Update from Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor
July 26, 2010

TALLAHASSEE – On Friday, I had the privilege to offer some words to a remarkable gathering of young men and women from across the state – some of whom are already or soon will be a part of the State University System of Florida.

Let me first say that our System has made great strides over the years in enhancing the accessibility of our campus infrastructure for those with disabilities. This is due in no small part to real dedication and committed leadership.

I was inspired to look out over a ballroom full of yellow-shirted teen-agers and young adults who are affiliated with the Youth Leadership Forum, which is put on each year by The Able Trust. Many of you are familiar with the good work this organization does to support, grow, educate, and help employ young people with disabilities. From all across the state, they came to the state capital for a great experience that happens to also be a “campus experience.” They are buoyed not just by each other (and the volunteers, mentors, and staff who assist them) but by their own individual awareness of their futures.

For instance, among those I met were Whitney Harris and Joseph Murray. Both of them are 20 years old, and both are mature, gracious, and professional far beyond their years. Whitney is a student at St. Petersburg College with plans to continue on, and Joseph works at Bethesda Hospital in Palm Beach County. Whitney, who is studying prosthetics, says she is, “so glad I could stay in Florida for this special program study area.” Joseph has spent a lot of time out of state helping the victims of Hurricane Katrina, including those with disabilities. He is a mentor and volunteer to those younger in the Youth Leadership Forum, which was sponsored by, among others, the Florida House of Representatives, the Office of Rep. Will Weatherford and Florida State University, which was also the host venue.

As I shared with them our vision for Florida’s future, their unique circumstances reminded me that whatever “challenges” we may face pale in comparison to the simple fact that today’s environment for all young people is the most challenging in the history of the world. Between the barrages of propaganda that constantly
robs them of time and attention, to the still-surmountable bigotry and narrow-mindedness that exists throughout society, all young Floridians — regardless of their physical abilities — should have access to the possibilities that come with a university degree.

Let us recommit ourselves to Joseph and Whitney and all those in Florida who depend on us not just to keep our System open and accessible academically but physically as well.

Below is a list of the other activities from this past week:

- The initial meeting of the “Task Force on the Future of Academic Libraries in Florida” took place in Gainesville last week, and I was honored to offer opening remarks for the launch of this important effort to strengthen the coordination of Florida’s college and university libraries. I want to thank so many who made this important meeting possible including task force co-chairs Kathy Miller and Jim Morris and Dr. Joe Glover and the University of Florida, which hosted the event. We look forward to the recommendations that will result from the work of this impressive group.

- Representatives of the Moffitt Cancer Center, which is located on the campus of University of South Florida in Tampa, came to the office to discuss upcoming and ongoing initiatives including the Moffitt Research Park and their for-profit venture called M2GEN.

- Governor Perez hosted the first meeting of the Tuition and Fee Work Group via a conference call to discuss the Board’s new responsibilities associated with approving new fees, increasing certain fees that are currently capped, and creating flexible tuition policies (including market rate tuition for graduate or continuing education courses). We will keep you informed as their work progresses.

- Dr. Claudia Hillinger from the Max Planck Florida Institute spoke to me about the upcoming visit of Germany’s State Education Minister Heubisch and his delegation who are all coming to Florida this fall.

- I hosted a conference call with Presidents, Provosts, CFOs and other university personnel to provide an executive summary of where we are with the plans for allocation of the $12 million (including $2 for commercialization) from the Legislature in support of New Florida 2010. We will probably host another call with a sub-set of this group in the coming weeks as we make a call for proposals and our System institutions prepare their applications.

Update on “Update”
It is my intention to send these Updates every week. Thank you for your leadership and partnership in the System.