The New Year is always a good time to talk about the past, present and future – and as we head into the January Board of Governors retreat and meeting next week, it will represent a most timely opportunity for Chair Ava L. Parker and the Board to celebrate many accomplishments while evaluating the status of Board priorities.

The 2010 Annual Report of the Florida Board of Governors, State University System also is a marker of the New Year. The enormity of staff effort in compiling, vetting, and preparing this document is significant, and I thank Dr. Dorothy Minear for spearheading it again this year. We are very appreciative of the significant contributions made by our 11 respective institutions as well. Further, plans are under way for a higher level of press outreach for the 2010 Annual Report. I am particularly looking forward to this because, as so often is the case, many perennial documents are transmitted across offices and buildings in Tallahassee with little effort to focus on the real success stories contained with these reports.

We will fully utilize this opportunity to share the major highlights with a wider audience, especially considering the unprecedented events of 2010 and the “firsts” that occurred through the year. To name a few: The Board of Governors has led an effort to raise the accountability bar to new heights – in a meaningful way. We commenced the New Florida Initiative and completed its first successful grant awards distribution cycle. The Board has led the effort to ensure the story that we tell to the Legislature is not simply one of, “It’s working,” but one of, “Here is precisely how it is working – and why.” Chair Parker will further outline these and other accomplishments at the January Board meeting.

While we herald achievements, we also are preparing for the short-term and long-term future of the System. I have been thinking about the Annual Report and other similar topics in context of Governor Scott’s ongoing transition and the upcoming Session. Just when you think our legislators couldn’t possibly be faced with a task worse than the Session they just left behind, something new comes to
their doorstep. Never before has the Florida Legislature had to grapple with the severity and number of consecutive years of deficits in modern times.

During this time of fiscal constraint, we must continue to maximize the effective and efficient use of our resources and work with our partners in the Legislature to achieve the proper balance of revenue derived from appropriation and from tuition. We must also remain keenly aware that the economic pressures our students face are as real as the economic challenges our universities and the Legislature are experiencing. The Florida Board of Governors and our universities’ Boards of Trustees will no doubt continue in their thoughtful stewardship of public resources and prudent decision making regarding tuition and fees.

**Florida Welcomes a New Governor and Prepares for Session**

Alongside a number of Board members and university leaders, I was honored to represent our System at several events related to the inauguration of Governor Scott and Lt. Governor Carroll last week. Based on conversations I have had with the new Governor and his team throughout the transition, it is clear that they have a deep and abiding appreciation for the role of our public universities relative to growing Florida’s new, knowledge-based economy. It is also a good sign that his education transition team report calls for our New Florida Initiative to be fully funded — embracing our vision for a State University System that is responsive to the needs of our state’s talent supply chain; provides a clear path to move university research from the laboratory to the marketplace; engenders greater coordination with all education delivery systems; and delivers accountability-based results that are real and measurable.

And now that we are nearly half-way into January, we find ourselves busy with legislative committee meetings. This week, I spoke in front of the Senate Higher Education Appropriations subcommittee about the Higher Education Coordinating Council and in front of the House Education Committee regarding system governance, accountability and our legislative agenda. Meanwhile, Dr. Dorothy Minear and Mr. Tim Jones presented to the House K-20 Competitiveness Subcommittee and the House K-20 Innovation Subcommittee to provide an overview of the System. We will keep you informed as our office continues to work with the Legislature on System priorities.

Thank you for your continued leadership in our State University System.