Update from Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor
February 2, 2011

This past week, I spent considerable time at important meetings of Enterprise Florida and the BioFlorida Institute, both in Tallahassee and both timely relative to our issues. Let me expound on that:

First, you may know that then-Governor Bush created Enterprise Florida more than 10 years ago in an effort to enhance communication and coordination between state government and its private sector partners, better steering Florida’s economic development activities. Enterprise Florida’s Board of Directors has representatives from about five dozen of the most active private and public organizations. Notably, it had been quite some time since the “Chair” of Enterprise Florida (the sitting Governor) actually moderated a meeting – and the full meeting at that. Governor Scott did just that, and was loudly lauded for his unrelenting passion and focus on keeping jobs in Florida and bringing jobs to Florida. I was gratified that much of what I heard and learned in the presentations dovetails nicely with our New Florida Initiative, to which I also spoke in opening remarks. It is clear that we are fully poised to align well with the strategic goals of Enterprise Florida as it continues its important work on national and global levels.

Secondly, I met with the brand new BioFlorida Institute — a spinoff of BioFlorida, a statewide professional trade association, if you will. A separate non-profit organization headed by Scripps Florida’s Dr. Harry Orf, the BioFlorida Institute will serve as a science education and workforce development foundation. It is wonderful to see this kind of new activity and necessary partner on the K-20 scene to complement local and state workforce needs. It further points to the importance of bolstering the momentum and synergy of the New Florida Initiative of the Board of Governors. I was happy to be asked to be involved in the BioFlorida Institute in an advisory capacity, and offered some thoughts to its formative Board of Directors on what issues to watch and/or be a part of leading in order to avoid duplication and concentrate on specific needs.

While these exciting events and initiatives encourage us to look to the future, I am also reminded of the daunting challenges we have just ahead as we wrestle with budgetary constraints. On Feb. 10, the Budget & Finance Committee of the Board of Governors, chaired by Gov. Tico Perez, will utilize the comprehensive
review process for the first time in its review of tuition and fee proposals from the 11 universities. A week later, Chair Ava L. Parker will convene the Feb. 17 conference call of the full Board — a meeting that will no doubt be closely monitored and widely reported, as it should be, as these are uniquely trying times for our students, our universities and our Legislators.

Against this complex backdrop, I reflect on recent remarks given to a South Florida audience by Pulitzer Prize winning columnist Thomas Friedman focusing on the role of education in keeping America competitive – or, more precisely, becoming more competitive once again. Friedman says: “The first rule is whatever can be done, will be done. The only question is will it be done by you or to you.” He correctly notes that science and math are important and what stimulates innovative thinking is a liberal arts education that encompasses music, drama and literature. Yet again, all roads lead back to our New Florida Initiative.

We are on a strong path of progress in the State University System. We are a national leader in many respects, a worldwide example in others, and on our way to a collective prominence that will sustain such levels of success. We have a Legislature – with both returning and brand-new members – that genuinely understands how hard we are working toward greater efficiency and undeniable national respect. You have a critical role in that effort.

Thank you for your continued leadership!