Update from Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor
February 24, 2011

The past three weeks have been action-packed on multiple fronts. In Tallahassee, the Governor’s widely anticipated and first proposed budget to the Legislature has continued to be a top focus. While we continue to evaluate the Governor’s recommended budget — and when you take into account all other parts of the State budget — we are generally pleased, as the System’s budget maintains its current base (minus non-recurring and minus federal stimulus, both of which were fully expected). We see the clear signal that both the Governor and this Legislature appreciate the unique role of higher education and the value of the investment. There are certainly employment-related issues that could have a very real effect on how universities recruit and retain faculty and staff. We are now working with the Legislature, which will consider the Governor’s recommendations as they develop their own budget plans over the next few months.

In Washington, our representative there is closely monitoring the intensity of debate regarding earmarks and spending cuts. We also are closely watching anything that could impact Pell Grants and need-based financial aid, of course. System experts and our staff are working on Medicaid reimbursement issues and medical school residency slots with stakeholders and members of Congress, as we identify opportunities to keep these issues on the table for action.

In these challenging economic times, I also want to make you aware of a great milestone in our ongoing efforts to reduce shared System costs: Some of you are aware that we have been working for more than 6 months on proactively refinancing existing Capital Improvement Trust Fund bonds. In early February, the State’s central bond division office sold for us $38.9 million in State University System Revenue Refunding Bonds. Refinancing this existing debt will generate a savings of $4.6 million! While these are long-term savings, the dollars are real and will result in an increased allocation from this important trust fund for student life facilities. We also were exceedingly pleased to know that each of the three national rating agencies independently assessed the credit-worthiness of the System’s program as AA — "outlook stable."
UCF’s “LAKE NONA” EMERGING AS A NATIONAL FORCE IN MEDICAL EDUCATION

While in Orlando for the Board's recent committee meeting, Chair Ava L. Parker and I visited several of UCF's new facilities in the sprawling Research Park as well as a tour of emerging projects that helped UCF earn a school-record $133.3 million in external research funding in FY 2009-10. We also took an intensely interesting tour of the UCF College of Medicine at Lake Nona. The Dean and Vice President for Medical Affairs, Deborah German, M.D., demonstrated some of the innovative features that make this medical school one of the most technologically advanced in the nation. Local and national physicians with specialties are booking into the facilities at a brisk pace to be guest lecturers, making that set of activities alone an economic driver.

In addition to creating outstanding learning and research opportunities for students, the UCF College of Medicine is the centerpiece of Lake Nona’s “medical city,” which is predicted to create 30,000 local jobs and have an economic impact in excess of $7.6 billion, according to an independent study. We also noted that the new Veterans Administration (VA) hospital is quickly “going vertical” on the parcel right next door, which some of you know has a teaching hospital agreement under way with UCF.

The Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute and the MD Anderson Cancer Center-Orlando are now open at Lake Nona, while the Nemours Children’s Hospital and the University of Florida’s research facility are under construction. I urge any of you who are in the area to take advantage of seeing some amazing new technologies and these state-of-the-art facilities in our System.
In February, I had the honor to represent the State University System of Florida at several events sponsored by The Open World Leadership Center, the Congressional agency working to increase U.S.-Eurasian understanding and partnerships. FAMU Student Government President Gallop Franklin, II and UF Student Government President Ashton Charles will represent the State University System and travel to Russia this fall as guests of the host country. While in D.C., we met with Dr. James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress who also is chairman of the Open World's board of trustees (pictured above with Gallop, Ashton and me). I am proud – as I know the Board of Governors is as well – for the rare selection of two students from one state, and both from public universities. The travel and all costs are fully funded by the International Relations Department of the Federal Agency on Youth Affairs of the Russian Federation. The student leaders will meet with their counterparts as well as senior officials in the legislative, executive and judicial branches of power in Russia.

STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM SUPPORTS “SUNSHINE STATE SCHOLARS” MEGA-EVENT
Spending time with dozens of top-performing STEM-focused high school juniors is one way to be energized about where the System is headed. Students, parents and teachers gathered for what was the largest and most gratifying
"Sunshine State Scholars" event to date at which our universities were able to showcase to these top students the benefits of attending a state university in their home state!

Mark Woodbury, President of Universal Studios Creative Division, spoke — drawing connections between education and jobs in the global economy. As a brilliant and creative architect, he shared an educational path that led him to the Universal Studios theme park in Orlando and theme parks around the world. His words resonated with representatives that higher education is the transformational change agent for many students.

This event came together over many months of planning with our partners at the Florida Education Foundation. Both Florida College System Chancellor Will Holcombe and I spoke at the event as well. We thank Jon Rogers, Ph.D., our Director of Academic & Student Affairs, for his liaison work and for representing us in Orlando as well. As I departed, I heard sponsors and underwriters asking about next year’s plans – always the sign of a highly successful event.

**CAMPUS SAFETY IS KEY**

Recent on-campus and off-campus tragedies in Florida and around the nation remind us that our primary charge is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our students, faculty and staff by creating a safe and secure setting in which they can learn, live and work. Factors that impact the living and learning environment range widely from indoor air quality to food safety; from campus lighting to residence hall security; from basic health care to advanced counseling; from daily campus security to emergency response; and so much more.

As campus life continues to evolve at each of our institutions, I am sure you will agree that we must remain vigilant to ensure the policies, regulations and statutes governing our decisions are up-to-date. We are fortunate to have access to well-respected experts — both inside and outside the academy — who can help guide our efforts as advances in technology and emerging societal challenges impact how we maintain safety and security. UF Police Chief Linda Stump, current chair of the 11 university police chiefs, is providing expert leadership regarding proposed legislation that would lift the current prohibition of firearms on campus. (Their official statement is attached.)

It has been said that student experiences will be shaped by adults, by peers, and ultimately by places. Our first duty is to provide a safe and secure place dedicated to learning and growing, and I anticipate continued dialogue surrounding this important aspect of the academic enterprise.

**IN CLOSING**

Finally, I want to commend the four state universities that helped lead the charge
for “College Goal Sunday Florida” on Feb. 20. Staff from FSU, FIU, UCF, and USF provided free assistance to Florida high school seniors and their families in completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The U.S. Department of Education requires students to complete the complicated FAFSA forms before determining eligibility for federal student financial assistance. In these difficult economic times, financial assistance is increasingly a deciding factor for students and their families to enter the System. “College Goal Sunday Florida” was coordinated by Enlace Florida in partnership with the National YMCA, Lumina Foundation for Education, USA Funds and the host universities.

Thank you for your leadership and support of the State University System — and for your support as we work on issues at an elevated level these next few months amid the Legislative Session.
February 10, 2011

To whom it may concern:

On behalf of the State of Florida University Police Chiefs, we stand united in our opposition to any legislation that would allow weapons on our campuses. As law enforcement professionals we prepare our agencies to deal with the day to day calls for service as well as critical incidents that involve weapons and violence. It is our belief the best way to provide a safe environment on our respective campuses is to have the support from the campus community, to include its faculty, staff and students, as well as operating an efficient and well trained police department. We believe that the higher education environment should remain weapon free, where civil discourse and spirited debate are meant to tap into the genius of tomorrow. As seen through the support of our respective student governments, they too are united in their position of opposition to bring weapons onto our campuses. Our collective goal is to continue to provide a safe environment where the most diverse populations come together for one common goal.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Chief Linda J. Stump
Chair
Florida University Police Chiefs