March 2015

March marks the start of the 2015 legislative session, and the Board of Governors and State University System of Florida are ready to hit the ground running. Over the next 59 days, our office will work hard to advocate for the State University System, and we’ll do our best to keep you updated on our progress. Your continued collaboration is key to our success, and we look forward to seeing many of you in Tallahassee.

Marshall M. Criser III
Chancellor

Session Begins

The 2015 Legislative Session spans March 3 to May 1, and our office will continue discussions with the Governor and Legislature on priorities from performance funding to university projects. We’re also advocating for exciting new initiatives to increase System synergies, including a new “Data Analytics Initiative,” which will enable participating universities to more easily share vast quantities of information and make researchers more successful in the competition for federal grants. A new “Shared Services” initiative will also increase collaboration by helping the State University System develop the data infrastructure necessary to negotiate better contracts.

State of the State

Crowds of Floridians flocked to Tallahassee on Tuesday to hear Governor Rick Scott deliver his annual State of the State address, a speech traditionally focused on Florida’s progress and on the Governor’s agenda for the upcoming legislative session. The Governor’s speech highlighted five items to help Florida out-compete the rest of the world, including an affordable education. The speech detailed several proposals designed to ensure that students get the maximum return on investment for their education, including plans to eliminate the state sales tax on textbooks and ramp up the production of degrees in high-skill, high-wage areas, including STEM.

Affordability Presentation

Following up on discussions held during our November and January Board meetings, I made a presentation on university affordability to the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee this morning. As our office studies this issue, we hope to continue thoughtful discussions on whether our universities are affordable for Florida students. The study conducted by the Board office takes into consideration the three main components of affordability: tuition, state appropriations and financial aid. Moving forward, we will continue examining the cost of attending our universities in the context of expected family contributions by income and the ability for students and families to pay.
FAMU/FSU College of Engineering

FAMU President Elmira Mangum and FSU President John Thrasher made history during our January Board meeting by agreeing to reform the Joint College of Engineering by enhancing its administrative and organizational processes. We expect to hold the Joint College’s first Council meeting in March and are excited to turn a new page as we address the concerns raised in the study by Collaborative Brain Trust.

Upcoming Board Meetings

March 18 – 19, 2015
Florida A&M University
Tallahassee, FL