Our view: Sending out an SOS  
02/18/2008 © Florida Today 
Lawmakers must significantly improve funding to shore-up Florida's sinking university system 

Don't Gov. Charlie Crist and lawmakers understand SOS? 

The presidents of Florida's colleges and universities have been long warning the higher education system is sinking from too little money and too many students. 

The facts back them up: 

Student tuition is $3,400 a year, about half the national average. Florida's funding for its colleges lags far behind other states. The universities have the worst student-faculty ratio in the nation and can't hire enough professors to offer students the courses they need to graduate in four years. 

The situation has dire consequences for the state, which needs a highly educated workforce to compete in the global economy. 

That's why university leaders met with House Speaker Marco Rubio last week and told him point blank the state system is facing the biggest threat in its history, can't afford more budget cuts and desperately needs additional funding this year. 

Crist and lawmakers must act and do it through a formula that guarantees -- at a bare minimum -- the $200 million more annually requested by Board of Governors Chancellor Mark Rosenberg to get Florida universities back on their feet.
The best way to do it is through a higher education summit that brings the key players -- and funding options -- to the table to craft a new policy that raises the schools to their rightful place of importance.

The funding options should include substantive yearly increases from the Legislature along with possible tuition raises and revisions to Bright Futures scholarships to make the program more equitable for students.

Crist is asking lawmakers for $5.42 billion for higher education next year, including $52 million for increased enrollment. That sounds like a lot but it's not against the backdrop of the Legislature's long-running failure to make Florida universities among the best in the country.

And the fact as many as 60,000 students could get shut out of state universities during the next four years because of enrollment caps and budget cuts.

Florida's economic future is directly linked to its universities. Without a major investment toward their success, our children and state will never become leaders in the 21st century world.

State university presidents feel dollar crunch
02/16/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press

TALLAHASSEE — House Speaker Marco Rubio got an earful from presidents of Florida’s major colleges and universities Thursday morning, as they warned of layoffs, lower graduation rates and shrinking programs if they don’t receive more funding.

“This is historic this year,” said Modesto Maidique, president of Florida International University. “We view the system as facing the biggest threat it has in its history.”

Because of lower state revenues, colleges and universities have had to tighten their budgets and the Board of Governors recently voted to raise full-time student tuition by 8 percent.

University administrators already cut their budgets in the fall resulting in a $65 million reduction to the state's 11 public colleges and universities.

Board of Governors Chancellor Mark Rosenberg suggested that if universities received about $200 million more a year, in a combination of raised tuition and
greater funding from the state, “We can get back in the game. Our fear is we’re losing our ability to graduate students.”

Florida State University president T.K. Wetherell said the state has to find a “more adequate funding formula.”

**Poor economy sends many to class**
02/17/2008 © Northwest Florida Daily News

FORT MYERS (AP) — The economy stinks.

Annual pay raises barely match the inflation rate.

You’re just happy a pink slip hasn’t arrived in your mailbox — yet.

Rather than tread water at a dead-end job, more adults are returning to college during the economic downturn. All five colleges based in Southwest Florida have reached record enrollment levels, and the State University System of Florida reports 13.4 percent more people applied to graduate school in 2007 than the prior year.

“This is the largest increase in graduate school applications, in both number and percentage, as far back as our records go,” said state Chancellor Mark Rosenberg.

“Our universities are helping people in the Florida workforce prepare for career changes and new opportunities.”

That’s exactly why 38-year-old DeAnna Helton returned to college.

“I lost my job in October through corporate downsizing because of the economy,” said Helton, formerly a title insurance underwriter. “It was a complete shock. They announced there would (be) 1,100 layoffs nationwide, but I never expected it would be my position.”

Helton, now working as director of sales and marketing for 1031 Tax Free Strategy, is attending Hodges University and will earn a master’s degree in management this August. She hopes to parlay that into entrepreneurial jobs and speaking opportunities.

The state’s five fastest growing occupational categories during the past year, according to Florida’s Agency for Workforce Innovation, are:
• Educational services: 6 percent.
• Arts, entertainment and recreation: 4.2 percent.
• Accommodation and food services: 2.9 percent.
• Health care and social assistance: 2.8 percent.
• Local government: 2.8 percent.

“The jobs growing most rapidly generally require more education and skills,” said Rebecca Rust, director of the labor market statistics center at Florida’s Agency for Workforce Innovation. “But when you look at the number of jobs gained, most of them are low-wage jobs.”

Statewide, the construction industry lost 3.3 percent of its jobs last year, followed by information (2.3 percent decline), manufacturing (2.1 percent) and real estate (0.7 percent). While layoffs are a direct result of the stalled economy, experts still point to education levels.

“Who gets laid off first?” Bradbury asked. “The entry level worker, then skilled technicians, then back office people.

**Higher Education: A system out of cash and short of options**
02/17/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

What good is admission to one of Florida's 11 public universities if, once you get there, the education is mediocre? How valuable is a degree from the University of South Florida if the professors are so overloaded and class offerings so scant, it takes an extra year or more to graduate?

This is the conundrum facing cash-strapped university presidents and state higher education leaders. After years of preaching "access and quality," they concede they can no longer promise Florida taxpayers both.

Consider: The university system is losing $157-million to its current-year base funding because of statewide revenue shortfalls, and it will lose as much as $171-million more when lawmakers meet this spring to prepare the state's 2008-09 budget.

Universities like Florida State and Florida A&M are preparing to lay off dozens of professors and staffers. USF is asking professors to take on heavier class loads because the university can't afford to fill vacant positions.
Colleges across the state are preparing to cut enrollment, reversing years of steroid-like growth and perhaps ending the long tradition that guarantees community college graduates a seat. Meanwhile, the governor wants to cut millions in scholarships that allow Floridians to afford smaller private colleges like Eckerd and Rollins.

It doesn't sound like the best recipe for building the state's work force or future economy, but university system leaders say budget cutbacks are forcing their hand.

"Quality is now at risk," said Carolyn Roberts, chairwoman of the Board of Governors that oversees the 11 state universities. "Access is important to our state, but quality has to be the No. 1 priority."

The situation has certainly grown more dire in recent months, as the state budget situation soured and relations between the Board of Governors and lawmakers iced over.

But it's no surprise that the system is in this state. In many ways, the system has been broken for a long time.

Graduate tuition for out-of-state students is among the highest in the nation, meaning universities here have a tough time attracting top students from around the country. Meanwhile, undergraduate tuition and fees for Floridians is the lowest in the country and covers just a quarter of what it takes to educate a student.

A Chronicle of Higher Education study found that Florida, while among the largest states, ranks 44 out of 50 for state appropriations. Two years ago, Florida ranked No. 27.

State dollars don't even cover all of the 300,000 students enrolled. The state failed to fund more than 6,500 students sitting in public university classrooms right now.

The state's revenue shortfall of more than $2-billion is making finances worse. USF will end the budget year in June having lost about $26-million. UF, the state flagship, will lose $40-million.

Meanwhile, professors aren't getting raises of any significance, even though they're expected to take on more students. Little wonder, then, that professors are leaving for states like North Carolina and South Carolina, which have raised their investments in higher education by 23 to 26.5 percent since 2005.
"I like Florida and FSU, but we feel we're being forced out by a Legislature that values tax cuts over education," FSU geography professor Barney Warf said in an e-mail to the Times.

He said he is leaving for a job at the University of Kansas. His wife, a Spanish instructor at FSU, will go with him.

No easy fixes

Improving Florida's higher education system will require tough, unpopular choices that go far beyond freezing enrollment or laying off faculty.

But the changes many say are necessary - significantly higher tuition, a revamp of the Bright Futures merit scholarship, more need-based aid - have little to no chance of happening this legislative session.

"Probably not," conceded South Florida Democratic Sen. Jeremy Ring, vice chairman of the body's higher education appropriations committee.

"As a state, everyone here needs to show a higher appreciation of our higher education system. If not, we're not going to get out of this crisis. The universities have to be the catalyst to drive our economy, and that requires significant funding."

But Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-St. Lucie, is Bright Futures' founder and chief protector. Pruitt never finished college, so the cause of helping students afford college is personal for him.

Under his tenure, the program that covers tuition based on high school grades and SAT scores is pretty much untouchable, even though critics say it gives too generously to students who can well afford college on their own.

Bright Futures is a major reason why Florida's average tuition and fees - $3,361 a year - are lower than any other state. When tuition goes up, so does the state's bill to cover Bright Futures. So even though university presidents say they cannot offer a top education at rock-bottom prices, lawmakers resist significant tuition increases.

The other tuition anchor is the Florida Prepaid College program, which allows families to lock in today's college prices when their children are still in diapers. Florida Prepaid leaves a cushion for a tuition increase of only 6.5 percent each year. Anything more does not sit well with their actuaries. Yet Chancellor Mark
Rosenberg says it would take an increase of about 13 percent a year for five years just to get to a rank of No. 37 nationwide - the same as Mississippi.

Gov. Charlie Crist recently told the Board of Governors that while he supported the 5 percent hike that took effect in January, he will not support another increase.

The governor's no-increase warning aside, the board voted the following day to raise tuition by 8 percent in the fall, a move that would generate an extra $32-million a year. But lawmakers maintain the board can't do so without their approval.

The tuition authority dispute is in court, and could drag on for a while. In the meantime, tensions between the board and Legislature seem to grow worse by the day.

Minutes after the board voted on the tuition hike on Jan. 24, Sen. Pruitt sent out a terse mass e-mail blasting their decision as the "camel's nose under the tent." It was just the latest such e-mail to come from his office in recent months.

Harder to get in

Amid all the political maneuvering and uncertainty, what are universities and community colleges to do?

"We're going to have to ask some very difficult questions about how many students we can afford to enroll and educate," said USF provost Ralph Wilcox.

The 11 universities already narrowed their doors a few months back, when they froze freshman enrollment levels. Now they're devising plans to cut overall enrollment, likely by reducing the number of freshmen and community college transfer students they'll accept.

That means it will be harder than ever to get into one of the 11 public colleges, especially the top three research institutions of UF, USF and FSU. It means more high school graduates will turn to community colleges for their first two years - yet they might not get into a four-year Florida university to finish the degree they started.

Already, Hillsborough and Miami-Dade community colleges have among the highest enrollments in the country. And their governing body hasn't given them permission to turn students away.
Over 15,000 transferred from community colleges to one of Florida's public universities in fall 2006, according to the Board of Governors. Those transfers represented more than 31 percent of all new arrivals in the state university system that year.

The strain on students is already starting to show.

Ashley Burnett, 20, graduated from Gaither High in Tampa and is a second-year health science major at UF.

She's applying to UF's occupational therapy program next year and needs certain classes.

"I tried to get into technical writing this semester, and they only had like two sections available," she said. "It was really stressful. A lot of classes are super crowded."

"The teachers are so stressed and overwhelmed. It's hard to ask questions in class because there are so many people."

"I would pay more tuition if I knew it would be less stressful here."

Incoming UF freshmen will pay more starting in the fall - 15 percent above the base statewide tuition each year, until UF's tuition reaches 40 percent above the base. UF, FSU and USF get to charge more under a "differential tuition" plan lawmakers passed last session.

The extra tuition was supposed to provide the resources to help elevate the three research institutions into a higher class, closer to the likes of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

But with all the millions cut from those universities since the differential was approved, now it will likely just leave the trio less worse off than the other eight Florida institutions.

Sen. Jim King, R-Jacksonville, sits on the Higher Education Appropriations Committee. He said lawmakers are in for a lot of angry voters if they don't make some fixes.

"Imagine being a parent, and you've been paying taxes, doing your part, thinking your child would be able to get a quality education from one of our universities," he said. "And all of a sudden there's no room at the inn? We are posturing
ourselves for a heck of a lot of ridicule that can only be changed by finding new revenue."

Florida Universities By the Numbers

11: Number of public universities

300,000: students enrolled

$2.2-billion: SUS budget, 2007-08**

31.1 to 1: Faculty-student ratio

25 to 1: national average ratio

$3,361: Annual in-state, undergraduate tuition and fees

$4,807: Mississippi's in-state, undergraduate tuition and fees

45 %: How much Florida would have to raise its tuition to reach Mississippi's level.

50th: Where Florida ranks among 50 states

42nd: Where Florida ranks for need-based financial aid

$390-million: Lottery revenues set aside this year for the Bright Futures merit scholarship

Zero: Portion of Bright Futures based on financial need

80: Percent of state aid dedicated to Bright Futures

20: Percent of state aid set aside for needy students

27: Percent of adult Florida population with a degree

46th: Florida's rank in bachelor degree production

** Not including $171-million more in cuts likely before the year ends June 30.
Florida university system looks at capping Bright Futures scholarships

02/18/2008 © Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

Florida's public university system is working on a proposal to cap spending on the popular but increasingly expensive Bright Futures scholarship program, a move that could lead to higher costs for some students and their families.

Key provisions of the proposal include redistributing money to help students from poor families, which could help schools with large minority populations, and those pursuing math and science degrees.

University officials hope that by capping the annual cost of Bright Futures, legislators will be more willing to raise tuition in a state that has the lowest rate in the nation: about $3,400 compared with the national average of $6,200.

The universities need higher tuition to afford more instructors and pay for other resources so Florida schools can compete with those in other states, said Carolyn Roberts, chairwoman of the system's appointed Board of Governors.

Any changes to the lottery-funded program would have to be approved by the state Legislature, which has been reluctant to tinker with a program that lawmakers think has prevented good students from leaving Florida for schools in other states.

"This is going to be a very uncomfortable conversation because legislators and university presidents and others in the State University System are going to have different opinions," Roberts said.

Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, says Bright Futures will be self-sustaining as long as the lottery pays for it.

"Bright Futures is not only great for our students, but it keeps the promise that was made to the voters when the lottery was presented to them in a constitutional amendment," he said.

Bar too low?
The program pays tuition and fees for students who make good grades in high school.
Students with a 3.5 grade-point average qualify for full tuition and fees, and those with a 3.0 average qualify for awards covering 75 percent of the cost at a university.

The program, however, has been criticized for setting the academic bar too low and promoting rapid growth.

Bright Futures began in 1997 with about 42,000 students sharing about $70 million.

This year, more than 150,000 students are splitting about $400 million.

"I know we're in tough financial times, but we need to look very carefully at any changes," said Rep. Marti Coley, R-Marianna, chairwoman of the House Committee on Postsecondary Education.

Though she had no immediate comment on the proposal, Coley said students and parents often tell her how much the program has helped them with college expenses.

"It's the families in the middle-income range — the ones who make too much to get needs-based aid but not enough to pay for college outright — that really want things to stay the same," she said.

The State University System's proposal would cap Bright Futures spending at its current level of $400 million.

But instead of spending it all on merit-based academic scholarships, $100 million would go to help students from poor families.

Another $100 million would go to students entering so-called STEM fields: science, technology, engineering and math programs.

That would leave $200 million for merit scholarships. The proposal leaves unclear whether that would mean fewer grants, smaller grants or stricter standards to qualify for grants.

The proposal does make clear that Bright Futures would no longer automatically cover tuition increases as it does today.

Higher education officials think that's a key reason state legislators resist tuition increases: When tuition goes up, the state ends up footing the bill for everyone who receives a Bright Futures scholarship.
And that, education officials say, has kept tuition costs artificially low and contributed to the growing financial trouble at Florida's 11 universities, which are controlling costs by capping freshman enrollment and, in some cases, contemplating faculty layoffs.

Fair distribution?
University officials say the proposal is also intended to jump-start a discussion about whether the state is being fair in the way it distributes student aid.

Florida gives 60 percent of its student-aid money to Bright Futures and 23 percent to needs-based programs, according to state university officials.

If the university system's proposal is adopted, schools with more low-income and minority students and universities that enroll more community-college transfer students could see dramatic increases in needs-based scholarship money.

For example, students at Florida A&M University, a historically black institution in Tallahassee, get about 1.2 percent of the state's Bright Futures money. Under the proposal, its students would get nearly 10 percent of the $100 million in needs-based scholarships.

The board is scheduled to take up the proposal Feb. 21. It's not certain whether the board will vote that day to take the proposal to the Legislature, officials said.

Jill Chamberlain, spokeswoman for House Speaker Marco Rubio, R-West Miami, said he is aware of concerns about the effect of tuition increases on Bright Futures. Rubio plans to meet with university presidents in Tallahassee next week, she said.
involved in student government, lives in a residence hall and enjoys a more traditional college experience.

Nearly 5,000 FAU students and 148,630 students statewide had their tuition fully or partially paid for by the program last year. But the ballooning $400 million scholarship plan that began a decade ago worries university officials who foresee it growing to nearly $1 billion within the next 10 years.

On Thursday, the Board of Governors, which oversees Florida's 11 public universities, will discuss ideas to alter the program, which is so popular with parents it has remained impervious to change, or even criticism.

What the board will review -- officials are quick to emphasize it is not a "plan" or a "proposal" -- would redistribute the wealth of the solely academic-based program to allow for economic need-based grants and would include awards for students pursuing high-need majors.

"We feel Bright Futures should be modified to reflect the needs of the state," said Carolyn Roberts, chairman of the Board of Governors. And like many university officials, Roberts believes Bright Futures has strangled university tuition, keeping it low so that more state dollars don't have to go into the Bright Futures budget.

Separating Bright Futures Scholarships from tuition is one of Thursday's discussion items.

Others include:

• Capping Bright Futures at its current $400 million price tag until 2012.

• Using $100 million of that money to pay for need-based scholarships, and another $100 million to pay students studying high-need professions such as nursing and engineering.

• The remaining $200 million would be dispersed according to standards in the current plan.

In later years, savings from capping the program could be dedicated to a newly defined need-based scholarship that would include low- and middle-income families.

Cho Tipton said he agrees with giving more need-based scholarships. "I feel like a kid who grew up in inner-city Miami-Dade County without the kind of education I got in Naples should be able to go to college just as much as I can,"
said Cho Tipton, who missed earning the highest level Bright Futures scholarship by 20 points on his SAT.

To earn the top Bright Futures Scholarship, which pays 100 percent of all tuition and fees, a student must have a 3.5 weighted high school GPA and a 1270 SAT score. Students with a 3.0 weighted GPA -- a B-average -- and an SAT score of 970 can have 75 percent of tuition and fees paid for with the scholarship.

The Bright Futures Scholarship was approved in 1997 and made its first $70 million in scholarship payments in 1998.

This school year, the program, which is paid for with lottery dollars, cost $398,430,336. Gov. Charlie Crist earmarked $402,721,729 for the scholarship plan in his proposed 2008-2009 budget.

The scholarship is championed by Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, who drove around the state in a little yellow school bus during a successful 2003 campaign to ward off cuts to Bright Futures.

Lawmakers are the only ones with the power to change Bright Futures, and Pruitt disputes the $1 billion figure included in the board's report. He said the scholarship is self-sustaining as long as the lottery stays in operation.

"Keep in mind that tuition is not the only source of funding for universities," Pruitt said. "We have provided significant general revenue increases to our university system over the past five years and are committed to a high quality, accessible and affordable higher education system in Florida."

But the common complaints remain, that it is out of reach to poor students in low-performing urban schools who can't meet the academic standards, and that it has kept Florida resident tuition artificially low.

Florida has one of the lowest resident undergraduate tuition rates in the country, with students last year paying just $2,211 for a full year of 30 credits.

With student fees, which vary by university, the average Florida student paid $3,383 for 30 credits last year.

One result of the changes to be discussed Thursday would be universities that now receive the most in Bright Futures money would lose some to schools that currently get very little.
For example, the University of Florida -- whose academic admission standards are some of the highest in the state -- receives 24 percent of all Bright Futures Scholarships.

Florida A&M University -- the only public Florida university that is still allowed to enroll students who need remedial college classes -- receives just 1 percent of Bright Futures Scholarships.

The ideas in Thursday's report would increase FAMU's scholarships to 9 percent and reduce UF's to 12 percent.

**First Coast colleges face musical chairs**
02/16/2008 © Florida Times-Union

A downturn in the economy often spurs increased college enrollment, and already more students are showing up at universities and community colleges in Florida.

But because of budget woes and battles over higher education in the state, there won't be room for everyone.

A new report estimates that as many as 60,000 students could be denied access to state universities by 2012 because of budget cutbacks. That's according to an analysis released last week by ENLACE Florida, a statewide research group that usually focuses on minority education.

With clashes looming over budget cuts, tuition hikes and state-funded scholarship programs, there's a lot to work out.

The Legislature this year ordered colleges and universities (as well as school districts) to carve millions from their budgets. Next year is certain to bring more cuts as an expected downturn in the economy shrinks state revenue.

By this summer, Florida Community College at Jacksonville is likely to have sustained a 10 percent decrease in state funding in a year's time, said the school's president, Steve Wallace. He called the $9 million loss from 2007 to 2008 unprecedented and said the college has cut back on support services in order to accommodate a burgeoning enrollment.

The University of North Florida is not anticipating layoffs right now. Instead it will draw from funds put aside last spring in anticipation of a bad budget year, said John Delaney, its president. But it is holding some positions vacant.
The budget shortfall also has threatened grants for in-state students attending private schools - such as Jacksonville University - and it has pinched funding for medical schools.

But even when times were good, critics say, higher education was shorted. The overall student-faculty ratio in the state university system has deteriorated by 45 percent since 1990, according to documents from the Board of Governors, which runs the state university system.

"The harsh reality is, we see this ever-shrinking pool of state subsidy, [and] we see an ever-increasing number of students on our doorstep seeking higher education," said Board of Governors member Lynn Pappas, a Jacksonville lawyer.

A call for higher tuition

Tuition increases, Pappas said, are the only answer to keeping the doors open and preserving educational quality.

The Board of Governors voted last month for an 8 percent tuition hike for public universities.

But it's unclear whether the board has the authority to raise tuition. It is embroiled in a lawsuit with state lawmakers who say that decision belongs to the Legislature.

Legislators won't drop their stance on the suit. They will, however, consider an increase in tuition. Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka, chairman of the House Schools and Learning Council, said he would seek a 5 percent hike for both universities and community colleges.

But Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach, Higher Education Appropriations chairwoman, pointed out that the governor objected to tuition increases last year.

A call to alter Bright Futures

Even if tuition does go up, the state would end up picking up much of the tab because of the enormous state scholarship program, Bright Futures.

Many scholarships provide a set amount of money students can use toward their tuition. But Bright Futures guarantees students either 100 percent or 75 percent of tuition at public colleges based on test scores and grades. So raising tuition at
state schools would also increase the amount the state must pay in scholarship awards.

Calls for changing Bright Futures are intensifying as financial pressures on higher education mount. The lottery-funded program is so large - nearly 150,000 students received $347 million in scholarships last year - it has helped keep tuition low among Florida's public universities. And it's growing so fast - it is projected to cost $1 billion in 10 years - that the state will soon be hard pressed to pay for it.

"Now it's no longer a tension; it's a crisis," Pappas said. "The status quo is no longer an option."

The Board of Governors is set to discuss the program at a meeting on Thursday. One proposal would shift $100 million from Bright Future's merit-based scholarships into need-based aid. It would benefit low-income students, especially those that attend community college, but would be politically unpopular with middle- and upper-income families whose children attend state universities.

Last year, the Board of Governors froze freshman enrollment growth at the universities for the next three years, and officials said in January that more cuts could reduce the number of available slots for incoming students.

Shrinking open seats at state universities will force even more students into the already-growing community college system. Statewide, an additional 55,000 students enrolled in community colleges, Wallace said, just as funding was significantly cut.

Community college presidents vowed not to cap enrollment. Pickens, who is also special counsel to the president of St. Johns River Community College, said it's a pledge that may not be sustainable.

"In the upcoming budget years, I just think it's going to be a mission they find practically and fiscally impossible," he said.

Florida universities work on security plans for students in wake of Northern Illinois killing spree

02/16/2008 © Orlando Sentinel
At Florida State University, the first warning of a rampaging gunman might be the wail of sirens.

The University of Florida is testing an emergency-alert system that sends text messages to cell phones.

And the University of Central Florida is training faculty, staff and students how to deal with someone who shows signs of coming unhinged.

Ten months after the massacre of 32 people at Virginia Tech, Florida's colleges and universities are feeling a new urgency to beef up security plans after a man killed five students and himself Thursday at Northern Illinois University.

"I think the heat has been turned up in the last 24 hours," said Al Harms, vice president of planning at UCF.

After Thursday's rampage, FSU police Chief David Perry was bombarded by e-mails, text messages and phone calls, most from horrified colleagues passing along the grisly news.

He watched as details emerged on CNN and came to a sickening conclusion: "No matter what plans you make, how well you prepare," Perry said, "what happened there could happen anywhere."

The killings at Northern Illinois took only a few minutes, and university officials say there's little they can do about such spontaneous acts of violence short of putting up fences and placing metal detectors at every entrance.

"We want to keep campuses open," said Tico Perez, an Orlando lawyer and a member of the state university Board of Governors. "We don't want a police state out there."

But schools throughout Florida and the nation are in the midst of developing and implementing programs aimed at heading off trouble and warning students and faculty if trouble arrives.

"We go to bed at night thinking about how we can make our campuses safer," Perry said.

UCF last fall began training faculty and deans on how to deal with troubled students. The training is popular because it helps clear up confusion on whom to call in specific situations.
To supplement the training, faculty members last fall received "911 Guides" that offer tips -- printed on easy-to-spot red file folders -- for handling unruly or troubled students.

The school also has added two counselors to the student health center's staff and hopes to add more, Harms said.

Tom Lopez, assistant vice president for safety and security at Valencia Community College, said his school, like UCF, is shopping for a more up-to-date electronic emergency-notification system.

In October, Valencia began training faculty and students to stay indoors when police determine an intruder is on campus. Valencia already has the ability to lock exterior doors by remote control to keep an intruder from going from building to building, Lopez said.

Florida State is unveiling FSU Alert, an emergency-notification system designed to coordinate ways to alert students and staff.

It would take a life-threatening situation -- from a gunman to a tornado -- to trigger the sirens sprinkled throughout the densely populated Tallahassee campus of nearly 50,000 students, Perry said.

But the sirens can't be heard inside some buildings, so the system follows up with more alerts through text messages, e-mails and radio bulletins that describe the threat and tell people what to do.

At UCF, the school is planning to select an electronic-notification system next month that might include text messaging, Harms said. The school has existing systems that could blast e-mail warnings in the meantime, Harms said. The school can also add emergency notifications to the scrolling text that appears at the bottom of television screens on campus, he said.

Unlike FSU, sirens would not be very effective at UF's sprawling campus in Gainesville, said spokesman Steve Orlando.

Instead, UF is testing a system that would trigger text messages from police dispatchers to students' cell phones. Dispatchers would have templates for difference emergencies so messages can get out quickly.

A recent test, however, revealed some flaws in the system.
Nearly 90 percent of the 50,000 students and staff on the distribution list got the message, but it took up to 50 minutes in some cases, Orlando said. The test also showed that some messages didn't get through at all.

"We're going to fine-tune things and try again in the summer," Orlando said.

As the universities refine their emergency plans, they're sending reports to the Board of Governors. The board wants to determine whether it should lobby for additional state money in specific areas, such as beefing up campus police departments or modernizing communications technology.

Perez, who is heading a committee studying campus-emergency plans, acknowledged that asking for more money will be difficult in a "very, very tight budget year."

Lawmakers turned down the board's request last year for $3 million to hire more campus police.

But Thursday's shooting also serves as a stark reminder that "security issues are not luxuries," Perez said. "We can't afford to become complacent."

**Budget cuts hurt college hopefuls**
02/17/2008 © Pensacola News Journal

Sarah McCarty received what she sees as a Dear John letter from Florida State University last week.

The Florida Atlantic University sophomore has a 3.9 grade-point average and has dreams of going to a larger Florida university, but she recently learned that because of state budget cuts, those aspirations may not come true at FSU.

"I really wanted to get that big college name on my diploma," said McCarty, an elementary education major. "It's very frustrating."

McCarty shares that frustration with the 1,200 other FSU applicants who received the same letter, which said FSU has exceeded its funded enrollment limitations for undergraduates and has decided to limit transfers to some Florida public community college students.
On Wednesday, FSU will mail nearly 9,000 more letters to students denying them their application unless the Legislature decides to increase funding during the coming legislative session.

FSU Provost Larry Abele said he is not optimistic lawmakers will improve funding and said getting accepted to Florida State won't be easy.

"It's going to be very difficult," he said.

FSU received more than 30,000 freshmen applications for fall 2008. In December, it sent out more than 6,700 letters of acceptance, followed this month with 4,000 more.

The university expects about 40 percent of those accepted to enroll in the fall. It's a picture of an already tightening admission window getting tighter and is playing out throughout the state.

The state's financial woes have strained funds for universities and although the Board of Governors recently decided to raise full-time tuition by 8 percent, a court still must decide if the board has that authority or if instead only the Legislature may increase tuition.

On Thursday, House members met with the presidents of Florida's 11 public colleges and universities to discuss funding issues.

Although ideas such as finding new revenue streams were discussed, no solutions were finalized.

FSU President T.K. Wetherell said if something isn't done to improve funding, the university will feel the impact even more.

"We'll do more cuts, we'll have smaller classes, faculty probably won't get raises and some will quit and we'll take that money and give it to the ones who are left," Wetherell said. "We'll just do what you got to do at that point to keep the house from falling down."

At Florida universities, officials have to be creative to weather the budget cuts.

At FSU, officials said they have improved retention and thus gained about 1,400 students, but now the state won't fund them. Those students cost the university about $10 million, Abele said, which is added to the $22 million FSU has had to absorb in two budget cuts.
"The reason that we have more students than we're being paid for is that we have worked so hard to improve retention," Abele said.

This fall 1,200 fewer freshmen will be entering FSU than entered last fall, Abele said.

At the University of Florida, cuts are being made but not to enrollment, officials said.

"President (J. Bernard) Machen said he was determined to keep the impact on students as minimal as possible," said UF spokesman Steve Orlando.

Meanwhile, McCarty, who will not look for an apartment in Tallahassee as she had planned this spring break, tries to come to terms with how state budget cuts have faded her Seminole dreams.

FSU "is one of the best schools in Florida," McCarty said. "It has one of the most beautiful campuses. ... Now I don't know if I should leave my smaller college."

**Editorial: A master's in neglect**
02/17/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

The exodus already has begun, and Florida State University geography professor Barney Warf is part of it. "I like Florida and FSU," he told Times higher education reporter Shannon Colavecchio-Van Sickler, "but we feel we're being forced out by a Legislature that values tax cuts over education."

Warf is leaving for the University of Kansas, and his assessment may strike some as harshly political. But it is supported by an inexcusable and unrelenting record of legislative neglect over the past two decades. The wheels are coming off Florida's higher education wagon, and the steady loss of faculty to other states is not even the most alarming signal.

The scariest part is playing out right now in the mailboxes of high school seniors, who are being rejected earlier and more often than in any previous year. Increasingly, this is the message these eager young students receive: Your application for enrollment in a Florida university has been denied.

"We're very proud of the system we have built," Florida International University president Mitch Maidique told House Speaker Marco Rubio last week. "But we view the system facing the biggest threat that it has in its history."
As Colavecchio-Van Sickler painfully documents in today's "For a Better Florida" installment (page 1P), this is not an academic scare tactic. This is the real world in today's Florida public universities, a system with the lowest tuition and the highest student-faculty ratio in the nation, a system that has endured an inflation-adjusted drop in per-student funding from $14,039 to $10,728 in the past 18 years.

Universities are now laying off faculty, courses are being curtailed, and eager young students are being caught in the squeeze. In just the past three years alone, the share of first-college students whose applications are accepted has dropped from 67 percent to 57 percent. This fall, the total 300,000 university system enrollment may shrink by as many as 17,000 students. Translation: More graduating seniors and successful community college students will be denied a seat in their state universities.

This disaster wasn't created overnight, and it won't be solved in a single session of the Legislature. Yet it is not clear whether the 2008 Legislature will even try.

Rubio did invite the 11 public university presidents to the capital last week, and his willingness to listen is commendable. But neither Rubio, nor Senate President Ken Pruitt, nor Gov. Charlie Crist is doing anything tangible to help. Pruitt even had the hubris to ridicule the presidents' offer of a five-year, $1-billion compact between the universities and the Legislature - a process used successfully in California.

"One would assume," Pruitt snapped, "that these are goals they have been pursuing all along with the $3.6-billion they are receiving now."

The multiyear compact is being proposed by the university system Board of Governors and presidents as a way to bind both the universities and the Legislature to certain obligations each year. The intent is to create a predictable stream of revenue for universities while holding them to a rigorous set of performance standards.

This kind of arrangement holds great promise as a method to rebuild university resources, but Pruitt's sneering reaction suggests it has little chance in the Capitol. That's unfortunate.

Tuition increases are another necessary ingredient, but Crist continues to stand in the way. He actually told a reporter last week that universities could hold off on tuition increases if only they would be "more disciplined." Does he think university presidents are hiding extra money under dormitory mattresses?
Last year, Crist signed a bill that allows the three major research universities to raise their tuitions higher than the others. When he did so, he publicly pledged "to find ways to fund state universities that mitigate, if not eliminate, the need for increased tuition revenues." As the 2008 session gets ready to convene, that pledge now rings hollow.

Universities cannot meet the demands of quality and quantity without a genuine financial commitment from lawmakers, and too many of them want simply to throw up their hands and blame the economy. That's disingenuous. This is a crisis of enduring neglect, and this Legislature has an obligation to start turning things around.

If it doesn't, its legacy may become padlocks on the doors of the state's universities below signs that say, "Sorry, we're full."

17,000 Florida college applicants may be turned away this fall
02/17/2008 © Stuart News

Between state budget cuts and the slumping economy, more high school students could be receiving "not accepted" letters from Florida public universities.

Florida's universities are facing $147 million in cuts this year, and as much as $171 million in 2008-09, according to state estimates. To deal with the cuts, the Board of Governors, which makes policy for the state university system, has told universities they may have to reduce enrollment if they don't get more money.

"We've got too many students and not enough professors," said Bill Edmonds, a spokesman for the Board of Governors. "We're not going to throw people off campus, but what we're going to do is not admit people, as many as we would under normal circumstances, to try to get our enrollment lined up with the state support."

Among the state's 11 public universities, preliminary estimates show 17,000 students might be turned away in the fall.

State education group ENLACE Florida, or Engaging Latino Communities for Education, painted a gloomy picture in a report released this month called "Higher Education in Florida on the Brink." The report predicts that as many as 60,000 Florida students could get shut out of state universities during the next few years because of the enrollment caps and budget cuts.
While ENLACE specializes in Hispanic education issues, the report studies the potential effects on all college-bound students. The report warns there may not even be space for all community college graduates or Bright Futures scholarship recipients, two groups traditionally guaranteed spots in the state university system.

"Access to a higher education is at risk for all Florida students," the report states.

ENLACE used data from the Board of Governors that show university enrollment trends and projected high school graduation rates. Enrollment at state universities has increased an average of 3.2 percent a year in recent years, the report states. ENLACE came out with several scenarios of what may happen if demand continues to rise while the universities freeze or reduce enrollment.

If the university system froze enrollment at 300,000 spots, the report predicts, about 40,000 qualified students would be denied admission to state universities by 2012. The report also considers a 1.5 percent enrollment decline, a "worst-case scenario that is not beyond the realm of possibility," to estimate that 60,000 students could get shut out by 2012.

Universities have already started turning students away.

Florida Atlantic University is preparing to accept fewer freshman and transfers.

"We need to deliver to the commitments that we made to the students that are here," said Ken Jessell, FAU's vice president for financial affairs. "We would probably limit the size of our freshman class and perhaps limit transfer students who do not have an AA degree."

It's a similar situation at every other university, including the University of Florida.

"We have been told to freeze enrollments even as we received a record number of 28,000 applications for next fall's freshman class," UF President J. Bernard Machen said in a statement.

Last week in Tallahassee, Florida International University President Mitch Maidique said that FIU is turning away qualified students — including students with SAT scores above 1,100 and better than B averages.
After hearing this year is the most competitive for high school seniors, St. Edward's School senior Natalie Kornicks applied to 16 colleges. UF, where she has wanted to go since middle school, is her top choice, she said.

Natalie, 17, initially thought she had a pretty good shot at getting into the college — high test scores, a solid grade point average, extra-curricular activities and entire family on her father's side who are UF alumni.

"It would make sense I would get in, but who knows?" said Natalie, who wants to study journalism at UF. Natalie is editor of the St. Edward's yearbook.

So far, Natalie has been accepted to five of the 16, but she's not sure if she wants to go to them. Most of the other schools aren't sending acceptance letters until April, she said.

Jack Bourret, 18, a senior at Martin County High School, doesn't think he'll be impacted by the cuts and caps. He has already been accepted at the University of Central Florida and is waiting on other responses.

"I'm a pretty good student and I've gotten a lot of good credentials, so I'm not really worried," he said. "I would be really nervous if I hadn't even applied to college yet. It's a huge deal and it will determine what will happen for the rest of our lives."

And while Florida universities might not be taking in new students, community colleges still plan on keeping their doors open.

"Over the next few years we're going to see the largest increases in community college enrollment that we've seen for a while," said Ed Massey, Indian River Community College's president. "We have an open door policy and we're committed to the open door. Depending upon the budget cuts it's going to become very difficult for every student to get every course they may need."

Staff writer Colleen Wixon, The South Florida Sun-Sentinel and Associated Press contributed to this report.

These are the deadlines for first-time college freshmen to apply to Florida's 11 public universities. Most school Web sites note "consideration is on a space-available basis."

University of Florida: Preferred application period ended Nov. 1. Applications accepted through March 1.
Florida Atlantic University: Priority applications were due Feb. 15. Applications accepted through June 1.

University of Central Florida: Applications due May 1.

Florida International University: Preferred application period ended Dec. 1. Applications accepted through March 1.

Florida Gulf Coast University: Priority applications were due Feb. 15. Applications accepted through June 2.

Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University: Applications due May 15.

Florida State University: Not accepting any additional freshmen, according to its Web site.

New College of Florida: Applications due April 15.

University of North Florida: Applications due April 1.

University of South Florida: Applications due March 1.

University of West Florida: Applications due June 30.

**Office of the Chancellor**

**No Articles Today**

**Florida A&M University**

[Law enforcement prepares for school shooting exercise](02/16/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat)

The North Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force will conduct a full-scale exercise Monday to simulate law enforcement reaction to a school shooting.

"This exercise on Monday is really a test to see how well prepared we are, and we'll critique our response," said Tallahassee Police Chief Dennis Jones.

The exercise will take place at Florida A&M University and Cobb Middle School. Authorities want the public to know about this simulation ahead of time so they won't be alarmed by the increased law enforcement presence at the schools.
The Leon County Sheriff's Office helicopter, a SWAT team, large armored vehicles and sirens and lights will be part of the simulation, which will start about 9 a.m. and end about noon. Guns will be loaded with "simmunitions," which make sound but aren't real.

Some classrooms at the schools may be evacuated, but Jones said it should not have any interference with the school day.

Outdoor triage stations will be set up at the hospitals to receive and treat the wounded to evaluate their response to a mass casualty situation.

This exercise scenario was developed in response to the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech, the Nickel Mines Amish school in Pennsylvania and other schools across America.

Authorities say schools of any size are potential targets for such attacks, and school systems and emergency response agencies in every community must be trained and prepared to respond.

The North Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force is made up of law enforcement agencies from 13 counties in the region.

Phil Kiracofe, spokesman for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, said the U.S. Department of Homeland Security mandates that the task force conduct this exercise at set intervals.

"We don't just practice on the assumption we're going to have a terrorist attack," Kiracofe said. "The same response model we also use for hurricanes or other natural disasters."

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**Florida Atlantic University**

**All FAU classrooms will get locks**

02/16/2008 © Palm Beach Post

Florida Atlantic University will install locks on all classroom doors at every campus to guard against the type of school shootings that have rocked two campuses in less than a year.

School officials announced in October that they were testing how the locks worked in one building.
On Friday, a day after a gunman killed five students and then himself at Northern Illinois University, FAU's vice president for student affairs, Charles Brown, said that all classroom doors that don't already have locks - about 250 - will get them.

Installation at the Boca Raton campus is expected to be completed in April.

The idea for the locks followed the April massacre at Virginia Tech.

"We really studied what happened at Virginia Tech and how he carried out his crime," Brown said. "The idea is that if a person runs into a building with a weapon, you can lock the classrooms and keep the person out."

The locks will cost about $60,000. FAU also has installed a siren and audio alert system, which should be operating within 30 days; plugged student contact information into a new reverse 911 system; and taught students and faculty, at orientation and through a new pamphlet, how to identify depressed or potentially dangerous students.

"Safety is a two-way street," Brown said. "Students need to tell us if they see something suspicious or feel uncomfortable with someone."

Some professors said Friday that they doubt the preventive measures will stop a homicidal maniac, and nightmare scenarios poking holes in security were played out in campus conversations.

The Northern Illinois gunman carried one of his weapons, a shotgun, in a guitar case, not hidden under a heavy winter coat, which would stick out in South Florida.

He entered the classroom through a door to the right of a stage - not a main entrance.

"I'm not against classroom locks, but I just don't see it as a big solution," said Fred Hoffman, an FAU math professor. "If a person was able to get onto campus with machine guns, then I would trust that person could get into a classroom."

The locks, called "thumb latches," allow people to leave the classroom but keep a person from entering.

Adam Dobrin, an FAU criminology professor who teaches at the Treasure Coast campus, said his classroom has a lock but that students often prop open the door
for late arrivals. Locks are a "feel good" solution and Florida should consider changing laws that restrict weapons on campus, he said.

"I don't leave my house without a gun on my hip except when I come to school," said Dobrin, who has a concealed weapons permit. "These people pick the easiest targets - schools, colleges, churches."

Marsha Rose, an FAU sociology professor, believes gun control is a better answer. She's not thrilled with the door locks but concedes they are necessary.

"Universities encourage a flow of ideas, openness to alternatives and tolerance for even the intolerant," Rose said. "While I endorse wholeheartedly the creation of a safe environment, it saddens me to know that we must keep 'others' out."

After Virginia Tech, the state Board of Governors, which oversees 11 universities, requested $3.5 million to beef up campus security but was denied.

Board member Tico Perez, who leads a university safety committee, said the request may not be for money this year, but rather legislative change that could allow freer sharing of student records, or the ability to expel a student who doesn't follow a court-ordered mental health treatment plan.

"We have 300,000 students and their safety is our responsibility," said Perez, an Orlando attorney. "You can't get complacent. Every time something tragic like this happens, it reinforces the need to get things done."

PDF: Task force report on campus safety

Oceans Eyed as New Energy Source
02/16/2008 © Fox News

DANIA BEACH, Fla — Just 15 miles off Florida's coast, the world's most powerful sustained ocean current — the mighty Gulf Stream — rushes by at nearly 8.5 billion gallons per second. And it never stops.

To scientists, it represents a tantalizing possibility: a new, plentiful and uninterrupted source of clean energy.

Florida Atlantic University researchers say the current could someday be used to drive thousands of underwater turbines, produce as much energy as perhaps 10 nuclear plants and supply one-third of Florida's electricity. A small test turbine is expected to be installed within months.
"We can produce power 24/7," said Frederick Driscoll, director of the university's Center of Excellence in Ocean Energy Technology. Using a $5 million research grant from the state, the university is working to develop the technology in hopes that big energy and engineering companies will eventually build huge underwater arrays of turbines.

From Oregon to Maine, Europe to Australia and beyond, researchers are looking to the sea — currents, tides and waves — for its infinite energy. So far, there are no commercial-scale projects in the U.S. delivering electricity to the grid.

Because the technology is still taking shape, it is too soon to say how much it might cost. But researchers hope to make it as cost-effective as fossil fuels. While the initial investment may be higher, the currents that drive the machinery are free.

There are still many unknowns and risks. One fear is the "Cuisinart effect": The spinning underwater blades could chop up fish and other creatures.

Researchers said the underwater turbines would pose little risk to passing ships. The equipment would be moored to the ocean floor, with the tops of the blades spinning 30 to 40 feet below the surface, because that's where the Gulf Stream flows fastest. But standard navigation equipment on ocean vessels could easily guide them around the turbine fields if their hulls reached that deep, researchers said.

And unlike offshore wind turbines, which have run into opposition from environmentalists worried that the technology would spoil the ocean view, the machinery would be invisible from the surface, with only a few buoys marking the fields.

David White of the Ocean Conservancy said much of the technology is largely untested in the outdoors, so it is too soon to say what the environmental effects might be.

"We understand that there are environmental trade-offs, and we need to start looking to alternative energy and everything should be on the table," he said. "But what are the environmental consequences? We just don't know that yet."

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has issued 47 preliminary permits for ocean, wave and tidal energy projects, said spokeswoman Celeste Miller. Most such permits grant rights just to study an area's energy-producing potential, not to build anything.
The field has been dealt some setbacks. An ocean test last year ended in disaster when its $2 million buoy off Oregon's coast sank to the sea floor. Similarly, a small test project using turbines powered by tidal currents in New York City's East River ran into trouble last year after turbine blades broke.

The Gulf Stream is about 30 miles wide and shifts only slightly in its course, passing closer to Florida than to any other major land mass. "It's the best location in the world to harness ocean current power," Driscoll said.

Researchers on the West Coast, where the currents are not as powerful, are looking instead to waves to generate power.

Canada-based Finavera Renewables has received a FERC license to test a wave energy project in Washington state. It will eventually include four buoys in a bay and generate enough power for up to 700 homes. The 35-ton buoys rise above the water about 6 feet and extend some 60 feet down. Inside each buoy, a piston rises and falls with the waves.

The company hopes later to be the first in the U.S. to operate a commercial-scale "wave farm," situated off Northern California. The project with Pacific Gas and Electric calls for Finavera to produce enough electricity to power up to 600 homes by 2012. Finavera eventually wants to supply 30,000 households.

Roger Bedard of the Electric Power Research Institute said an analysis by his organization found that wave- and tide-generated energy could supply only about 6.5 percent of today's electricity needs.

Finavera spokesman Myke Clark acknowledged that wave energy is "definitely not the only answer" to the nation's power needs and is never going to be as cheap as coal. But it could be "part of the energy mix," and could be used to great advantage off the coasts of Third World countries, where entire towns have no connection to electrical grids, he said.

Nick Furman, executive director of the Oregon Dungeness Crab Commission, said he fears the wave technology could crowd out his industry, which last year brought in 50 million pounds of crab and contributed $150 million to the state's economy.

"We've got a limited amount of flat sandy bottom on the Oregon Coast where we can put out pots and where we can fish, and the wave energy folks are telling us they need the same flat, sandy bottom," Furman said.
"It's not the 10-buoy wave park that has the industry concerned. It's that if it's successful, then that park turns into a 200- or 400-buoy park and it just keeps growing."

Editorial: Yellow light on 'green'
02/18/2008 © Palm Beach Post

Gov. Crist has committed the state to developing "green" energy that doesn't harm the environment. Now, he must direct state agencies, especially the Department of Environmental Protection, to stop approving little-tested technologies without setting standards. Otherwise, even "green" energy could harm the environment.

And "green" proposals abound: For ethanol plants that use vast amounts of water and energy to make fuel from corn or yard clippings; for "plasma-arc" garbage-zappers that could release as much mercury as a coal plant; for underwater turbines that could harness the currents of the Gulf Stream but also might chop up marine life in a "Cuisinart effect." And in St. Lucie County, wind turbines on beaches the public paid to preserve.

With five ethanol plants on the books in Florida and plans to start producing fuel within 18 months, scientists are researching which plants are best for Florida to grow. Concerns about the amount of water these plants will use seem to have evaporated, but it's a crucial issue in Florida's repeating cycles of drought and floods. Approval of a Geoplasma garbage vaporizer plant in St. Lucie County depends on whether its mercury emissions will be higher than promised. Gov. Crist wants to give Florida Atlantic University $10 million more for its Gulf Stream power project - a fascinating idea, if fish soup isn't a by-product.

Last week, the state correctly backed off a hasty push to approve Florida Power & Light Co.'s request to build three, 40-story wind turbines on St. Lucie County public beaches. Even a planned April meeting is too soon to reconsider. FPL already plans six wind turbines on its own land. FPL has a booming wind business in other states, where turbines are inland, but little experience with coastal turbines. The utility does propose to remove the turbines if environmental problems arise - such as large numbers of birds being killed by the blades.

That backward offer illustrates what is wrong with the state's process. "Build it now, remove it if it harms the environment" isn't a smart plan. In California, projects must go through a full environmental review, and identify problems and ways to solve them in advance of approval. Even then, the state has had
problems. Above all, the process for approving these new technologies must invite public participation. The state set a bad example in the windmill case by first going along with FPL's attempt to fast-track the proposal. Going "green" has to be more than a slogan.

**Boca Raton: Helen Thomas to speak on Washington politics**  
02/16/2008 © Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

Helen Thomas, former United Press International White House bureau chief and renowned journalist, will speak at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, at the Carole and Barry Kay Auditorium in the University on the Florida Atlantic University campus, 777 Glades Road.

Thomas, who has covered every president since John F. Kennedy, will provide an in-depth analysis of what's happening in Washington, the war in Iraq and the status of women in politics.

Tickets are $25 online at www.fauevents.com or call the box office at 800-564-9539.

**State Department rebukes FAU for Indian teachers' 'poverty' wages**  
02/16/2008 © Palm Beach Post

PORT ST. LUCIE — The State Department has blasted Florida Atlantic University for raising the specter of "servitude" by recruiting experienced Indian teachers for public schools and paying them "poverty" wages while the college accepted money to administer the program.

Under an internship contract between FAU and the school district, the 16 teachers - all of whom have master's degrees and multiple years of experience - were to be paid as interns for the first half of the year and receive a regular teacher's salary the second half.

The school district paid the normal salary rate the first half of the year but gave the Indian teachers only $5,000 of that amount and sent the remainder to FAU to administer the program, said Susan Ranew, a St. Lucie schools human resources official.

It's unclear how much FAU earned under the pilot program, but a teacher with a master's degree and three years' experience would earn $38,700 a year, or $19,350
per semester, Ranew said. An Indian teacher with those credentials would have earned $5,000 last semester and FAU would have received the difference of $14,350, Ranew said.

If that number were representative of all 16 teachers, it means FAU could have earned $229,600 under the pilot program.

FAU President Frank Brogan said the money was used to hire mentors for each teacher, host an orientation session in India and help the teachers find housing and transportation.

"We've lost money in the program," Brogan said. "It has turned out to be incredibly expensive to administer because of the additional time and costs of getting people settled in a foreign country."

The State Department said there has been an "egregious misuse of the university's privileges" as a sponsor of the Exchange Visitor Program and said it places the department in a potential "state of notoriety and disrepute."

"To pay the master's level-educated teachers with three to five years' experience a wage at or below poverty level may be interpreted by some as a form of peonage or servitude imposed upon foreign nationals by a State Department-designated sponsor," Stanley Colvin of the department's Office of Exchange Designation and Coordination wrote FAU on Jan. 24.

Brogan said the Indian teachers were aware of the salary when they agreed to participate and are paid the same as U.S. teaching interns.

In a sharply worded letter sent to FAU last month, the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs chastised FAU for recruiting teachers under a short-term scholars program designed only to allow foreign students to study up to six months at FAU.

The mix-up resulted in the 16 Indian teachers being sent home from St. Lucie County public schools Feb. 8 while FAU officials and Florida members of Congress worked to extend their short-term visas until the end of the school year.

Although the State Department held little hope of that in a Jan. 24 letter to FAU general counsel David Kian, a State Department spokeswoman said Friday officials are working to protect the teachers caught in the middle.
"We're trying to make sure they're treated fairly," Darlene Kirk said. "It wasn't their fault."

Brogan on Friday acknowledged that an FAU employee mistakenly applied for teaching visas under the student program but denied treating the teachers as servants or profiting from it. The international pilot program was modeled after a successful one that has involved U.S. teaching interns since 2002.

The foreign-exchange program has proven so costly, Brogan said, FAU decided in October not to renew it for a second year.

"It's a great, innovative ideal to bring them over here," Brogan said. "There's no question the error in the visa assignment was ours, and it has caused a great deal of difficulty with these 16 fine people and their students. We're hoping to get word any moment that they'll get to stay the rest of the school year."

The 16 math, science and special education teachers are at six St. Lucie County schools and are being replaced with substitutes until their fate is decided. U.S. Rep. Tim Mahoney, D-Palm Beach Gardens, said Thursday he's been told there's a "high probability" they will be allowed to remain in the U.S. until the school year ends.

FAU update: University to host annual Transfer Student Expo on March 8
02/17/2008 © Stuart News

Florida Atlantic University will host the annual Transfer Student Expo, a university-wide open house event for students transferring from a community college or another university, on March 8 at the Treasure Coast, Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter campuses. Event registration on the Treasure Coast campus begins at 9 a.m.

Attendees may speak with representatives from FAU's degree programs, learn about the admissions process, how to transfer credits, explore financial aid opportunities and interact with students. Information will be available on many programs.

Admission applications will be accepted at the event from people who have an associate of arts degree or 60 college credits, a completed FAU admission application (downloadable from www.fau.edu), a $30 application fee (payable by
check or money order) and official college transcripts. The Treasure Coast campus is located at 500 N.W. California Blvd., St. Lucie West.

Register online at www.fau.edu/admissions/TransferExpo08.php.

For more information, call Willie Finklin, assistant director of admissions, at (772) 873-3308.

Florida Gulf Coast University

FGCU postpones degree programs
02/16/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press

TALLAHASSEE — Florida Gulf Coast University is delaying three new academic programs it planned to introduce this fall, pulling back the reigns as Florida's Legislature eyes more budget cuts.

FGCU hoped to roll out a bachelor’s program in journalism, a master’s in mathematics and a master's program in environmental science for the fall 2008 semester. Each program was in its developmental stages but was forecast for board approval this spring.

Delaying journalism will save $290,000; mathematics, $117,000; and environmental studies, $90,000, according to FGCU Chief of Staff Susan Evans.

FGCU President Wilson Bradshaw, who joined other college presidents Thursday in Tallahassee, has decided not to tamper with plans to add $2 million worth of new faculty. The new professors would teach psychology, sociology, communications, composition, microbiology, cell physiology, chemistry, mathematics, art history, economics, accounting, physical therapy and criminal justice. FGCU also will add a faculty position in the library, along with endowed professorships in landscape design, environmental education and music.

House Speaker Marco Rubio got an earful from presidents Thursday, as they warned of layoffs, lower graduation rates and shrinking programs if more funding is not forthcoming.

“This is historic this year,” said Modesto Maidique, president of Florida International University. “We view the system as facing the biggest threat it has in its history.”
Lower state revenues have led colleges and universities to tighten their budgets and the Board of Governors voted to recently raise full-time student tuition by 8 percent. University administrators already cut their budgets in the fall in a $65 million reduction to the state’s 11 public colleges and universities.

Board of Governors Chancellor Mark Rosenberg suggested if universities received about $200 million more a year, in a combination of raised tuition and greater funding from the state, “We can get back in the game. Our fear is we’re losing our ability to graduate students ... Other states are rapidly moving ahead of us and that hurts our ability to be competitive.”

Gov. Charlie Crist reiterated his opposition to the tuition increases, saying his $70 billion budget proposal calls for increased state university system spending without it.

Students already face enough hardship during the economic downturn, he said.

Florida State University President T.K. Wetherell said the state has to find a “more adequate funding formula.”

Rubio, a Miami Republican, told the group despite budgetary challenges, higher education remains important.

All 11 presidents of Florida’s public colleges and universities attended the meeting.

Wetherell, a former Florida House speaker himself, suggested giving each college or university board of trustees more authority over their school.

“Let us have the flexibility to run the universities as businesses,” he said.

Florida A&M University President James Ammons said the school is graduating more black students with bachelor’s degrees than any other in the country.

“We’re serving a need that clearly, one that should be met by the state university system of Florida,” Ammons said.

Some presidents are considering reducing enrollment.

“We believe we should be a state priority of the highest importance,” said Maidique, who said if higher education doesn’t receive more funding, some universities could receive lower academic rankings and lose faculty.
FGCU Improves Campus Security
02/16/2008 © Ft. Myers-WINK (CBS)

ESTERO, Fla-- Florida Gulf Coast University is going high tech to improve campus security.

University Police just installed several security cameras throughout the campus, as well as put up digital message boards to notify students of where to evacuate during an emergency.

It was all paid for through a $150,000 grant.

The university is also working with the Board of Governors to come up with a statewide university notification system.

Cape needs its own university campus
02/18/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press

Should Cape Coral have its own branch of Florida Gulf Coast University?

You bet it should.

The day has long passed when the answer to such questions was, "Well, there's already one in Fort Myers."

Cape Coral is bigger than Fort Myers; in fact, at 170,000-plus full-time residents it's the most populous city between Miami and Tampa. Some other measures of the Cape's robustness are listed in the accompanying editorial.

The Cape is going to grow, but as a study presented to the City Council on Monday makes clear, if the city is going to grow in a healthy, well-rounded fashion, it has to create more opportunities for higher education, as well as more job opportunities that require higher education. Commuting to Fort Myers for jobs and learning is not an acceptable future for the Cape.

The study says the percentage of Cape residents with a four-year college degree is lower than average for a city this size. That goes hand-in-hand with the lack of economic development. Progress in both areas must be simultaneous, too.
City officials are continuing to press FGCU for a branch at the city academic village site on Kismet parkway.

It may have to start small, but a branch campus is needed for the city's future.

**Use FGCU inaugural for needy**  
02/18/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press

Good for Florida Gulf Coast University President Wilson Bradshaw for putting the money that would have been spent on party favors at his formal inauguration next month into a scholarship fund instead.

But why stop there? As reported in The News-Press on Monday, some other colleges have decided to cancel presidential inaugurations altogether and divert the money saved elsewhere.

In the FGCU case that would save $75,000, or five times as much as the party favors cost. Each $15,000 could cover in-state tuition for a needy student. That's five students right there.

We would love to see the resulting fund named for Bradshaw, as was done with the president of the University of Albany in New York in 2005, where the donation kicked off a highly successful scholarship drive.

Lee County is a great place to raise money for good causes, as witnessed by the perennial success of United Way and of FGCU itself in fundraising. People would love to jump on a bandwagon propelled by such an offer.

Are we being killjoys? After all, the inauguration of a new university president, like the inauguration of a president of the United States, is a chance for the new leader to inspire his campus and his community by setting goals for an institution that should be central to our identity. As ritual, inaugurals are valuable celebrations; we all feed off pomp and ceremony.

But these are trying times. The real estate bust and the impending budget crunches for universities and other public institutions - as well as tuition hikes - require a new kind of inspiration. Austerity can be inspiring, too, when times are tight. Bradshaw, who relied on need-based financial aid and jobs at the post office and at a shoe store to get through college, obviously has a keen interest in seeing other kids receive such assistance.
The inaugural set for March 28 will last for two hours. A scholarship fund could last forever.

**FGCU provost candidates down to 12**
02/16/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press

FGCU’s search for a provost is down to 12 semifinalists, who emerged today as the best prospects from a field of 46 applicants.

The semifinalists include two vice chancellors who happen to work at the same Colorado university, one former provost, one professor, one associate provost, five college deans and two vice presidents.

Florida Gulf Coast University President Wilson Bradshaw, on his second day on the job in November, told then-Provost Bonnie Yegidis that he wanted a strong second-in-command capable of running the operation when he was off-campus. One issue that remains unresolved is whether the new hire would have the title of provost or senior executive vice president.

Just like in the presidential search last summer, only one internal candidate applied — Ken Millar, dean of the college of professional studies. The 12-member provost search committee critiqued his resume, with some members expressing doubt about his upper-level administration experience. It was the same unanswered question when Joe Shepard, FGCU’s vice president for administrative services, was eliminated from the candidate pool during the presidential search in August.

The list contains 10 men and two women, and three semifinalists are minorities, according to assistant director of human resources Susan Baurer.

Semifinalists will have initial interviews March 1-2. Committee members then will select five finalists whose campus interviews run from March 10-25.

Yegidis accepted Bradshaw’s request that she take a faculty position at FGCU, although she was given a yearlong sabbatical. However, Yegidis has applied for the dean of the college of liberal arts and sciences at University of Florida in Gainesville.

**FGCU students provide boost to Estero counterparts**
02/16/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press
To graduate from Estero High School, students must have a 2.0 grade point average, 24 credits and pass each portion of the FCAT.

But for some students, those requirements are just out of reach. And a group of Florida Gulf Coast University students is trying to give them a much-needed boost.

Wayne Robinson's Foundations of Civic Engagement students are working with students "on the bubble" to encourage them and help them reach the requirements for graduation.

"It's a meshing together," said Robinson, a minister at All Faiths Unitarian Congregation.

Foundations of Civic Engagement is a required course for all arts and science students and it requires 10 hours of community involvement.

The students work together in groups of five and are matched with Estero High students.

The program isn't designed to have the college students tutor the high-schoolers, but mentor and encourage them.

"A lot of them just need to know somebody cares about them," said Elmer Stewart, honors physics and chemistry teacher at Estero High School.

But Robinson said the learning experience is as much for FGCU students as it is for the high-schoolers.

"College students are an elite group," he said. "I'm hoping they will encounter the issues these kids have."

One of the issues the college students have encountered is students who don't show up for mentoring sessions.

"It's an issue in this group," Robinson said. "Part of the learning experience is dealing with the fact that some of these kids are not going to show up."

Stewart said he's been going after Estero High students to make sure they participate in the mentoring.
"We don't want any of them to fall through the cracks," he said. "We just can't drop the ball with these kids."

FGCU junior Brandon Quarterman said he hasn't had trouble meeting with his student. He said they e-mail regularly and meet outside school hours.

"We'll just talk about life," he said.

This is the second year Robinson's Civic Engagement class has worked with Estero High students. Last year, a college student called his high-schooler every morning to make sure he got up and went to class.

Last year, more than 50 percent of Estero High students in the mentoring program made it to graduation.

Quarterman said he feels privileged to have a chance to work with another student.

"I wasn't sure what I was getting myself into," he said. "I'm doing my small part helping the community."

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**Florida International University**

**Revenue Loss Hits State Med Schools**
02/18/2008 © Lakeland Ledger

The state leaders who embraced new multimillion-dollar public medical schools in Orlando and Miami insisted their creations would not diminish Florida's investment in existing medical schools.

But two years later, Florida's public university system is losing tens of millions of dollars because of a statewide revenue shortage. And the state's oldest public medical school is in trouble with national accreditors because its state funding has dropped as enrollment climbed - leaving its lecture halls and student clinical facilities overcrowded.

"Our accreditation's in jeopardy," said University of Florida medical school dean Dr. Bruce Kone. "It's a real crisis, and we need some tangible evidence that the state is going to increase its support."
So as the legislative session nears, UF and University of South Florida officials are lobbying hard to make sure their decades-old medical schools don't suffer so the newer ones can flourish.

They want about $16 million more each year in state money $9 million for UF and $7.4 million for USF to put themselves on more equal footing with the medical programs at Florida State University, the University of Central Florida and Florida International University.

Moreover, UF and USF administrators want the state to develop a policy that ensures all public medical students enjoy the same state investment in their education, no matter which school they attend.

"We're not asking them to take away money from other medical schools," Kone said. "We're asking them to grow the pie and give us our fair share."

Tough budget year

Kone and UF president Bernie Machen met with state House Speaker Marco Rubio last month to talk about their concerns. Kone also met with the governor's chief of staff and Senate President-designate Jeff Atwater. Rep. Joe Pickens of Palatka visited the medical school last month.

Meanwhile, USF president Judy Genshaft has repeatedly declared medical school funding one of her priorities for the legislative session that begins March 4.

But now is not the best time to be asking lawmakers for more money. Florida's budget is bleeding red, with an expected $2 billion deficit for the 2008-09 year.

"Everything is going to be tough this year, and that's a capital EVERYTHING," Pickens said. "I certainly agree that UF is deserving of some additional funding, and I think USF is probably in the same boat. But nothing is going to change the fact that this is a difficult budget year."

And there appears to be no turning back on the fledgling medical schools at UCF and FIU. Administrators are hiring faculty and planning ambitious curricula. Last week they got the green light to recruit their first student classes.

UCF and FIU split $10 million in startup money from the state last year and are asking for an additional $18 million this year, for a total of $28 million a request endorsed by Gov. Charlie Crist.
The schools are expected to cost $500 million over the next decade. Supporters say the investment is worth it because the schools will produce much-needed doctors in a growing state with many elderly residents and families.

"We've been given some very strong, positive support," said Steve Sauls, vice president for government relations at FIU. "Am I concerned about the funding for universities this coming year? Yes. But I believe it's all about economic development, and this medical school for us is a major economic development initiative."

Critics argue the best solution to a doctor shortage would have been to increase the number of residency slots, since many doctors settle down where they complete their residencies not necessarily where they graduate from medical school.

Just 14 percent of Florida's doctors graduated from a Florida medical school.

Uneven spending

Meanwhile, the state is still spending millions to build up the medical school it approved seven years ago amid much controversy and political maneuvering.

Since 2000, the state has spent $200 million for the college of medicine at FSU, an initiative so contentious it triggered the dissolution of the state Board of Regents, the university system's former governing board.

FSU's $43.9 million in state dollars this year translates to about $120,000 for each of its 357 students. Enrollment will be capped at 480 students by 2010.

In contrast, UF gets less than $30,000 per student from the state, even though it costs the medical school $73,000 a year to educate each aspiring doctor. The average cost nationally of educating a medical student is $58,267.

USF gets slightly more than UF per student, though administrators could not provide an exact figure.

For the rest of their operating costs, the two schools rely on student tuition and revenues from faculty medical practices.

The newer programs get most of their annual operating dollars from the state.

UF has increased its enrollment by 25 percent to 540 students in the past five years, yet state money dropped by 40 percent during that period, Kone said.
National accreditors sent UF a letter this summer warning that if state money continues to decline, "it is likely to compromise the quality" of the medical school. They said lecture halls are too crowded and the library resources "challenged."

UF and USF officials say they just want a common funding formula that levels the playing field for all of the schools and their students.

"Both USF and UF have received reductions in general revenue in the past few years," said Patricia Haynie, associate vice president for USF Health. "The concern we have is that, with the development of additional medical schools, there might be additional reductions. The fact is there are now several schools, and each needs a certain amount of base state funding to satisfy accreditors."

Kone said his medical school's dependence on revenue-generating medical practices puts too much pressure on faculty who should be focusing on teaching and research. UF has hired more nontenure-track medical school faculty - practicing doctors, not professors - who can teach students while bringing in revenue to support the medical school's operations.

"Our research is suffering," Machen said.

The number of UF clinical faculty jumped from about 330 to 611; tenured and tenure-track faculty dropped from 632 to 565.

"Clinical faculty are not engaged in academia and research," Kone said. "We're fast going from a flagship medical school to a trade school."

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**Florida State University**

**Florida State president T.K. Wetherell: Budget cuts worse ordeal that cheating scandal**
02/17/2008 © Orlando Sentinel

T.K. Wetherell left Daytona Beach in his parents' 1959 Ford station wagon, bound for Florida State University in September 1963. He brought with him a typewriter, a stack of blank paper, a box full of his things and his mind full of dreams for his football days ahead and those beyond the field.

"He was extremely quiet," said Bobby Bowden, who was the Seminoles' receivers coach when Wetherell arrived on campus. "And I think he's quiet now except
when he has to make a move, he does. He always had that smile on his face. And always was alert. His eyes were bright."

Wetherell grew into a leader during games on Saturday afternoons, and during a political career that peaked with a 12-year stint in the Florida House of Representatives, and during his presidency at Tallahassee Community College.

To the chagrin of some and the elation of others, he won the same position at FSU in 2003 and, for the past 10 months, has guided the university through an academic fraud case that has affected 61 athletes and brought mockery to this campus.

FSU on Wednesday submitted its internal report to the NCAA. The university placed its athletic department on two years probation and cut scholarships, and the NCAA could add more punishment.

But Wetherell, 62, said this hasn't been the most difficult ordeal of his time here.

"The budget cuts were the worst," he said, speaking about the financial wounds suffered by all state institutions. Last month, FSU's Board of Trustees approved slashing the university's $1.8 billion operating budget. "I mean, I don't like to see this [academic fraud]. It's gotten probably more publicity than the $28 million that we lost. And it affects 50, 60 kids.

"But that budget cut affects 40,000 of them here and then another whatever it is -- thousands -- everywhere else. So it's been more public than a lot of things but it hasn't been the most difficult to manage."

In regards to the academic misconduct case, at least, Wetherell would like people to believe he has acted with the decisiveness and swiftness he once used to return kickoffs for the Seminoles. He ran one back 100 yards against Kentucky in '65, and Bowden said, "he's one of the old-timers that could play today. I think that's pretty true."

Down-home approach

His game is different now. Shoulder pads gave way to three-piece suits, cleats to polished shoes, talk of X's and O's to the art of politics.

University presidents carry a stereotype that doesn't fit Wetherell. They're supposed to be stuffy and scholarly. They're not supposed to say "ain't" or use
salty language or profess addiction to chocolate cherry blizzards at Dairy Queen -- a vice Wetherell tries to hide from his wife, Virginia.

"He comes across as kind of the good old boy and I think slips up on people that don't realize that behind that facade he puts on is a skilled administrator and negotiator," said Sam Bell, who has known Wetherell for about 45 years and preceded him as Florida Speaker of the House.

Jim Smith, the chairman of FSU's Board of Trustees, said Wetherell "disarms people with that laid-back, aw-shucks attitude."

"He's more intellectual than his persona," Smith said.

Wetherell, one of the country's highest paid university presidents with a package worth in excess of $700,000 annually, can be as uncompromising as cold steel on issues on which he believes he's right. Early in FSU's internal investigation into the academic fraud, he informed former athletic director Dave Hart that his contract wouldn't be renewed. Hart resigned on Dec. 31 in a move Hart insisted had nothing to do with the investigation.

During the fall, three of Hart's senior administrators also resigned -- none, Hart has maintained, because of the investigation. And last month, Wetherell informed Mark Meleney, then the university's director of Athletic Academic Support Services (AASS), that his contract wouldn't be renewed.

"In all instances [his] leadership was strong and decisive on this issue," FSU Faculty Senate President Jayne Standley wrote in an e-mail. She didn't respond to additional interview requests.

"He saw that the NCAA was immediately informed," Standley wrote. "That there was a very thorough investigation, and that the Faculty Senate Steering Committee, administrators, and the Athletic Committee were totally involved and informed.

"... In every respect, this incident was handled with strong and ethical leadership from [President] Wetherell."

Critics question role

Not everyone has agreed. A portion of the faculty at Florida State has at times questioned his qualifications in e-mails to trustees, citing lack of background in
higher education. Others have criticized his penchant for casting stones at Hart, the former athletic director.

After the Sentinel published a story on Feb. 4 in which Wetherell strongly criticized the athletic department in general and athletic academic support in particular, people on various Internet message boards vented about the president's frankness and, at times, lack of tact. They were quick, also, to point out that much of the abuse occurred in a department that didn't directly report to the athletic director.

His critics have grown fiercer in the anonymous forums, where some wonder how a university president can be so occupied with athletics.

Wetherell, for example, also has had a say in football scheduling and the hiring of assistant football coaches.

Jim Cobbe, an FSU professor and former member of the Board of Trustees who is teaching in Vietnam, wrote in an e-mail that "T.K. is probably at the extreme end of what is considered normal and appropriate [involvement for a president] -- but FSU's alumni/booster constituencies probably also are near the extreme in their interest in athletics."

The line that draws Wetherell to athletics is obvious, given his past. Inside his box at Doak Campbell Stadium hangs a picture of the infamous Lane Fenner catch that was disallowed -- a play that should have given FSU a victory against Florida in 1966. And inside the men's room in the president's box, the urinals are Gator blue and orange.

But his emphasis on athletics, Wetherell said, goes deeper because it "brings an institution and unprecedented amount of public relations."

"So whether you like it or not," Wetherell said, "in today's society and particularly in the South, athletics has a disproportionate [influence on the] perception of an institution. That will offend some people . . . but that is a fact."

Sports 'on the front burner'

Wetherell appears focused on leaving his mark on the athletic department at FSU, which former Florida Coach Steve Spurrier once dubbed "Free Shoes University" after a scandal surfaced involving football players receiving discounted merchandise at Foot Locker.
The past eight months have been relentless. He notified one athletic director that his contract wouldn't be renewed and hired another, Utah State's Randy Spetman. He helped develop a football coaching succession plan, in which FSU announced that offensive coordinator Jimbo Fisher would become coach when Bowden retires.

Wetherell oversaw the investigation into academic fraud that now is in the NCAA's hands.

"I think he's had to deal with athletics more than presidents normally would but that has been what's been on the front burner here the last six months," said Smith, the chairman of the trustees. "I think he's looking forward to things kind of cooling off."

These days, after several months of looking into the transgressions of FSU athletes, a tutor and AASS Learning Specialist Brenda Monk, the president can finally focus on the future.

From his office on the second floor of Westcott Hall, Wetherell can look outside a window and into the only world he's ever wanted to be a part of -- one he never really left when he entered it 45 years ago and one that needs guidance now more than ever.

**Our position: FSU was right to punish itself for scandal, but it never should have occurred**

02/16/2008 © Orlando Sentinel

At first blush, it's easy to congratulate Florida State University for acting quickly following a widespread academic cheating scandal involving athletes. A self-imposed probation of two years and a loss of scholarships will hurt. But it's nothing to brag about, either.

Where was the oversight and diligence from FSU on the front end? This wasn't about a star player getting a couple of extra bucks under the table from a booster. This involved 61 athletes cheating through an online musical course. Several athletes told university officials that "it was common knowledge" they would receive improper help.

It's a serious matter that may also include additional sanctions from the NCAA, which should not let up on its investigation.
Two lay foundation for FSU's black faculty members  
02/18/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

The year is 1968. Two new instructors have been hired at Florida State University. But these two are different than those who were employed at that time.

The new additions to the campus of about 16,000 students were the first black instructors employed by the university. Two people who, alumni, students and administrators say, helped provide the backbone of a legacy for today's 82 black faculty members at FSU.

Those two are Earl Gordon and Tonya Harris and both still live in Tallahassee. Harris was hired as a faculty member for FSU’s School of Nursing. Gordon was hired as a sociology instructor who was also in charge of the Horizons Unlimited Program -- a precursor to the Upward Bound program.

Christian groups lose SGA funding  
02/17/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Gay and lesbian students at Florida State University have won a small victory in their attempt to get non-discrimination policies of the institution changed.

Student Senator Jeremy Lightner asked the Student Government Association to hold money for any organization on campus that has not changed its anti-discrimination policies to include gays and lesbians.

His request was unanimously approved. Two groups ended up having hundreds of dollars held -- Every Nation Campus Ministry and Christian Legal Society.

"Despite the action that has been taken by the Student Senate at FSU to take away all of our funding, we at Every Nation Campus Ministries are here to serve the university and help meet the spiritual needs of the university community," director Ross Middleton said.

Middleton said the organization doesn't plan a legal challenge. His reaction was shared by those at the Christian Legal Society. Casey Maddox, litigator and counselor with the society's national office, said, "We are still hopeful student government will make the right decision."
The right decision to Maddox is to remove the hold on the dollars. He said the group did not know about Wednesday's vote and was not given the opportunity to respond.

"CLS' concern is with spiritual belief not (with) someone's sexual orientation," Maddox said.

Zachary Dryden, executive director of the PRIDE Student Union, said Every Nation Campus Ministry and Christian Legal Society requested and were granted an exemption in changing its policies. FSU's Office of Student Affairs granted that exemption.

The exemption, however, goes against the requests of the Student Government Association, Dryden said.

CLS student David Osborne believes student government is sending a mixed message.

"It's unconstitutional," Osborne, a second-year law student, said. "Essentially what they are saying is you can be a Christian group but you can't be a Christian group."

Osborne believes the student government's decision is, "kind of akin to telling a student group of Democrats that they must have a Republican as president. It destroys one of the tenants of the organization.

Cheated
02/16/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

It's a familiar story: A handful of misbehavers in a military unit, marching band or athletic team are responsible for punishment that affects the whole group.

It seems unfair because those who played by the rules suffer as well. The reality is that, in any organization, it's rare that the behavior of one person has no ripple effect that either elevates others or drags them below the surface.

Just as an individual's sterling achievements reflect well on the team or corporation he or she is with, one person's unethical or illegal acts hurt the larger group in a host of ways.

That's certainly the case involving academic misconduct among about 60 Florida State University student-athletes. The university on Thursday announced a series
of self-imposed penalties as a result of its investigation, but FSU still awaits an NCAA probe and word on whether additional sanctions are in store.

But even before a two-year probation began Wednesday, FSU’s football team — and fans — already had been punished. As a result of the academic scandal, which first surfaced publicly last fall, 22 football players were suspended from playing in the Music City Bowl in December.

That was just the first game of a four-game penalty, and not only the team suffered as a result of the appropriate punishment, but also the fans, who were robbed of the privilege of seeing the Seminoles perform at full strength.

Unfair as it is that student-athletes and fans who played no role in the misconduct are now dealing with the consequences of the acts of team members and the tutors who misguided them, FSU’s effort to honestly, thoroughly investigate what happened and to mete out strong penalties is commendable.

Anything less would send a harmful message: that cheating, a problem that afflicts educational institutions, corporate America and society in general, is so common that it only deserves a mild slap on the wrist.

No, it doesn't — and FSU’s response is not only strategically smart, coming before the NCAA’s own investigation, but institutionally insightful.

There remains at FSU and among universities with major sports programs that generate millions of dollars in revenue a level of disconnect between academics and athletics. Like other universities, FSU has attempted to bridge the gap in various ways over the years, with some success.

Had the university failed to take a strong stand in response to this scandal, however, it only would have reinforced the perception that student-athletes, who already are privileged in many ways, are held to a different standard even when it comes to cheating. Had that happened, FSU’s academic integrity would have been the first casualty.

It's possible, maybe even likely, that FSU will suffer in future athletic competitions as a result.

Unfortunately, that's what happens when a small group messes it up for everyone else.

What Local Students Say About Campus Security
Following the tragedies at Virginia Tech and NIU, many students at local campuses still feel the proper measures are in place in case of an emergency. One FSU student said, "I thought about that and I don't feel scared on this campus. I feel secure."

Drew Goldfarb, an FSU Student, explained the University's text alert. He said, "Because of Virginia Tech last year, they were going to test the text messaging system. By a certain time of the day they basically act as if something had happened and send a test alert and I got it on my cell phone. They basically said this is a test, that this is the FSU alert system if there was an emergency there would be instructions on what to do."

But that only helps if students can get the message. Goldfarb also mentioned that they are not always allowed to have their cell phones in certain classes. He explains one teacher's policy, "The teacher doesn't like us to have any electronics on. No laptops, no cell phones, no nothing."

Joshua Rosen, another FSU Student said, "Florida State University does do a very good job securing the campus. Again, it's hard to stop someone who is determined to go on a rampage."

Campus authorities say they are prepared to respond. Chief David Perry with FSU says they are trying to have 100% of the students in the text alert system. He said, "We have almost a 90 percent enrollment rate because students either tell us during the registration process, they want to receive a text message or they don't and that's their choice, but it is invaluable."

Chief Calvin Ross with FAMU said, "It's very important that agencies have the adequate plans and prepare through constant evaluation of their ability to respond."

Both police chiefs also mentioned, you never know when random attacks could happen, so they urge people to pay attention to warning signs and your surroundings.
UCF's technology incubator provides a good growth environment for startups
02/18/2008 © Orlando Sentinel

If Orlando is ever going to become one of the nation's top biomedical hubs, it will need more people like Nilabh Chaudhary.

"Neil" Chaudhary, with a strong background in both business and molecular biology, may live in Cincinnati, but his heart and soul are in Orlando. He is co-founder and chief executive officer of an Orlando startup company, NeoCytex Biopharma Inc., and he needs all the help he can get.

"I'm a scientist. I know business, but not the nitty-gritty," said Chaudhary (pronounced CHOW-dree).

His 2-year-old company, co-founded with University of Central Florida molecular biologist Kiminobu Sugaya, is doing stem-cell research to develop ways to regenerate brain cells, which could offer significant help -- perhaps even a cure -- to people with Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

Such breakthroughs are many years in the future, Chaudhary knows. For his company, "it's extremely high-risk and high-reward. We need support without having to lay out dollars for infrastructure, so we can put our money toward the critical science needed to move the project forward."

He's getting that support from UCF's technology incubator, part of the university's office of research and commercialization. NeoCytex is one of 46 current incubator clients, seven of which are in the life-sciences field.

The incubator's staff of seven UCF employees and two dozen or so community volunteers "hold your hand in the beginning," Chaudhary said. "They let you go when you're past that stage, then again when you need it."

The UCF technology incubator is doing a lot of hand-holding these days, with life-science companies its fastest-growing sector. Founded in 1999, the incubator didn't encounter its first life-science client until late 2001, when Harvard medical-school grad Philip Chen moved to Orlando and launched a medical-diagnostic startup.

Now among the incubator's most successful "graduate" companies, the Cognoscenti Health Institute has about 100 employees in Florida and is a unit of
Sonic Healthcare USA. Cognoscenti had two employees when it was launched shortly before 9-11, and seven employees by the end of that year.

"I came straight out of academia," Chen recalled of the help he received as an incubator client. "I knew the technical part of running a bioscience company, but getting payroll, human resources, marketing -- they were instrumental in helping us make the right connections."

The incubator provides advice and consulting through its connections to UCF and the Central Florida business community. It also offers flexible office space at a subsidized price.

Steve Grimsley is chief technology officer for Welnia LLC, a wellness-software company that was in business for two years before joining the UCF incubator in 2005. The move gave Welnia, which specializes in chronic-disease management, sorely needed office space, access to advice, and even the ability to run a pilot program through a UCF wellness class.

But the biggest plus, Grimsley said, could be summed up in one word: networking. "You get access to people easily; you're connected to a network. When you're small, you don't [usually] have access to services."

Biomedical companies are a special challenge for an incubator, said Tom O'Neal, who oversees the program as UCF’s associate vice president for research.

"A good software company can be in and out of here in 18 months," O'Neal said. "You can spend seven or eight years on a life-science company."

It took Cognoscenti just under six years to graduate, though it was profitable almost from the start. "To get to sustained profitability is the key," Chen said, "and for life-science companies, it takes longer."

But not always. Bill Christy, chief executive officer of AOI Medical Inc., spent two years in the UCF incubator before graduating last summer -- when his company netted $16.8 million in an initial public offering.

Christy, who ran four previous startups before founding AOI in June 2005, didn't need the hand-holding that Chen and Chaudhary did. But he did need the infrastructure and networking.

AOI Medical, which developed an innovative surgical treatment for elderly people with collapsed vertebrae, needed the ability to increase its office space as well as access to UCF laboratory space.
It also turned out that another UCF incubator client, Mydea Technologies, was a perfect match for AOI, which was turning out three-dimensional computer solutions that Mydea could quickly turn into physical models.

The incubator, Christy said, was "a vehicle to grow efficiently and economically."

AOI and Cognoscenti are among 27 companies that have graduated from the UCF incubator. All 27 are still in business, said O'Neal, who also noted that three-quarters of all UCF incubator clients are still in operation.

The typical technology-incubator client starts with a promising idea, he explained, but turning that idea into a money-making product or service is a bigger leap than many realize. "The research is the hard part, but that little bit at the end is hard, too, if you don't know how to do it."

The UCF technology incubator runs on an annual $1.6 million budget, about $700,000 of which comes from rent that client companies pay for the space they use in Central Florida Research Park, which is next door to the university in east Orange County.

UCF kicks in about $650,000 a year. Other major contributors include Orange County and the city of Orlando, which kick in $100,000 each.

"We have limited resources," O'Neal said in explaining how startups are selected for incubator status. "We're not looking for tire-kickers, or the faculty member looking for prestige who wants to go back to his friends and say, 'I've got a company.'"

But while trying to be selective, O'Neal acknowledged that the UCF incubator is still lacking in one of the most critical areas for biomedical startups: specialized laboratory facilities, widely referred to as "wet-lab" space.

There's some wet-lab space at UCF, but not nearly enough to satisfy the needs of life-science startups.

Neil Chaudhary, the NeoCytex executive, called the incubator's lack of wet-lab space a major problem.

"We've been hindered by not having ready access to labs," he said. "There's a lot of investor interest in us. They know we need to be generating more data, and we need more space. The faster we can have it, the faster we can grow."
John Fremstad, vice president of technology-industry development with the Metro Orlando Economic Development Commission, estimates that there is roughly 15,000 square feet of wet-lab space in all of Central Florida, equivalent to "one floor of a high-rise," he said. If Central Florida is to become a world-class biomedical cluster "in 25 instead of 50 years, we need a foot on the accelerator."

The heavy foot may belong to Rasesh Thakkar, the Tavistock Group executive leading the charge to establish a "medical city" in his company's Lake Nona development in southeast Orlando.

Thakkar announced plans Friday to build a 100,000-square-foot wet-lab facility in Lake Nona -- with a mid-2010 completion date -- near the UCF College of Medicine and the Burnham Institute for Medical Research.

"The saying is, 'If you build it, they will come.' If they don't, I will have serious egg on my face," said Thakkar, calling the planned facility both "a $50 million bet" and "a turbo-boost mechanism for the [biomedical] cluster."

Thakkar expects the bet to pay off and promises that, as soon as half of the wet-lab facility's space is leased, he will start work on a second one.

"My goal is that, when a [biomedical] company says it would like to locate in Central Florida or Orlando or Florida, I want to be able to tell them, 'You can move in tomorrow.'"

Such talk is music to the ears of Neil Chaudhary, though wet-lab space is just part of the equation for a biomedical startup such as NeoCytex. He figures a few more years and about $8 million in investments will get his company through phase 1 clinical trials and pique the interest of a big pharmaceutical company -- with a resulting payoff in excess of $100 million.

"When we get that deal, we don't need the incubator any more," Chaudhary said.

"The incubator," he explained, "helps young companies live through the valley of death -- when they can't raise money because the project is too risky, but they still need world-class support -- because without it, you're nothing."

Energy finds place in Florida sun
02/18/2008 © Lakeland Ledger
Tire tracks lead up a grassy hill to a metal box that tells the tale of Florida's first foray into commercialized solar energy.

The box tracks energy output from the 1,200 solar panels atop an old landfill off Bee Ridge Road in eastern Sarasota County.

Flat as a pancake, like a smooth dance floor half the size of a football field, the solar array at Rothenbach Park powered about 20 homes on a sunny morning last month.

The array, connected to the commercial grid late last year, was operating only at half capacity. Despite its impressive size, the grid is peanuts in the world of energy production. Sarasota County alone has nearly 220,000 homes; Florida more than 8.5 million.

Yet Rothenbach Park is the largest commercial solar site in Florida.

That could soon change, according to Florida Power & Light. Under pressure from state leaders, the company plans to use Sarasota's test project to launch solar construction statewide.

At the same time, Gov. Charlie Crist wants to triple the amount of state grant money available to help home and business owners install solar panels on their rooftops.

Virtually ignored for years, solar and other renewable energies are gaining momentum in the Sunshine State. But experts say Florida remains far from weaning itself off conventional fossil fuels, including high-priced oil.

While Crist wants to increase the solar rebate program to $10 million next year, that is just a fraction of California's $300 million annual commitment. In California, 11 percent of the energy comes from renewable sources, compared with Florida's 2 percent.

According to a November 2007 report by the advocacy group Environment America, Florida's clean energy policies rank below 21 other states.

Taking a cue from California's Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Crist has declared clean energy a priority and substantial changes are in the works, precipitating a battle among legislators, environmental activists, energy executives and the governor over Florida's energy future.

"Energy is hot right now," said state Sen. Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton, chairman
of the Senate's public utilities committee. "And everybody has a different idea about what to do."

Crist and top legislators in both chambers are divided over issues, such as whether to create strict renewable energy quotas for electric companies. Quotas would greatly increase clean energy production but also electric bills.

They also differ on restricting fossil fuels by capping carbon emissions.

The governor has created an "energy action team" to research the issues.

Legislators are retaining their own consultants. Energy companies are gearing up for a fight while national environmental groups open Florida offices to weigh in.

Major policy changes are expected within 12 months.

"This is a critical year for the future of energy in Florida," said Jerry Karnas, who sits on the governor's action team and recently opened an office in Sarasota for the national advocacy group Environmental Defense to lobby on behalf of a state carbon cap. "We're building momentum and consensus for some real game-changing policies."

Sarasota businessman Pat Benz earns a living manufacturing material for contact lenses but alternative energy is a passion.

The owner of Benz Research and Development decided last year to install solar panels on his business and stumbled across the state rebate program begun by former Gov. Jeb Bush in 2006.

Benz installed $200,000 worth of solar panels on his house and the state paid half the cost. Federal tax breaks knocked off another $30,000.

The solar panels save Benz about $7,280 annually on his electric bill, meaning they will pay for themselves in 10 years.

Yet Benz is one of only 4,452 Floridians who received a solar rebate in the past two years. The money ran out quickly.

California's rebate program serves 100,000 people annually. Benz thinks it takes a California-like commitment to make real reductions in energy consumption and pollution.

"It's a numbers game," Benz said. "If you subsidize it and make it more affordable
then you're manufacturing more solar panels and the price comes down."

Expanding solar rebates brings up the prickly subject of tax increases.

California uses a special energy tax, or surcharge, amounting to about $16 annually for every residential electric utility customer.

Florida has no dedicated fund for renewable energy, and must squeeze money from a state budget with a $2 billion deficit.

Solar expert Philip Fairey, deputy director of the Florida Solar Energy Center at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, has proposed a $1 monthly surcharge that would generate $200 million annually.

Fairey describes the surcharge as one of the "big three" renewable energy policies Florida needs to be a national leader. The others: a renewable energy quota for electric companies and a cap on carbon emissions.

"What they all boil down to is money and better regulations," Fairey said.

Although an electricity surcharge has not received much attention in a state battered by rising property taxes and insurance premiums, Fairey is optimistic about the potential for major policy changes.

Crist has made renewable energy a priority - he wants to double spending to $100 million despite the budget deficit - but the Legislature could be a tough sell.

Facing resistance, Crist has tried to sidestep critics by using the Public Service Commission, the state's utility regulator.

Workshops are under way on a "renewable portfolio standard," or RPS. So far, 27 states have adopted a mandatory RPS, which forces utilities to generate a percentage of power - Crist wants 20 percent by 2020 - from renewable sources.

But legislators say they ultimately must approve the plan, and some are leery of mandates on electric companies.

"The governor has made some semi-mandates and the legality of that is still in the air," said Rep. Paige Kreegel, R-Punta Gorda, who chairs the House energy committee. "I believe in the free market and that incentives work better than mandates."

Fairey and others argue that electric companies need strict quotas or they will not
"Ten years ago, getting Florida Power & Light to announce a solar plant like the one in Sarasota would have been impossible because there was no political will," Fairey said. "They are responding to the threat of regulation."

FPL spokeswoman Sharron Bennett noted that in September the company committed to building 300 megawatts of solar production, enough to power thousands of homes.

She said FPL opposes a specific mandate for solar production, noting that solar is one of the more expensive forms of renewable energy.

The utility wants to experiment with a variety of alternatives. FPL is building the state's first big wind turbines in St. Lucie County, expanding biofuel production and purchasing clean energy from private producers. The company began a "green pricing" program that allows customers to pay an extra $9.75 per month to purchase energy from renewable sources.

So far, 34,000 people have signed up for the program, including 4,856 customers in Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties.

Kreegel and others think such voluntary programs work better than strict mandates.

Yet, besides the Sarasota project, FPL has no firm plans for other solar arrays. Fairey thinks FPL will move slowly without regulation.

John Burges, a Sarasota-based investor with Pretium LLC who has financed energy projects worldwide, agrees that Florida needs stronger regulations.

But, as a financier, Burges also knows that solar can be prohibitively expensive.

With commercial electric generation, Burges thinks Florida should follow European countries, which offer huge tax breaks and a pricing structure that allows electric companies to recoup costs.

"What's happening in Florida with solar is nothing right now; it's irrelevant," Burges said. "To get serious, the state would have to make some major changes to the taxing and pricing structures."

Such policies can be unpopular, Sen. Bennett said.
"Nobody wants to go and say, 'We're raising rates,'" Bennett said. "But the reality is that if you want clean energy that's likely."

**Want to be a nurse? Florida needs you**  
02/17/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

It's no secret that Florida, like most states, suffers from a severe shortage of nurses. What are we doing about it? The Florida Nursing Center, created by the Legislature in 2001 and housed at the University of Central Florida, last year did the first statewide survey of nursing needs. Details appeared last month in the "2007 Nurse Employer Survey," which helps quantify a shortage that has reached almost mythic proportions. Says the report: "The shortage will be fueled by an aging population demanding more health care as well as an increased number of retirements from the aging nurse workforce."

The key recommendations:

Emphasize retaining: "Increasing the number of new nurses alone will not satisfy the health care system's need for experienced nurses with specialized skills," the report said.

Pay attention to ways to retain older and younger nurses. "Although individual nurse employers are experimenting with improvements to the work environment, a global approach backed by scientific evidence is underdeveloped."

Increase production of new nurses strategically. "A strategic, data-driven approach to education program expansion must be taken to maximize the use of limited resources needed to educate new nurses."

Increase faculty salaries to be competitive with salaries offered in practice settings.

Look more carefully at nursing needs in nonhospital settings, especially skilled nursing facilities and home health agencies. In Clearwater, BayCare Health System chairman Steve Mason says his alliance of nonprofit area hospitals is working with the University of South Florida and St. Petersburg College to spur the training of nurses. The coming wave of aging baby boomers will only further challenge the nursing sector, Mason says: "We are trying everything we can to build the work force we need."
In light of last week's Northern Illinois University shooting in which six people died, including the gunman, college students across the nation have begun to question whether they are safe on their own campuses.

In an e-mail sent to all University of Florida students Friday, UF President Bernie Machen updated the UF community on all the safety changes the school has made since the Virginia Tech shootings last April.

"While we are shocked," he said, "we also find ourselves once again asking the question, 'Are we prepared?'"

UF spokesman Steve Orlando said the school's text messaging system is its first line of defense in notifying students when an emergency takes place.

Orlando said that the text messaging trial last month reached approximately 40,000 students, which he said he believes is the largest number of people involved in such a test at a university.

Orlando said the school is going to test the system again in the summer, in hopes of reaching all 50,000 who are signed up to receive messages from the school.

He said last month's test yielded a few glitches that the school has been working to fix.

The school's home page also will be updated with announcements in the case of an emergency, and UF has the ability to send an e-mail to all students, faculty and staff with one click, Orlando said.

He said that the text messaging system is the most efficient method because the home page can take time to load, and an e-mail may take 20 to 25 minutes to reach all its recipients.

Orlando advises students who have suspicions about a fellow student to report that student to UF's Office of Student Affairs. He said that the office will then contact the suspicious student to check in and make sure everything is OK.
After a shooting takes place on another campus, Orlando said that UF reviews all its procedures to make sure the school has everything in place if a similar situation were to arise at UF. "To prevent something like this is completely impossible," Orlando said.

He said that the main thing is that everyone needs to be aware of his or her surroundings.

"You can never let your guard down," he said.

President Machen said that he couldn't disagree more with those who say open college campuses should be a thing of the past.

"We must continue to strike that delicate balance between safety and openness," Machen said in his e-mail. "I believe we all agree that this is the very bedrock of our society, one well worth preserving.

"Even if we could place gates at the entrances of campus and send students through metal detectors, I would argue that this would only create an atmosphere of fear and closed thinking," he continued.

Machen informed students that the UF Police Department trains regularly for various emergency situations, including a scenario that involves a gunman on campus.

He also said that in December, UFPD became the first university law enforcement agency in the country to complete the "Triple Crown," or accreditation by three three different accrediting bodies.

Orlando said that students should feel safe on campus because UF has one of the best police departments in the country.

UF political science sophomore Brian Goodrich said he believes college campuses are extremely susceptible to attack because of their layout.

"Especially in some of the more isolated buildings at UF, it's a frightening possibility," he said. "Shootings can happen anywhere, but schools are very vulnerable."

Goodrich said that he feels safe walking on campus because it's hard to imagine a school shooting happening at a place like UF.
"I think these school shootings are tragic," Goodrich said. "Students and faculty should be able to attend school without fear of an attack."

**Despite recession signs, jobs available for college graduates**

02/17/2008 © Chicago Tribune

It's never encouraging to graduate from college when the economy shows signs of a recession. But experts say that despite the current slowdown, this spring's graduates can find jobs.

In its annual survey, the Collegiate Employment Research Institute at Michigan State University found that while employers are cautious, they plan to make 7 percent more positions available than last year for graduates with a bachelor's degree.

One reason has nothing to do with the economy, but with Baby Boomers.

"Some companies have 60 percent of their workforce getting ready to retire," especially in industries such as transportation, education and accounting, said Philip Gardner, director of the institute.

Norfolk Southern Corp., a railway company based in Norfolk, Va., for example, has doubled the number of graduates it aims to hire, to about 150 annually. More than half of the railway's current managers are eligible to retire in the next five years.

"If there's a prolonged recession we may have to adjust our hiring needs, but there's still opportunities regardless of what's going on in the economy," said Rudy Husband, a company representative.

Hiring also is expected to stay robust at firms with significant overseas business.

Still, landing a job this year won't necessarily be easy, especially if companies in industries hardest hit by the economic downturn -- financial services, housing and retail, for example -- have to scale back hiring considerably.

Small and medium-size firms, which are feeling the pressure of rising costs and tighter lending standards, also may put recruitment on hold, according to the Michigan State institute report.
Here are tips from college career advisers on how to find the opportunities in today's job market.

Act now

If you haven't started your job search yet, get going. Employers who set recruiting goals for the year are likely to fill those positions in the next few months, and then reassess their employment needs as the economy's prognosis becomes clearer.

"Normally, I might suggest that a student take the summer to travel or do volunteer work," said Carl Martellino, director of career development at Pomona College in Claremont, Calif. "This particular time, it may be better to forgo that and push up the timeline to getting a job."

Use campus resources

As you begin your job search, make sure to take full advantage of your school's career center and other tools.

These resources, which can include resume writing and job databases, are free (or at least covered by your tuition) and often give you a leg up compared with other job seekers.

At the University of Illinois, for example, students can search for jobs on Always Illinois, a new networking site made up of the school's alumni.

"With recruiting on campus having been plentiful, students haven't needed to tap alumni for job advice," said Lois Meerdink, assistant dean of business career services at the university. "Now it's important to use a multifaceted approach."

Refine your search

The career center also can help you adjust your search to the current economy.

If you're determined to land a job in, say, retail, career advisers can help brainstorm alternative positions that might offer a similar experience.

One option, Martellino said, is to work for a temp agency that staffs a specific company.

"You can go in as a temp and prove yourself that way," he said. "And you'll have access to the internal job listings."
In addition, if you are competing for a reduced number of jobs, it's all the more important to put together a polished resume and pitch.

Stay optimistic

It's easy to let news about layoffs or cutbacks affect your search.

"Students would rather not take the chance of failing," said Tom Halasz, associate director of the career resource center at the University of Florida. "They would rather continue on in graduate school rather than go into a down job market."

But if you approach your search as though you have no other option than to get a job, you likely will succeed, Halasz said.

"Persistence and enthusiasm are qualities that employers look for in new employees," Meerdink said.

Is agriculture a dying industry?
02/17/2008 © Gainesville Sun

Rumors of agriculture's demise may have been greatly exaggerated, but there's cause for concern about the industry's overall bill of health, according to experts.

A firestorm erupted earlier this month when Bernie Machen, president of the University of Florida, was quoted as saying agriculture was a "dying industry" unworthy of state investments. Machen has denied making the remarks, which were published Feb. 5 in a monthly agriculture newspaper. Even so, the ensuing controversy raises real questions about whether agriculture will play as pivotal a role in the 21st century as it has in the past.

Agriculture is still a multi-billion-dollar industry in Florida, but there are some signs that point to decline. The number of farms in the state dropped to 40,000 in 2007, continuing an annual decline that began in 2003, when there were 44,000, according to state figures. Farmers, who are an average age of 57, are increasingly tempted to sell valuable land to developers rather than take their chances in the often volatile world of agriculture, experts say.

While the amount of farm land may be declining, improvements in growing methods have enabled farmers to do more with less land, according to John
VanSickle, an agricultural economist at UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

But VanSickle concedes the agriculture industry faces real challenges. Times have been particularly tough on Florida’s citrus growers, who are plagued by the wrath of hurricanes and emerging plant diseases like citrus canker and citrus greening, he said.

"I wouldn't say that it's healthy, but I wouldn't say its (problems are) more extreme than we've seen in the past," VanSickle said. "There are cycles in agriculture as there are in the housing industry."

State statistics paint a troubling picture for citrus producers, who by several measures are losing ground. Between 2003 and 2007, citrus production fell from 292 million boxes to 162 million boxes - a 45 percent drop. Even though production has declined, however, Florida remains the dominant player. The total production value of oranges, for instance, was $1.2 billion in 2006, which accounted for 67 percent of the U.S. market, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"At our lowest peak, we're still producing two-thirds of the oranges in this country," said Terence McElroy, press secretary for the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

While Florida may lead the nation in orange production, some analysts are concerned the U.S. agriculture industry is losing market share to foreign competitors who employ cheap labor. The world’s leading producer of oranges in 2005 was Brazil, which more than doubled Florida’s production with more than 18 million metric tons of oranges, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported.

Dennis Olson, senior policy analyst for the Institute on Agriculture and Trade Policy, traces the agriculture industry’s problems back to the early 1990s and the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The agreement, and subsequent efforts to deregulate, removed congressionally set price minimums that had prevented the value of agricultural products from plummeting, Olson said. Additionally, the agreement ended a policy that had restricted farmers from developing on all available land. Absent such restrictions, farmers overproduced and drove product prices below the cost of production, Olson said.

"I think (agriculture) is dying because of these failed policies," he said.
Sales figures, however, only tell part of the story, according to UF economists.

A just released UF study placed the agriculture industry's total economic impact in Florida at $59 billion - when including the money spent by manufacturers that support the industry through equipment and supplies.

The study itself indicates IFAS' continual efforts to prove its worth in the state.

The institute, which has roots going back to the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, was designed to conduct research that would help improve agriculture across the state. With extension offices now spread across all 67 Florida counties, IFAS has an annual budget of $300.4 million and employs more than 2,300 people who are supported by state money and grants.

Despite its long history and sprawling presence in the state, IFAS is undervalued, according to some faculty in the institute. And while Machen contends he didn't forecast the doom of agriculture in a public statement, there are a number of faculty who now say they see Machen as out of touch with the land-grant mission that created UF and IFAS.

Actually, Machen has publicly backed major initiatives that rely on the institute's expertise. He was a major supporter of building a new center to fight infectious diseases that plague plants as well as humans. The institute also has a real presence in the university's alternative energy research, which Machen has called a key priority.

But when it comes to the inventions UF is pushing into the marketplace, UF has focused mostly of late on biomedical research and technology.

"Is ag bio, other than energy, right now a very big part of the investment portfolio? No, it's really not," said David Day, director of technology licensing at UF.

The technology research that's helping UF to secure big grants and contracts is also, in part, what's helping to propel the university upward in national rankings.

Machen has made moving UF into the top 10 public universities the over-arching goal of his presidency, and the trustees who approve his bonuses largely grade Machen on his ability to improve numbers that matter to U.S. News & World Report.
While reaching for the top 10 may sound good to trustees, the intense focus on rankings is exactly what has some IFAS faculty on edge. A faculty member, who asked not to be identified for fear of retribution, called Machen's focus troubling.

"What we read in the paper is that Machen wants to move UF into the top 10 Ivy League type of situation, and one doesn't get into the Ivy League by increasing yields of wheat per acre or solving citrus greening," the faculty member said. "(But) what is the use of being in the Ivy League if the ivy has some disease that pathology can't cure because it's been liquidated?"

Faculty may be increasingly less inclined to publicly criticize Machen, and IFAS leaders aren't talking either.

Jimmy Cheek, the senior vice president of IFAS, and his second-in-command, Joe Joyce, both refused to comment for this story. Additionally, Joyce sent a "reminder" e-mail Wednesday to IFAS leaders telling them to make sure faculty don't discuss the budget cuts with reporters. Asked about the apparent gag order, a UF public affairs official denied UF had a policy to silence faculty on the issue.

"We have no policy prohibiting faculty and staff from speaking to the media," Janine Sikes, UF's director of communications integration, wrote in an e-mail. "I have confidence that IFAS is trying to ensure that the most factual information available is given to the media."

**Letter of the week**  
02/17/2008 © Gainesville Sun

A mandate to reduce the University of Florida budget will force cuts of up to $50 million by July 1 of this year. Plans for disproportionate reductions in IFAS have been reported.

IFAS is the research and development center for Florida's agricultural and natural resources industries which have $97.8 billion annual impact.

We are a group of graduate students representing many countries and backgrounds who hope that our careers will support the continued availability of an inexpensive, safe and nutritious food supply to the public.

Only 2 percent of the public is directly involved in the agricultural activities that feed the entire country and much of the world. But today's agriculturalists are
not just farmers in overalls; we are leaders in technological advancements and research.

In 2004, Florida had 44,000 farms with total agriculture sales of $6.8 billion and an estimated impact of $60 billion. In 2006, farms increased to 45,000 and the impact of agriculture on the state increased to $90 billion. Agriculture is a thriving industry in Florida.

Programs within IFAS make it possible for producers to meet demand for commodities in a changing world. The University of Florida is a land grant institution; a beneficiary of The Hatch Act (1887) which continues to provide funds for state institutions to research, teach and offer community extension specifically for agriculture.

While we support the obvious need for fiscal responsibility and understand the budget pressure within the University of Florida we object to any budget plan that will unfairly target IFAS and the agricultural industries that are intrinsic to the foundation of the University and the Gator Nation.

Jamie Foster,
The Animal Sciences,
Graduate Student Association,
Gainesville

Community colleges face impact of growing pains from higher admissions
02/16/2008 © Gainesville Sun

The odds are against most for being admitted to the University of Florida and several other state universities this fall because of state budget cuts, large numbers of applicants and space limitations.

The odds are nearly 100 percent that anyone can still be admitted to one of Florida's 28 community colleges, but there's a catch.

As the economy gets worse and as state universities turn away applicants, the odds get slimmer of being able to get every course required or needed when it's needed at a community college.

No matter where someone is accepted, free help will soon be available to help them qualify for financial aid.
At the University of Florida, 28,000 people applied for fall admission and 6,600 have been accepted. Statewide, more than 60,000 qualified students could be turned away from their first choice university by 2012, according to a recent study.

In contrast, Florida's community college system has an open-door policy. Portia L. Taylor, Santa Fe Community College's vice president of student affairs, said open door means, "there is no required GPA for admissions and there is no cap on the number of students admitted. We use your placement test scores to determine the level of coursework at which you'll start."

While an open-door policy makes higher education accessible to all, it also creates a demand bottleneck when the state or national economy is faltering.

"Our enrollment is counter-cyclical to the economy," said Ed Massey, president of Indian River Community College and chairman of the Florida Association of Community Colleges' Policy and Advocacy Committee. "As unemployment goes up, our enrollments go up. Enrollment increased 7.71 percent systemwide this year, which means we have 20,538 more full-time equivalent students. When the economy improves, we expect to see our enrollment decline."

During economic downturns, community colleges are on the front lines of helping the unemployed prepare for new careers, Massey said.

To deal with the recent increase in demand, Florida's community colleges have been expanding class sizes, hiring more adjunct faculty and expanding their online courses.

"We are expecting to see another increase this year, and we may not be able to accommodate all those coming our way right away, so education may take longer," Massey said. "Students may have to wait a semester or two to be admitted to the classes they need."

One problem is space. Many community colleges have few or no lecture halls because they are focused on educating students in relatively small classes.

Another problem is finding money to pay for faculty. Massey said tuition covers 23 percent to 24 percent of costs and adding more students adds more costs for faculty salaries at a time when the state is cutting budgets everywhere.

SFCC President Jackson Sasser, who also serves as chairman of the Florida Community College System's Council of Presidents, said that although
community colleges want to maintain their open admissions posture, the current situation "could create an effective cap, a de facto cap, on enrollment. There is a limit, which is real, on the number of students we can accommodate with the faculty and staff and space we have."

Massey and Sasser said the community college presidents are taking steps like freezing hiring, using adjunct (part-time) instead of full-time faculty, and lobbying the state Legislature for budgets that will make it possible to meet demand for education.

"When the Council of Presidents met in Tallahassee on Feb. 11, we voted once again on our commitment to remain accessible and to meet the state's training needs to help bring back the economy," Sasser said.

For those who are admitted anywhere, the big question may be how to pay for tuition and fees and books. While there is still money available, students have to know how to qualify for it.

Most financial aid, including all federal grants and loans, require a student submit a FAFSA, a Free Application for Federal Student Aid. Financial aid experts acknowledge that the form can be confusing and a single mistake could jeopardize financial aid.

To reduce the chance of error, financial aid officers nationwide are holding College Goal Sunday on Feb. 24.

The event provides anyone planning to attend college to get free, one-on-one help filling out a FAFSA no matter where they plan to enroll. In Gainesville, the free help is available on SFCC's Northwest Campus.

Those planning to attend will need to do some homework before they arrive.

The financial aid staff from SFCC and UF who will be helping at College Goal Sunday said it is best to have your tax return completed so that participants can bring a copy, as well as their Social Security number, driver's license and untaxed income records like child support income.

A final item that students will need is a personal identification number for the FAFSA. Go online to www.PIN.ed.gov. and get your number before College Goal Sunday so that you will be able to file an application during the event.

College Goal Sunday will take place on the southwest side of campus in Building N, Room 216.
Officials said those who bring everything they need should be able to complete the application in 30 to 45 minutes. The free help will be available from 2 to 5 p.m.

**UF has mass text messaging service in the event of an emergency**

02/16/2008 © Gainesville Sun

E-mail messages and Web site updates were used to alert Illinois students of a shooter on campus Thursday, but a mass text messaging service, like the one now used at the University of Florida, does not appear to have been in place, according to security experts.

Continue to 2nd paragraph Daniel Carter, senior vice president of a nonprofit group called Security on Campus, said a preliminary review of Northern Illinois University's emergency warning protocol doesn't indicate NIU had a system in place to alert students via text message on their cell phones. The university did, however, have other important alert mechanisms including sirens, Web site updates and e-mail alerts, Carter said.

"The most important thing was that they had a multi-channel response protocol," he said.

As of Friday morning, the death toll at NIU was at six; the lone gunman had opened fire on a classroom full of students, killing five and then himself.

In the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings last year, which led to emergency protocol reforms on many college campuses, UF has worked to expand participation in its emergency text messaging service. Students are required to give their cell phone numbers so they can be contacted in the event of an emergency, but faculty and staff have the option of not participating.

In a recent test of the system, 86 percent of the 41,383 people who have signed up for the system successfully received text alerts, according to UF officials. Those who didn't may have provided incorrect contact numbers or are not signed up for text messaging services with their cell phone carriers, UF officials said.

In most cases, UF students received the trial text message within 40 minutes. For 5,736 of the students contacted, however, the process took 50 minutes or more. Steve Orlando, spokesman for UF, said the university is working to speed up the
"We think we've worked all the bugs out, so it should take between 20 and 30 minutes tops," he said.

Students, faculty and staff who want to update their contact information for the alert system can do so at my.ufl.edu.

In many cases, students at NIU were contacting each other about the shootings before the university, according to news reports.

Christian Crum, an NIU senior quoted by the Associated Press, said he got a text message from a fellow student but not from the university.

Crum said he got the e-mail message by 4:11 p.m., more than an hour after the shooting.

"The e-mail wouldn't have been that helpful," he said.

One of the methods NIU officials used to alert students was through an alarm system. UF does not have sirens, but the university does have vehicles equipped with loudspeakers that could be used in the event of an emergency like a shooting, Orlando said.

UF ranks 4th in licensing revenue
02/16/2008 © Gainesville Sun

The University of Florida didn't bring home a national championship trophy in football last season, but UF held its own in 2007 against other universities when it comes to revenue from trademark licensing royalties.

Between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, gross sales of licensed products brought $1,998,020 into UF's coffers, according to Debbie Gay, licensing manager for the University Athletic Association. In the previous quarter, gross licensing revenue added up to $1,690,148.

That placed UF fourth in the nation, behind the University of Texas, University of Michigan and Notre Dame. The universities are ranked according to the royalties they report by the Collegiate Licensing Company, which released the latest rankings Friday.
"I'm very pleased to see those dollars going up, despite the fact that we didn't have a championship," Gay said.

Success in a sports program will translate into sales for a while afterward, she said, and UF's fourth-place spot probably reflects an increase in its national prominence.

Florida State ranked 14th, the University of Miami was 21st and athletic upstart University of South Florida, whose football team surprised many rivals last season, came in at No. 47.

Video game maker EA Sports was the No. 1 non-apparel licensee and Nike USA - maker of UF's sideline gear - was the No. 1 apparel licensee.

Gay points out that the royalties from the sales of collegiate merchandise benefit both academic and athletic programs at UF.

The earnings are split equally between the University Athletic Association, to be used at the discretion of Athletic Director Jeremy Foley, and UF's Tigert Hall, with UF President Machen determining how they will be used.

**St. Lucie research park aims to be hub of new technology industry**:
TCPalm.com
02/17/2008 © Jupiter Courier

ST. LUCIE COUNTY — The Treasure Coast Research, Education and Development Park may sit on mostly empty land now, but it some day could be the future of economic growth in the county.

The 1,600-acre park sits on either side of Florida's Turnpike just south of Orange Avenue and is currently home to researchers with the University of Florida and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. About 250 to 270 acres of the park remain undeveloped and hopefully will attract companies specializing in renewable energy and medical, biological and other types of scientific research.

County commissioners recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., where they pressed for federal funding to pay for roads, wastewater and utilities at the site. State lawmakers will consider this session whether to pay for shifting agricultural operations on the site and creating a new business incubator there.
County officials are hopeful biotech companies such as Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies, which already have settled in St. Lucie County, will lead to more of the same.

"Obviously, there's been a tremendous investment in biotech in the area," said County Commissioner Doug Coward. "We have a tremendous window of opportunity to capitalize on spin-off activity."

Dick Kennedy, executive director of the Treasure Coast Research, Education and Development Authority that manages the park, said seeds of the venture were planted about 2 1/2 years ago. Officials now are in the process of creating a master plan for the area. Once the plan is ready, possibly by the end of March, the authority can begin actively recruiting businesses.

Among the desired businesses for the park are pharmaceutical, solar energy and nano science research, and robotics and diagnostic labs. Listed as "unacceptable industries" on the park's Web site are heavy manufacturing, gas stations, hotels and auto repair shops — although the park might welcome lunch restaurants, coffee shops and other businesses that could help support the new industries.

The plan is to focus on the first 35 acres and develop the park in little bits at a time, Kennedy said. The land is co-owned by the St. Lucie County Board of Education, the county and the University of Florida, and there are about 35 scientists currently working there.

Sixty acres are set aside for the school district to eventually build a K-12 school focusing on science education at the park, though no set date is set for the school to open, Kennedy said.

Grants are also being looked at to help move the project forward, but the federal and state money requests are all "essential," he said.

County Administrator Doug Anderson said he specifically wants to see more "green technology" companies come in and has talked with Florida Power & Light Co. about trying to bring a solar plant to the area.

"The county has recognized the need to bring in diversified jobs to our communities," he said. "Citrus and cattle have been declining over the years. The county felt we needed to have a broader and more diverse job base."

Coward said they had positive feedback from federal lawmakers, but that they were also blunt in saying how difficult it is to get money to the local level.
"It's troubling times. There's not a lot of money available for local projects, no matter how well intended they might be," Coward said.

STATE AND FEDERAL MONEY

The Treasure Coast Research, Education and Development Authority is seeking the following:

$7.4 million from the state to move agricultural field operations to the west side of Florida's Turnpike to allow for future business development.

$4 million from the state to build an incubator building to attract fledgling companies on a short-term basis until they can be spun out on their own.

$2.9 million from the federal government for infrastructure, such as roads, wastewater and utilities, to support new businesses.

'The Most Critical Need We Face'
02/16/2008 © Lakeland Ledger

When President John F. Kennedy announced that America intended to put a man on the moon, Florida leaders realized the state was ill-prepared for either the challenges or the opportunities the space race would bring.

As the 1960s began, Florida only had three state universities, with a fourth about to open its doors.

"By far the most critical need that we face in this coming biennium is the need to make sufficient provisions for the higher education of the young people in Florida," Gov. Ferris Bryant challenged the Legislature in 1963.

The result of his challenge was a major expansion of the State University System, and Florida's emergence as a modern state. Without that commitment, Bryant insisted years later, "There was no way they could handle the mass of people that was coming up. It was like a tidal wave."

It would be absurd to argue that higher education is any less important to the state's economic destiny today than it was nearly half a century ago. But history is repeating itself. Today, as in Bryant's day, higher-education capacity arguably remains "the most critical need we face." And the "tidal wave" Bryant anticipated has arrived with a vengeance.
As drafters of the ENLACE Florida report warned this week, as many as 40,000 qualified students stand to be denied admission over the next four years if the state university system freezes its enrollment at 300,000. And faced with budget cuts of $147 million this year and $171 million next year, university officials have no option but to do exactly that.

For the past decade, the policy has simply been to continually expand enrollments at the 11 universities in the face of shrinking per-student funding. That's a prescription for educational mediocrity that is no longer sustainable.

With the University of Florida looking at the prospects of another $47 million in budget cuts this year, officials will have no choice but to accept fewer students. Of 28,000 applications received this year, just 6,600 were admitted.

Ferris Bryant was a leader of vision and resolve who looked into the future and anticipated the epic changes that were coming. We would be hard pressed to identify anyone possessed of similar vision in high office in Florida today.

His successor, Gov. Charlie Crist, seems to believe Florida's future can be secured on low taxes, even lower tuition, more gambling revenues and not much else. If he has given any thought at all to the long-term implications of an increasingly overcrowded, underfunded higher-education system, he has shown no outward sign of concern.

"In no area have we done so badly" as in the area of access to quality higher education, Bryant said in 1963. Sadly, that assessment is just as true today as it was then.

Paul Dosal, executive director of ENLACE Florida, told the St. Petersburg Times this week:

"The problems in higher education here are so complicated that they're not likely to be solved in a regular legislative session. So we felt like the best recommendation was to say, 'Listen, guys, sit down and figure this out.' We just feel like we're either in crisis or on the brink of a serious one, and something needs to be done."

The time for leadership is now, Gov. Crist. Will you rise to the challenge, as Ferris Bryant did before you?

Fateful day for UF applicants
02/16/2008 © Sarasota Herald-Tribune
SARASOTA — Waiting for a college acceptance tends to be a nerve-racking experience. For University of Florida hopefuls, this year was worse than ever.

For the first time, the university arranged for a single notification date for the majority of its 27,000-plus freshman class applicants -- less than half of whom would get in.

That led thousands of high school seniors to log onto the Internet at 5 p.m. Friday to see whether they were headed to Gainesville -- or joining the biggest rejection list in the history of the state's flagship university. So many applicants were online that it took some an hour to get through.

"This is driving me crazy!" said Riverview High School's Marissa Martinelli, on several occasions, as she waited for the Web site to free up.

The drama surrounding admittance to UF exemplifies the challenge facing almost all of Florida's state universities: a record number of applicants vying for a shrinking number of openings.

The state university system is expected to shrink by as many as 17,000 students next school year unless the Legislature provides a significant increase in funding, which many see as unlikely because of the state's economic downturn.

The University of Florida received about 1,000 more applications this year than last. Only 37 percent were admitted as of Friday night, the highest rejection rate ever by a Florida university.

For Marissa and her family, the wait to find out whether she was admitted to her first choice school seemed excruciating.

She spent the day at the beach, trying not to think about it.

Her grade-point average seemed high enough. At 4.7, it was well above last year's freshman average of 4.1. Her SAT score, however, was below 1200 -- lower than the average for those accepted to UF last year.

"They've prolonged this long enough," said Paul Martinelli, Marissa's father, as the two walked into the family computer room.

"If they don't take her, I don't know what it is they want," he said.
Martinelli, who owns a cabinet business, never went to college. If he were his
daughter, he would want to go to the University of Florida, too.

"I fell in love with the campus," he said. "We all did."

Marissa's best friend was waiting to hear about her own application to UF.

The two discussed whether to go online and get the results together, but decided
against it.

"We're so close that if one of us didn't get in we would have felt really bad,"
Marissa said.

She signed online and clicked on the link. Nothing happened. She tried again.
She tried four more times as the computer flashed a message saying the
connection had timed out.

Click, click, click, click.

"There must be too many people online," she said. "This is not working."

She began tapping her foot against the desk.

Tap. tap. tap.

She pushed her long brown hair away from her face again and again.

Her best friend sent her a text message. Her best friend got in.

"Why can't I find out?" she said to her dad. "It's killing me!"

She tried again. Her father got out his laptop. Maybe, he said, it was the
computer.

"Of course I'm the one here waiting," she said. "This really just makes it worse."

"How many people applied anyway?" her dad asked.

Wrong question.

"I don't know," she groans.

Her mother is out of town with her little sister for a cheerleading tournament.
Marissa cracks the knuckles on her right hand.

Crack. Crack.

"This is really stressing me out," she said.

Crack.

Her dad tries the Web site at least five times on the laptop.

"It's going!" he finally shouts, putting the computer in her lap.

She types in her user name, Mmartinelli7, and password.

She clasps her hands and waits.

"Oh my god yes!" She jumps up and hugs her dad. "I'm so happy!"

She prints out the acceptance letter.

"Welcome to the Gator Nation," she reads aloud before spinning around in the chair. "I like the sound of that."

She gets on the phone. There are many calls to make.

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**University of North Florida**

*Safety Upgrades in Place at UNF*

02/16/2008 © Jacksonville-WJXT (CBS)

JACKSONVILLE, FL -- Based on lessons learned at Virginia Tech, phone messages, websites, and loudspeakers will all be put to use if the University of North Florida faces an on-campus emergency.

In an interview with First Coast News on Friday, UNF Police Chief Mark Foxworth outlined the changes and improvements the university has made in the wake of last year's shootings at Virginia Tech.

Police can:
- activate a PA system in campus buildings
- replace the main campus phone operator at (904) 620-1000 with an emergency message
- send update e-mails by the thousands
- put the website unf911.org online with information
- pull out massive roadside message boards to let drivers know what's happening

One of the ideas pushed after the massacre at Virginia Tech was a system to broadcast text messages to cell phones all over campus. Chief Foxworth says his school has not yet installed a system with that ability. He says UNF is in the process of hiring a security consultant to draw up a text messaging plan, along with a new campus-wide security policy.

But a few major changes are already here.

Every two weeks, a board meets to talk about troubled students. The group, called "Save Our Students" looks for students with drug, alcohol, or medical issues, and then directs them to agencies within the university or outside groups to help them.

All police officers at UNF have now gone through advanced, SWAT-style training, led by a North Florida alumnus who now leads a SWAT team on the First Coast.

And the Institute of Police Technology and Management, located on campus, often has more than 100 out-of-town police officers training there. Under a new agreement, they will all step in to help in a crisis.

The university offers one more coincidental sign that it's staying alert: in less than a month, they're holding a previously scheduled all-day conference on lessons learned from those Virginia Tech shootings. Security experts who worked on that incident, as well as the shootings at Columbine High School, will be at UNF on March 11th. Anyone from the public can register to take part.

**UNF teams up with Lean Consortium**
02/16/2008 © Jacksonville Business Journal

Businesses can learn how to remove waste from processes and smooth the flow between them at the University of North Florida through the school's new partnership with the Jacksonville Lean Consortium.
Lean refers to a system of business principles focused on removing waste from processes and smoothing the flow between them. It's increasingly being applied outside the manufacturing sector, where it was created.

"The JLC is one of the best lean consortiums in the nation and UNF has a tremendous reputation for quality in the Southeastern United States, so this is a natural fit," said Bob Wood, dean of the UNF Division of Continuing Education.

Classes on Six Sigma -- a method of eliminating defects in service and products -- and the International Organization for Standards for various industries will also be available.

University of South Florida

**USF to Limit Transferring Students**
02/17/2008 © Lakeland Ledger

The University of South Florida will significantly limit the number of transfer students it accepts each year, in a cost-cutting move aimed at reducing enrollment on the main campus - while shifting some students to the roomier regional branches.

The new transfer policy will allow USF, the state's third-largest institution, to reduce enrollment by 2,500 over three years, as suggested recently by the university system chancellor.

Administrators say that while the policy is driven by about $50 million in painful budget cuts, it does have an upside.

It will help the research university improve the caliber of its students.

And it will make better use of branch campuses such as St. Petersburg - perhaps bolstering a politically tricky bid for $15 million to build a campus in Lakeland.

"The budget climate is creating some very real and difficult situations for the university, but on the other hand there's some opportunities here," said USF provost Ralph Wilcox.

Starting in fall 2008, USF administrators will "cut back significantly" on freshmen and sophomores wanting to transfer from other colleges, Wilcox said.
"There will always be some exceptions, but those transfers tend to be less-successful students who for one reason or another did not have success at another institution."

USF also will be more discriminating with its upper-level transfers, many of them community college graduates, who will now find the competition to become a USF Bull is much tougher.

Upper-level transfers represent half of USF's annual 8,000-student transfer population. Wilcox said the goal is to "maintain those numbers" but improve their quality.

"If you've got a 3.0, and a degree from a community college, your future is pretty assured here," Wilcox said. "If you have a 2.0, it's unlikely you'll be admitted."

USF's new limits on transfer students are similar to changes already in place at other Florida public universities.

The University of North Florida this past fall stopped taking lower-division transfer students who haven't already earned an associate's degree, or 60 hours of college credits.

FSU has adopted a similar policy, and admissions officials recently sent letters to about 2,000 transfer applicants to remind them that only Florida community college associate's degree graduates will be considered for summer and fall admission this year, said admissions director Janice Finney.

The University of Florida hasn't made any such changes, but spokesman Steve Orlando conceded "it's not something we're ruling out."

The 11 universities have already lost more than $150 million this year and expect to lose as much as $171 million the next, thanks to the state's more than $2 billion deficit.

USF will lose about $25 million from this year's budget, Wilcox said, and probably another $25 million or so next year.

The Board of Governors last month ordered universities to deal with the money woes by whatever means necessary - cutting enrollment, limiting or ending transfer student admissions, laying off faculty, eliminating academic programs.
The chancellor followed up with a memo suggesting enrollment statewide be reduced from nearly 300,000 today to 281,000 by 2011.

FSU will cut its freshman class from 6,200 this year to 5,300 in the fall.

"Our phones have been ringing off the hook," Finney said. "It's not something we want to do to students, but we just don't want to reduce the quality of the education here."

Without more resources, university leaders warn that they will continue to turn away hardworking high school graduates with 3.0 averages.

"This is the worst denial of opportunity for qualified young men and women," Florida International University president Mitch Maidique told lawmakers in Tallahassee last week.

"We view the system as facing the biggest threat that it has in its history."

Editorial: New USF hospital wrong on all counts
02/18/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

Now is not the time to consider building a new teaching hospital at the University of South Florida. State and local governments are cutting billions in spending. Universities, including USF, are turning away students and imposing hiring freezes. The housing market is stalled, and the economy is flirting with a recession. What Floridians want is for their leaders to set appropriate priorities and spend declining public resources on the most pressing priorities. A USF hospital fails on both counts.

Sen. Dennis Jones, R-Seminole, filed legislation that would clear the way for medical schools in Florida to exempt themselves from the state's certificate of need, or CON, process, a regulatory requirement for all new hospitals. While the legislation would be only a first step, it would remove a major barrier by allowing the university to lobby for a hospital while avoiding the most important criterion: need. While the CON process takes time and can slow the response to a community's evolving health care needs, the purpose behind it is sound. The market demand for an expensive new facility, particularly one built with public dollars, should be demonstrated before allowing construction to proceed.

Put aside, for a moment, whether USF needs its own hospital. Jones' bill would cause havoc with health care planning. Giving USF or other medical schools a
freebie on certifying need only invites a rush toward empire-building. The big losers would be those public charity care hospitals that would see the more lucrative sides of their business pulled away - private-paying and insured patients whose revenue helps general hospitals' subsidized care for the poor. CONs are essential - especially when it is a state university asking the state to get into the hospital business.

Advocates argue the hospital would raise USF's profile, enable it to attract more prominent faculty and generate money for health services outside the state budget. Those are worthy goals. But building a new hospital, particularly now, is an inefficient way to accomplish them. Why not expand residencies with USF's existing hospital partners? USF's main teaching hospital, Tampa General, is a recognized leader nationally in trauma, transplant, nursing care and other services. It is about as close to a university teaching hospital as USF could want. The growth of biotech and medical services and research in the Tampa Bay area also puts USF in place to raise its international stature.

The financial issues also are a concern. The Florida Hospital Association, which opposes Jones' legislation, estimates that a new full-service hospital costs $2-million per bed. USF envisions a 200-bed facility. The state does not have that kind of money lying around. Neither does this community.

In concept, there may be merit in a university teaching hospital. There is the value of having academic excellence associated with a university's name, and USF's medical school has trained some of the area's finest physicians. But the issue here seems to be more about independence and self-image than medical necessity, and the timing is all wrong.

If USF wants its own teaching hospital, it is going to have to wait for a better economic climate and it is going to have to play by the regulatory rules.

Suspended USF student may take deal
02/16/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

TAMPA - A suspended University of South Florida student facing explosives charges is discussing a plea agreement with federal prosecutors.

The prospect of a plea bargain for Youssef Megahed, 21, surfaced during a conference Friday in U.S. District Judge Mark A. Pizzo's courtroom, but Megahed's attorney, Adam Allen, said no deal has been formally offered.
Megahed would plead to a lesser crime if he accepts any agreement, said Allen, a federal public defender.

"If there ever is a deal it won't involve anything he's charged with presently," he said.

The U.S. Attorney's Office declined to comment.

The talks prompted an attorney for co-defendant Ahmed Mohamed to ask for more time to prepare for a hearing on whether evidence should be suppressed, according to courtroom minutes.

Mohamed, 26, and Megahed were arrested Aug. 4 near a South Carolina naval base, where investigators found four PVC pipes filled with sugar, potassium nitrate and kitty litter. A federal indictment charges both with illegally transporting explosive materials. Mohamed faces an additional charge of demonstrating how to make an explosive device.

One of Mohamed's attorneys, Linda Moreno of Tampa, asked Pizzo to delay a suppression hearing scheduled Tuesday in the event Megahed reaches an agreement. Her request was denied Friday, court records show.

Attorneys for both defendants want evidence and statements collected at the traffic stop thrown out. They said comments made by a deputy that were captured on camera show racial bias. They also say Megahed was questioned before being read his Miranda rights, according to court records.

Mohamed's other attorney, Lyann Goudie of Tampa, was attending to another case Friday during the conference. But she said a plea agreement would make her and Moreno the lone and lead attorneys in Tuesday's suppression hearing, leaving them ill prepared.

Both signed on to represent Mohamed about a week and a half ago. Megahed's attorney, in comparison, has had months on the case.

Allen said late Friday he planned to be at Tuesday's hearing. "Things could always change," he said.

Goudie had hoped to fly late Friday to the site of the South Carolina traffic stop to better prepare a defense. But she canceled the trip given the plea possibility.
NICEVILLE — Okaloosa-Walton College student Samantha Schoenwald was shocked Thursday night when she got a message from her stepfather.

Two of her former softball teammates attend Northern Illinois University, where a gunman killed five students and wounded 16 others before killing himself.

Although her friends were unharmed, “it was really shocking,” Schoenwald said.

Despite Thursday’s attack, Schoenwald feels “completely safe” at OWC.

“It just feels like a really good environment … You can go around and everybody’s smiling,” she said.

Schoenwald’s sentiments were echoed by several local college students and faculty Friday. The Northern Illinois incident raises concerns but the general sense is that, “It won’t happen here.”

“We’ve got ongoing discussions, and certainly every time we see one of these things it tweaks our interest,” said Gary Yancey, OWC’s vice president of administration.

Chadwick Golets, 18, who attends OWC’s police academy, feels safe in his classes because all of the instructors are deputy sheriffs.

“Most of our instructors are armed,” he said.

Although he doesn’t have Golet’s advantage, Jerrod Hutcheson, 16, isn’t really worried about safety because of the campus’ small town atmosphere.

“It just doesn’t feel like something would happen here,” the OWC Collegiate high schooler said.

Collegiate student Mason Charles, 15, agrees that a small college environment makes a difference.
“I feel pretty safe because that was in Illinois and that’s a long way from here,” the sophomore said.

Allison Whitney, 18, said she feels awful for the tragedy in Illinois. But she couldn’t imagine anything like that happening at her school.

“I’m hoping that nothing would happen like that,” she said.

Like the students, faculty members feel safe in their classrooms.

Tony Russo, an OWC physics professor, said, “I think we live in a good community.”

OWC Collegiate high school teacher Ross Hamilton said there’s no particular risk because it’s an educational setting.

“I feel as safe here as I do in any other public setting,” he said.

He added that there are more student behaviors that give “cause to pause.” No idle threat or comment is taken likely.

Students at the OWC/University of West Florida Fort Walton Beach campus say their fears are allayed by the armed Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office deputy who patrols the campus.

Deputy Nick DeCaprio said he hadn’t seen any change in the mood on campus Friday.

“I just walk around and make sure everybody’s doing what they’re supposed to be doing,” he said.

“I feel pretty safe being here because it’s a small campus,” said student Allison Hernandez, 23.

Yancey said OWC continues to make some changes, including new faculty awareness training to identify people with emotional problems.

They’ve also revised some procedures and developed a referral program for someone they think is emotionally disturbed.

Gwen Street, director of student auxiliary services, said people have to be realistic after of incidents such as at Northern Illinois.
She understands people’s frustrations, but a metal detector on every door is not feasible, she said.

“We never want to have barbed wire and be in a prison to go to school,” she said

“We know this sort of thing happens,” she added. “But it’s just not really a concern here. I don’t want to say that it’s not ever going to happen here, but it’s so random.”

DUI warnings can't be overdone
02/17/2008 © Pensacola News Journal

It’s good to see the University of West Florida chapter of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity stepping up to present an innovative seminar on the hazards of alcohol use— including drunken driving.

Co-sponsored by UWF, the seminar is open to all university students.

It’s the kind of community leadership we need.

The police can’t catch all the drunken drivers. Sadly, we often discover them only after they have killed someone.

As we have to know all too sadly in this community, the threat of DUI is a message that can’t be shouted from the rooftops too often.

Especially for younger people.

We’re also proud to hear that the local seminar was inspired by the News Journal’s series on DUI published in December.

That series detailed the 1,719 DUI arrests made in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties in 2006, and examined the carnage and lost lives that resulted.

We have far too many otherwise good citizens serving long jail sentences because they made the bad decision to drink and drive.

The cases come with too great a regularity.

On March 25, Escambia School Superintendent Jim Paul faces arraignment on a drunken-driving charge in Pinellas County.
Last week, a Texas man pleaded guilty in a drunken-driving crash that killed a Navarre High School student last summer. He faces up to 46 years in prison.

In late January, 19-year-old Joshua Harris of Pace was sentenced to 30 years in state prison in the drunken-driving deaths of two women.

In mid-January, Jimmy Coleson was found guilty of DUI manslaughter and faces 16 years in prison for causing a crash on Gulf Beach Highway that killed his 22-year-old passenger.

In early January, Gary White, 41, pleaded guilty to DUI-manslaughter for the death on the night of June 23 of 7-month-old Chloe Collar of Birmingham, Ala., when White slammed his truck into the back of a sport utility vehicle on U.S. 29 carrying Chloe and her parents.

We have far too many of victims of DUI now lying in eternal graves; six people lost their lives in the two counties in 2006 due to wrecks involving drivers who were drunk.

What it says is that you face the risks of DUI every time you take the wheel? whether you have had a drink or not. Because every time you drive, some of the drivers sharing the road with you have had too much to drink.

Do the math: 1,719 DUI arrests over 365 days is an average of almost five arrests per day.

The scariest statistic, of course, is the one we don't know: How many drunken drivers are not caught?

We congratulate Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity for doing its part to get the word out.

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**State Higher Education Issues**

**Science standards merit approval**

Tallahassee Democrat

The current Sunshine State Science Education Standards have received an F from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, while the proposed revised standards have been graded excellent by one of the scientists who previously authored the report that gave Florida its failing grade.
The revised standards address the scientific theory of evolution without equivocation or the introduction of nonscientific notions. Evolution is the central organizing concept that allows us to understand all biological sciences, from medicine to forestry to entomology, and its principles are the theoretical basis that underlies major advances in all biological fields. Students must understand the current state of the science to be part of an informed citizenry.

The economy of Florida requires the foundation of well-educated citizens in order to compete and prosper within global competition. A solid grounding in the sciences is essential to providing a well-educated labor force to the state's employers.

We urge the Florida Board of Education to adopt the revised Public School Science Education Standards as drafted by the duly appointed and authorized Department of Education Writing Committee.

SANDY D'ALEMBERTE, Former FSU president; STANLEY MARSHALL, Florida Board of Governors and former FSU president; BETTY CASTOR, Former USF president and former state education commissioner; SIR HARRY KROTO, FSU professor and Nobel laureate in chemistry; E.T. YORK, Former chancellor of state university system; GREG BOEBINGER, Director, National High Magnetic Field Laboratory; OCIE HARRIS, Dean, FSU College of Medicine; JOHN KELSAY, FSU professor of religion and former chairman of religion Department; DONNA SHALALA, President, University of Miami

Getting smart
02/17/2008 © Florida Times-Union

"There are no bad boys. There is only bad environment, bad training, bad example, bad thinking."
- Father Edward Flanagan, founder of Boys Town

That motto has been replaced in recent years by a new view. That there are many bad boys, and increasingly, bad girls. Incorrigibles who need to be locked up.

This view gained currency thanks to a few sensational incidents, such as the 1993 attack on British tourists at a rest stop off Interstate 10 near Monticello.

The vision of the super predator, juveniles attacking ruthlessly and without remorse, gained currency nationwide.
This overly negative view has created an expensive system that relies on prison as the first and last option in too many cases.

By 2000, the Florida Legislature eliminated the option of judges to place juveniles in minimum-risk, nonresidential programs.

The result is an overly harsh, highly expensive system that simply does not work.

Those are a few of the observations inspired by a new report from the Blueprint Commission on Juvenile Justice, chaired by Frank Brogan, president of Florida Atlantic University and former lieutenant governor.

The commission reported that many juveniles were sent to rural facilities "notorious for severe and harsh discipline, including corporal punishment."

These large facilities often are ineffective in rehabilitating the juveniles. In fact, gang activity and violence can flourish there.

Doing time, petty crimes

Thanks to this view, Florida is putting away many juvenile offenders who don't need to be locked up.

This policy costs much more than less intensive programs and it's probably less effective, as well. So getting tough for petty crimes makes no sense from both practical and cost reasons.

At current rates of incarceration, Florida will run out of room in its juvenile facilities in five years, the commission reported. There will be no room in secure facilities in 10 years.

Yet the cost for prevention services is just a fraction of detention: $2,128 compared to $42,606 for detention.

The blueprint commission advocates a change from "get tough" to "get smart."

The focus already was beginning to turn. In 2004, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency urged Florida to develop graduated penalties for different offenses - which doesn't seem all that radical an idea.

In detention centers, almost half of those had committed nothing worse than misdemeanors.
"The smart strategy for Florida is this: Invest in a continuum of services that can address the needs of low-risk offenders outside of secure and residential placements, while continuing to provide appropriate sanctions for youth involved in serious and violent crime."

We need more prevention, more rehabilitation and more diversion from detention, said Walter McNeil, secretary of Florida's Department of Juvenile Justice, in the report.

The vice chairman was Richard Danford, president of the Jacksonville Urban League.

"It's mind-boggling to hear what is going on in this state," Danford said in a telephone interview. "Florida may not have the worst system in the country, but we're close."

The commission suggests community-based services that help keep kids out of trouble. More interventions and alternative programs are needed as opposed to lockups.

The best programs are small, with good educational and skill-building programs to prepare young people to return to their communities. Programs focused on minorities and a growing proportion of girls are needed.

"We need to put aside all the partisan politics and realize these young people are our future," Danford said.

Statewide, there is not enough communication among the agencies that deal with juveniles, such as school systems and the criminal justice system, he said.

Minorities overrepresented

While blacks represent 21 percent of the population ages 10 to 17, the proportion of blacks is nearly double in the juvenile justice system (39 percent).

And as many as two of three juveniles in the system have mental illness or substance abuse issues. So diversionary centers must have trained therapists to deal with abuse issues, for instance, rather than correctional officers under the imprisonment model.

Jacksonville may be slightly ahead of the trend with the new commitment to reopen a Juvenile Assessment Center that will properly refer juveniles with
appropriate levels of security and treatment. The commission suggests each of
Florida's regions should have a juvenile assessment center.

As the commission states, "Ultimately, this reform is about changing the way the
state of Florida thinks about juvenile offenders - are they villains who need to be
punished, or young citizens who need our help?"

Our image of them may determine our solutions.

Where are all the good boys and girls? All around us.

How would Treasure Coast schools respond to a gunman on
campus? : TCPalm.com
02/16/2008 © Jupiter Courier

Treasure Coast school districts and law enforcement agencies practice at least
twice a year and review plans annually for a day they hope never comes — a
school shooting or other crisis situation on a school campus.

After five people were shot Thursday on the Northern Illinois University campus
before the gunman turned his weapon on himself, districts and law enforcement
say they feel prepared, but constantly are looking at their plans to see if changes
are needed.

The St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office, working with the St. Lucie County School
District, is simulating an "active shooter" exercise Monday at Treasure Coast
High School in Port St. Lucie to rehearse what to do if someone came on campus
with a firearm.

The training, planned weeks ago, comes days after the Illinois shooting.

"We do this (training) periodically," said Mark Weinberg, public information
officer for the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office.

Indian River County officials have been talking about staging a similar
simulation sometime this year, at the request of district principals, said the
district's Risk Management Director Gerry Koziel. The district has practiced
responses to bad weather and other emergencies, but never has simulated a
hostage-taking or shooting, he said.

"The schools are all preparing, so the staff knows what to do," Koziel said.
Schools still are the safest places for children to be, said Lt. Morgan Sprott, school resource officer supervisor in Martin County. But that safety comes with almost daily discussions of how best to respond to an issue.

"We are trying to prepare and be as prepared as we possibly can, and hope and pray that day never comes," Sprott said.

Sprott said officials also have to know how to respond to evacuations, critical accidents in front of schools, gas leaks or a severe injury in a class. Districts work with law enforcement by sharing blueprints of schools and continually updating crisis plans.

College campuses also were looking at their crisis plans in reaction to Thursday's shooting.

Charles Brown, vice president for student affairs at Florida Atlantic University, said the university has made a number of safety improvements on campus in the past few years, including locks on classroom doors and improved alert systems.

He said he believes FAU is safe, but he added, "Any time something like this happens, we all feel uneasy."

After the Virginia Tech shootings in April, officials at Indian River Community College and Florida Atlantic University, said they were working on improving campus alert networks.

The shooter who killed five students before turning his gun on himself Thursday at Northern Illinois University was identified Friday as Stephen Kazmierczak, a 27-year-old former NIU graduate student. University Police Chief Donald Grady said, without giving details, Kazmierczak had become erratic in the past two weeks after he had stopped taking his medication.

Could Crist end up on the Republican presidential ticket?
02/16/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Vice President Charlie Crist?

Many around the Capitol scoffed last spring when legislators exempted federal offices from Florida’s “resign to run” law, so a sitting governor might audition for Washington without giving up his day job.
Eyebrows were raised when the Republican Party later amended its delegate rules so that, if the GOP national convention won’t seat a full Florida delegation, state Chairman Jim Greer can choose the 57 who go to St. Paul -- and broker them to the candidate who’d do something nice (think “running mate”) for Florida.

And when Crist’s endorsement two days before state primary gave Sen. John McCain a push to eclipse Mitt Romney, semi-serious speculation turned to ponderous prognostication. Could the man known as “Chain Gang Charlie” just 10 years ago, in a hopeless mismatch with then-Sen. Bob Graham, have the gravitas to rank with the likes of Hanibal Hamlin and Catcus Jack Garner?

“I’ve always said Gov. Crist is the future of the Republican Party,” said Greer. “He would be an asset to any administration.”

Attorney George LeMieux, the political confidante Crist dubbed “the maestro” for his role in past campaigns, said the governor “is not campaigning for it.” But LeMieux, who recently left Crist’s chief of staff post to resume private practice, said his old boss enjoys 70 percent-plus approval ratings in most demographic groups across Florida and could deliver 27 electoral votes in November, just as he gave McCain a boost in the primary.

“The vice presidency matters two ways. It can matter thematically, to help underscore the strength of the presidential candidate,” said LeMieux. “It’s not a guarantee, as with John Edwards, who did not carry North Carolina for John Kerry, but it’s all about electoral votes and Gov. Crist absolutely takes Florida off the table.”

Conventional wisdom holds that any of the U.S. Senators running in either party must look outside Washington and go for executive experience to balance a ticket. McCain has the added problem of having bucked Republican orthodoxy on some issues dear to conservative hearts -- as Crist has, on issues like global warming and restoring felon voting rights -- so Govs. Tim Pawlenty of Minnesota and Mark Sanford of South Carolina have been more prominently mentioned as ballast.

One wild card in the veepstakes this year is that the Democrats go first, with their convention in late August. The GOP will have the advantage of knowing who they have to run against and whether, for instance, ex-Gov. Mike Huckabee of Arkansas might be a better match.
Even assuming could swing their states, Minnesota has only 10 electoral votes, Arkansas has six and South Carolina has eight, while Crist has a demonstrated ability to draw Democrats and independents in a state with 27 electors.

Florida A&M University political science professor Keith Simmonds said Crist could be just what McCain needs.

"With McCain having problems with his Republican base, he cannot afford to lose one of the South’s largest states," said Simmonds, who is also assistant dean of the FAMU College of Arts and Sciences. "Our popular governor who has shown that he knows how to attract Democrats and independent voters can be quite helpful to McCain, if he is concerned about keeping his base intact by the time November comes around."

Crist was dogged by vice-presidency questions last week at a news conference announcing a new department head, after a Cabinet meeting and following a Washington luncheon with Republicans in Congress. Tradition and common sense demands an aw-shucks modesty from Academy Award nominees, beauty pageant contestants and vice-presidential possibilities, so Crist coyly insisted it was an honor just to be mentioned.

“I’m focused on Florida; I mean, it’s very flattering to have even the discussion of it, but frankly, it’s premature,” he said. “It’s not something I’m focused on, not something I think about.”

Asked if it would be hard to resist, if asked, Crist chuckled and said, “I don’t know. Nobody’s asked.” But he scoffed at the idea that McCain needs somebody closer to GOP orthodoxy to balance the Arizona senator’s “maverick” image.

“Let me address it in terms of his campaign and how well he’s doing,” said Crist. “Obviously, people in our party support the senator, his views, his general approach and I think he’s right where the Republican Party is and where America is.”

Democratic National Committeeman Allan Katz said choosing Crist “would be a strong statement by McCain that he really wants to remake the Republican Party in his image.” Katz said his party will face a major math problem if Crist runs with McCain.

“A Republican cannot win without Florida and to win Florida, the Republicans would have to spend somewhere north of $30 million,” said Katz, a Tallahassee city commissioner and prominent capital lawyer. “If Crist is on the ticket, they
carry Florida and don’t have to spend $30 million. The problem for Republicans is whether he’s too moderate, and McCain already has that problem himself.”

Lobbyist Brian Ballard, who is close to the governor, said Crist is telling friends not to lobby for him. Ballard said Crist’s very late endorsement of McCain -- the Saturday before the primary -- proved that he was concentrating first on passing the property-tax amendment that was also on the primary ballot.

But he also said Crist isn’t too moderate to sooth conservative doubts about McCain.

“You look at ‘Chain Gang Charlie,’ who just passed a $9 billion tax cut, and if Charlie Crist isn’t a conservative, then I don’t know what people are looking for,” said Ballard. “Gov. Crist is the one person who could put Florida in the bank for McCain.”

State Board of Education to vote on evolution - as a 'theory'
02/16/2008 © Orlando Sentinel

A revised version of Florida's science standards will go to the State Board of Education on Tuesday, possibly calming the outcry over how evolution is to be taught in public schools.

The change would insert a single phrase -- "the scientific theory of" -- before the word evolution, as well as other topics, such as the big bang and plate tectonics, said Tom Butler, spokesman for the Florida Department of Education.

The new version will be presented as another option for the seven-member board to consider. It comes in response to "the input we've received from the public," Butler said.

The new standards would, for the first time, require teaching evolution to Florida's public-school students. The board is set to vote on the standards at its Tuesday meeting in Tallahassee.

Hundreds have attended public hearings on the new standards, and more than 10,000 logged on to the state Web site to post their views. Many were upset the state planned to teach evolution as the "fundamental concept underlying all of biology," and as a concept "supported by multiple forms of scientific evidence." They argued that other beliefs about how life on Earth started and developed should be taught, too.
The revisions do not change the basic descriptions of evolution, Butler said, but simply add the "scientific theory" phrase.

By adding the word theory, which many opponents of the standards had argued for, the new version may appease those who do not view evolution as a scientific fact or those whose religious beliefs are in conflict with evolution.

State Rep. Marti Coley, R-Marianna, said she had not heard about the change but thought it might appeal to her Panhandle constituents, who have been among the harshest critics of the new standards.

"All that we're asking is that they use the word theory," Coley said. "As long as they have the word theory to acknowledge that everything with it is not 100 percent proven, that would be good."

Some school boards in North Florida have passed resolutions opposing the standards and asking the state to make revisions.

State officials ran the new version by the scientists and science teachers who helped write them to ensure the wording remained "scientifically accurate," Butler said.

Those educators gave their approval to the new version, he added.

Paul Cottle, a physics professor at Florida State University, said he supports the new standards but understood the reasons behind the last-minute revisions.

"The goal is to make the standards more acceptable to a broader spectrum of the population," he said.

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**Floridians Love Their Schools, Doubt Quality**
**02/18/2008 © Lakeland Ledger**

Floridians give glowing marks to the schools their kids attend yet are profoundly pessimistic when comparing Florida's education system with those in other states, according to a St. Petersburg Times survey.

Only 12 percent of respondents said the education Florida children get is better than in other states, while 45 percent said it was worse.

Parents with children in school weren't quite as downbeat: 25 percent said Florida schools compared well; 39 percent said they did not.
The standards are too low, and the emphasis on standardized testing in this case, the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test is too high, said Michael Squillace of Spring Hill.

"The problem with the FCAT is that teachers try to teach only what’s on the test," said Squillace, 33, who has three children in elementary school. "If kids don't do well on the test, the teachers worry that it will reflect on them. It waters down the curriculum."

The survey was administered to 702 registered voters Feb. 6-10.

It also found Floridians are:

Strongly divided about the FCAT, with 44 percent saying it has hurt education and 44 percent saying it has helped.

Strongly opposed to grading schools based on FCAT scores alone, with 55 percent opposed and 37 percent in favor.

Largely satisfied with Gov. Charlie Crist's handling of education issues.

The results come less than three weeks before the state Legislature meets for its annual session to tackle a long list of vexing education issues. Among them: potential changes to Florida's school-grading system; potential tweaks to the class-size amendment; and potential cuts to education spending for the second time in a year.

On the upside: Florida parents like their schools.

Seventy-five percent rated their kids' schools good or excellent, while 20 percent said only fair and 1 percent said poor, the survey found. Meanwhile, 80 percent gave their kids' teachers a good or excellent rating.

On the downside: They don't like how Florida stacks up to other states, or at least how they think Florida stacks up.

On some academic indicators, Florida has made strides in recent years, but it continues to rank near the bottom in per-student spending. With more education cuts on the horizon, it's hard to see how the public's take on school quality will change for the better, said Darryl Paulson, a professor of government at the University of South Florida St. Petersburg.
Education spending is "almost a cornerstone of how education success is viewed," said Paulson, who teaches courses on education policy.

Also on the downside: The public still doesn't like the FCAT.

Former Gov. Jeb Bush, who left office last year, made the test the keystone of his accountability system. Now FCAT scores determine school grades, factor into teacher bonuses and help decide whether third-graders can be promoted.

Supporters say that system has forced schools to better tailor teaching to a student's individual needs, and put a spotlight on poor and minority students. But critics say it has elevated test preparation over real learning and has led schools to cut back on noncore classes.

The Times survey found FCAT frustration crossed party lines, with almost as many Republicans (42 percent) as Democrats (51 percent) saying the FCAT has hurt education in Florida.

"You have to have some measure, I understand that," said Ashley Andrews of Clearwater, the father of a third-grader. "But I feel that too much emphasis is put on the FCAT. I don't feel it's a good indication of whether a child has gotten a good education."

Carol Sampey of Indian Rocks Beach said the FCAT has helped and hurt.

On the one hand, "You're not just passing kids who don't know how to read," said Sampey, a mother of three small children. But on the other, "You hear schools are failing because of one student who has a disability. It seems like they're saying, 'Here's the formula and you have to stick with it, even if it doesn't make sense.'"

To date, Republican lawmakers who supported Bush's agenda have not backed away from high-stakes use of the FCAT. They say evidence is on their side.

National test scores show Florida is making some of the biggest gains in the country in elementary reading and math. The state is a leader in the percentage of high school students taking and passing rigorous Advanced Placement tests.

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National Higher Education Issues

College Paper Vows to Fight a Takeover by Gannett
J. David McSwane, the student editor of The Rocky Mountain Collegian, was looking forward to a quiet spring semester at the Colorado State University after drawing global attention last fall for a four-word editorial criticizing President Bush.

What he got instead was another storm.

On the first day of classes in January, Mr. McSwane learned that the university president was meeting with representatives from the local daily, The Fort Collins Coloradoan, which is owned by Gannett, to discuss a potential “partnership” with the student newspaper.

The Collegian, now worried about its future as an independent student newspaper, is planning to fight any possible takeover by a media company. And Gannett and The Coloradoan have become targets for harsh criticism from college newsrooms and journalism departments across the country, who portray Gannett as a “dark lord” that wants to rein in student press freedom.

“If The Coloradoan were to take over The Collegian, only Gannett would win,” The Daily Nebraskan, the campus newspaper at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said in an editorial.

Gannett dismissed any suggestion that it planned to conquer student journalism.

“There is no grand Gannett strategy,” said Tara Connell, a spokeswoman at its headquarters in McLean, Va. “Gannett is not looking to buy college newspapers. We look at all sorts of things.”

Gannett owns two student newspapers in Florida, however — The Tallahassee Democrat owns The FSView & Florida Flambeau at Florida State and Florida Today owns The Central Florida Future at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. Both are for-profit newspapers, although the vast majority of student newspapers, including The Collegian, are nonprofit.

Media companies find college newspapers attractive properties for several reasons: operating costs are low because student labor is inexpensive, sometimes even free. Advertising is on the rise. And perhaps most important, the newspapers are read — frequently — by a young audience with relatively deep pockets.
In 2006, MTV acquired Y2M: Youth Media and Marketing Networks, whose subsidiary, College Publisher, is host of Web sites for 450 campus newspapers.

“College communities are fairly healthy economic engines. There’s a constant influx of students coming in with cash,” said Kevin Schwartz, the general manager of The Daily Tar Heel, the student newspaper at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. “The underpinnings of a healthy market are found in a state university town.”

According to Alloy Media and Marketing, which places advertisements in college publications, advertisers spent $30 million on ads in college papers in 2006. Alloy also estimated that advertising in college newspapers increased 15 percent in 2007, from 2006.

And as John Morton, a newspaper industry analyst in Silver Spring, Md., noted, college newspapers have a captive audience. A 2006 survey conducted by College Publisher found that 44 percent of undergraduate students read their campus newspaper twice or more a week — compared with 28 percent who read the local newspaper that often — and 77 percent read it at least once a month.

College print publications are still beating their online counterparts as well — only 24 percent of respondents said they read the college paper online twice or more a week. (Of national publications, USA Today, Gannett’s flagship publication, has the second-highest readership on campuses, behind The New York Times, the survey noted.)

College newsrooms are also relatively immune to the market pressures of the industry. “Our primary focus isn’t bringing money to stockholders, it’s providing opportunities for students,” said Mr. McSwane, The Collegian editor, who is a junior from Arvada, Colo. “We don’t ever have to worry that someone’s going to come down and say, ‘Hey, we have to cut our newsroom budget because someone in Kansas isn’t making enough money.’ ”

That independence from the bottom line is what keeps student journalism fresh and irreverent, or so holds the common wisdom in college newsrooms, and journalism professors tend to agree. “If there is free press, it’s probably on the college campuses,” said Donna Rouner, a journalism professor at Colorado State who wrote an op-ed for The Collegian criticizing any deal.

No proposal has yet been submitted, but an advisory committee composed of students, including a representative from The Collegian, and Colorado State faculty members held its first meeting Thursday to decide whether a deal with Gannett or any other media company was worth pursuing.
Blanche Hughes, the vice president for student affairs, who sits on the committee, said its goal was to gauge how the proposal would work for students as well as the university. She said the committee would look for job and education opportunities for students and assurances from any company that made a bid for The Collegian that the quality of the newspaper would be maintained.

Mr. Morton said he doubted that Gannett’s ownership would change a student newspaper. “I’m sure Gannett has absolutely no interest in having anything to do with the editorial product,” he said.

But buying student newspapers, Mr. Morton said, made financial sense. “It’s a way of enlarging your footprint,” he said.

Mr. Schwartz, the general manager of The Daily Tar Heel, said he thought Gannett was going after young readers. But he said campus newspapers, with their easy availability and focus on community-based journalism, helped to instill the newspaper habit in students.

“Let us make them newspaper readers for you,” he said.

University Leaders Grapple With a Tragedy - Chronicle.com
The Chronicle

At even the best-prepared universities, there is no playbook for handling the crush of tough decisions that comes after a mass shooting rocks an otherwise quiet campus.

The police tape eventually comes down. But the decisions remain, often with few guideposts.

The key, said John G. Peters, president of Northern Illinois University, is to keep focused on the basics.

"The world wants answers to questions, and answers are always slow in coming, and confusing," Mr. Peters said in an interview with The Chronicle Sunday afternoon in his office. Dressed in gray slacks and a black sweater, with a red and black ribbon pinned to the shoulder, and his eyes red from fatigue, Mr. Peters talked about his university's response to the fatal rampage last week.
The castlelike building that houses the president's office was the scene of a media frenzy after Steven P. Kazmierczak, a former Northern Illinois student, burst into a crowded lecture hall and opened fire on a class of 140 or so students. He shot 21 people, killing five, before turning the gun on himself. The investigation is ongoing, and the police have yet to find a motive.

In interviews this weekend, Mr. Peters, faculty members, and administrators said their university was as well-prepared as it could have been for the crisis that unfolded here last week, on a campus tucked amid cornfields an hour west of Chicago. But even the best-laid plans don't cover everything, they acknowledged.

"One of the things I've realized is that not having an answer is not an option," said Brian O. Hemphill, vice president for student affairs. "We're talking about people's lives, and them being able to move forward from this point."

Managing a Crisis

Mr. Hemphill's office was bustling on Sunday morning, where a dozen or so volunteers answered phones and handled random assignments. Almost everyone wore NIU sweatshirts or pins.

One volunteer sat at a table gluing together strips of red and black ribbon—Huskie red and black—to make pins. But even that small task involved an unanticipated obstacle: "It's hard to find red and black ribbon in town right now," she said.

It was just a tiny piece of a larger challenge university officials have faced in the days following the shootings. For them, the aftermath has often boiled down to one thing: Details.

"The details are very important," Mr. Hemphill said. Those include contacting all of the students who were in Cole Hall at the time of the shooting and finding accommodations for the dozens of counselors who arrived late Thursday and Friday from nearby institutions. Campus leaders have also struggled over the kind of language the university president should use when referring to the gunman—"evil" or "disturbed"? (He settled on "disturbed.") And they also had to decide which university officials would attend which funerals, as all five for Mr. Kazmierczak's victims are scheduled for this week.

The logistics can be overwhelming, officials said.
Students at U. of Maryland-College Park to Examine Its Past Ties to Slavery

The Chronicle

In 2006 Brown University issued an impressively detailed, 106-page report on the institution’s historical connections to slavery. The professors who worked on the report — which was undertaken at the behest of Brown’s president, Ruth J. Simmons — hoped many other universities would do likewise, digging into their own, often-unsavory pasts, and sharing those findings with the world.

That hasn’t happened, at least not yet. But a new course at the University of Maryland at College Park seems to be following Brown’s lead. The two-semester class, according to today’s Washington Post, will examine the university’s ties to the slave trade and prepare a report for the campus’s president, C.D. Mote Jr.

What will happen after the report is finished is unclear. The question of whether to apologize or attempt to make amends has been a vexing one — and not just for colleges. Maryland is one of just a handful of states to express regret for slavery. —Thomas Bartlett

College Officials Contest Proposed 30-Minute Requirement for Emergency Notification

The Chronicle

A proposed requirement that colleges warn students and employees of emergencies within 30 minutes has yet to become law. But the prospect that it might prompted sharp rebuke from campus police chiefs and other administrators here over the weekend, at a conference on higher-education law sponsored by Stetson University and Naspa—Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

Many college officials expressed extreme frustration with the proposed 30-minute rule, a provision in legislation to renew the Higher Education Act that the U.S. House of Representatives passed this month. As it stands, the measure would require institutions to "notify the campus community in not more than 30 minutes in the event of a significant emergency or dangerous situation." It defines such a situation as "an immediate threat to the health or safety of students or staff."
The watchdog group Security on Campus lobbied Congress for the 30-minute rule, which is not a limit on the "timely warning" already required of colleges under federal crime-reporting law, but a new obligation in the case of a severe crisis. (The law would not change the way colleges report threats less immediate than, say, an active shooter or an approaching tornado.)

The watchdog group's main concern is that campus bureaucracies result in slow responses. "We don't want a committee to be deliberating something while lives are being lost," S. Daniel Carter, senior vice president of Security on Campus, told college officials at a conference session here.

The administrators responded that the time limit was not only impossible to meet but also misguided. The first priority in a crisis, several police chiefs said, is to be on the scene controlling the situation, not in an office sending an alert.

Would it really be a good thing for campus safety, asked Dolores A. Stafford, chief of police at George Washington University, if observers of a crisis could say, "Well, they got the notice out, but they really screwed up the response"?

"Your institutions give you the resources to do both," said Mr. Carter, to which the room responded with laughter.

"Are you talking to the same people who are trying to cap our tuition increases?" one participant yelled, referring to Mr. Carter's conversations with federal lawmakers.

Mr. Carter defended his position by citing Northern Illinois University's response to the shootings on its campus last week. Officials there sent out an alert within 20 minutes, he said. "Don't say it can't be done."

"We're living in a different world now," Mr. Carter said. Students and parents' expectations of communication are higher, he argued, and colleges must re-examine old notions of how — and how fast — they can share information. An initial alert "doesn't have to be perfect," he said. But, he suggested, it has to be fast.

A quick alert may not be useful if it does not provide students with well-informed advice, said Carey M. Drayton, executive director and chief of public safety at the University of Southern California. "What do you tell them in those 30 minutes to do?" he said.

Not all threats are immediately clear, some police chiefs said, doubting whether, in those cases, a warning as simple as "be alert" would be of any use. Experts
debated that question after a graduate student was murdered near the University of Chicago this past fall (The Chronicle, November 28, 2007).

The proposed 30-minute rule, while setting a strict time limit, leaves some questions unanswered. When does the clock start — at the first gunshot, or the first 911 call? And what has to happen in that time — a college's sending of alerts, or all students and staff members' receipt of them? A large public institution that recently tested its text-message notification system found that it took 50 minutes to transmit alerts to 40,000 people, one participant said.

Whether the 30-minute rule will become law is still unclear. The Senate's version of the bill to renew the Higher Education Act, which passed last summer, does not set a time limit for colleges to warn their campuses of emergencies. Instead it says such notification should be "reasonable and timely." In the coming weeks, a conference committee of legislators from the House and the Senate will meet to hash out their differences.

After the conference session here, Mr. Carter was willing to entertain some participants' proposed compromises to the 30-minute rule. For one, they said, let the clock start not at the first report of an incident, but when authorities have gathered pertinent information about it. And allow reasonable exceptions to the deadline when a college has demonstrated a good-faith effort to respond, said Jesus M. Villahermosa Jr., former director of campus safety at Pacific Lutheran University and founder of Crisis Reality Training, which consults with law-enforcement agencies.

Expectations differed on whether the provision, modified or not, would become law. But Mr. Carter was certain of one thing. Even if it is not in the final version of the bill, he said, "we're not going to let it go away."

What Kind of Notification System Works Best When Crisis Strikes? - Chronicle.com

The Chronicle

Walter L. Czerniak, associate vice president for information-technology services at Northern Illinois University, was out of town when a gunman killed five students in a classroom last week.

Mr. Czerniak was attending a conference in Arizona where he was learning, among other things, about emergency-notification systems that can send text messages to cellphones—a method that a growing number of colleges have set
up since the shootings last spring at Virginia Tech (The Chronicle, October 5, 2007).

But Mr. Czerniak still isn't sure whether such a system would have done much good in keeping people on campus updated as the crisis unfolded if it had been in place at Northern Illinois.

For one thing, he said, he learned that other colleges have had trouble getting people to sign up for emergency-alert services—a problem that college leaders discussed at a recent meeting in San Diego (The Chronicle, February 12).

Most colleges leave the choice of whether to register for the services up to individual students or professors, both because they want to respect the privacy of users and because, in many cases, universities do not have any other way of learning the cell-phone numbers of people on their campuses. At many colleges with the systems, fewer than half the students have signed up.

An added complication is that students change their cell-phone numbers frequently. And, of course, someone has to keep the phone numbers up to date.

And, once installed, systems are not necessarily trouble-free (The Chronicle, December 17, 2007).

False Sense of Security

Mr. Czerniak said he was pleased with the technology Northern Illinois did use. Messages were sent via campus e-mail and voice mail just minutes after the shooting, and officials posted information on the university's Web site.

The first message the university sent on Thursday said: "There has been a report of a possible gunman on campus. Get to a safe area and take precautions until given the all clear. Avoid the King Commons and all buildings in that vicinity."

"What you don't want to do is create a false sense of security," and think that a system is working when it is not, he said. "In any disaster, there's no one good way to get ahold of everybody."

Colleges are in fact looking to use as many different methods as possible to get the word out during emergencies, and not all of them are high-tech. At Virginia Tech, where a student killed 32 people before committing suicide last spring, officials have installed a siren system on the campus that can blast audio messages or high-pitched tones in the event of a crisis.
The siren system was developed for the Defense Department and is also used in biomedical facilities to warn of hazardous spills, said John M. Dorney, manager of business development at Acoustic Technology Inc., which makes a public early-warning system it says is used by Virginia Tech.

One prerecorded message in the system, Mr. Dorney said, is: "There is a shooter on campus. Seek shelter immediately."

The technology isn't cheap. It costs $25,000 for each speaker set, and most campuses would want to install sets at various locations. The systems are high-powered and so can be heard from far away, and they have two separate connections to the campus network, in case one is knocked out, he said.

About a dozen colleges in the United States have purchased a system, said Mr. Dorney, though he would name only Virginia Tech and Washington State University.

Commentary: Fearing Our Students Won't Help Them - Chronicle.com
The Chronicle
By GARY PAVELA

Months ago, a participant at a conference where I spoke talked with me privately about the dismissal of a troubled student on her campus. Her conscience bothered her, she said, because the student was "different" — but not threatening — and was removed because he made other students and staff "uncomfortable."

We agreed that hair-trigger "mental health" dismissals were probably more frequent after the Virginia Tech shootings and that the practice was harmful both to colleges and to students.

Now, in the aftermath of the shootings at Northern Illinois University, were we wrong? Has the time come to dismiss troubled students first and ask questions later? The answer remains no. And the reasons have less to do with concerns about legal and civil liberties than with our primary responsibility to promote safety and security on campus.

There are, undoubtedly, legal risks associated with dismissing students with disabilities — including actual or perceived mental disabilities — without due process and a determination that the student poses a "direct threat" to self or
others. Enforcement letters from the U.S. Department of Education Office for
Civil Rights warn colleges that students "must not be subject to adverse action on
the basis of unfounded fear, prejudice, and stereotypes" and that any "direct
threat" dismissals must be supported by "the best available objective evidence."
Colleges are required "to determine the nature, duration, and severity of the risk;
the probability that the potentially threatening injury will actually occur; and
whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures will
sufficiently mitigate the risk."

But those OCR, pre-Virginia Tech regulations sound cumbersome. Perhaps it's
worth a calculated legal risk to ignore them. Isn't life more important than civil
liberties?

Another impediment to pre-emptive mental-health dismissals is the "false
positive" phenomenon. Mental-health experts deny having any empirical
expertise in predicting future behavior, especially when professional risk
assessments (which are designed to prescribe appropriate therapies and
medications) are used for the administrative purpose of dismissing potentially
violent students. Paul S. Appelbaum, a professor of psychiatry at Columbia
University and a past president of the American Psychiatric Association, has
written that "combining data from the available studies suggests that the odds
that a student with suicidal ideation will actually commit suicide are 1,000 to 1. ...
Thus policies that impose restrictions on students who manifest suicidal ideation
will sweep in 999 students who would not commit suicide for every student who
will end his or her life — with no guarantee that the intervention will actually
reduce the risk of suicide in this vulnerable group" (emphasis added).

False positives at 999 to 1 are daunting. Still, if the "one" is a student who dies on
your campus, the risk of inaction seems compelling. Dismissed students are
inconvenienced. Students who commit suicide are dead.

Another consideration raised when policies related to eccentric or troubled
students are being developed is the impact on campus diversity. The idea of
"diversity," of course, isn't limited to ethnicity. We seek a diversity of insights,
ideas, and experiences — including, perhaps, the experience of learning how to
adapt to a mental disability and to turn the adaptation into a worthy career or
creation. This process can be seen in the life of the Johns Hopkins University
psychiatry professor Kay Redfield Jamison, described in her book An Unquiet
Mind: A Memoir of Moods and Madness (Knopf, 1995), and supported by
Jamison's research showing that there is a "literary, biographical, and scientific
argument for a compelling association, not to say actual overlap, between two
temperaments — the artistic and the manic-depressive."
Educators are faced with the same dilemma. It's true that diversity is critical to our mission. And fostering creativity is a top priority — especially in a global economy where innovative ideas (often deemed strange or irrational at the outset) may prove essential to economic competitiveness. Still, safety trumps all else.

**Live From Another Stunned Campus...**

*Inside Higher Education*

In the hours after last week’s shooting at Northern Illinois University, Michael Van Der Harst wasn’t watching the television coverage of his campus. He was helping feed it.

As an editor at the Northern Star, the student newspaper, and a reporter for the campus station, Northern Television Center, Van Der Harst split his time speaking to sources and fielding phone calls until 2 a.m. “When I hung up the phone it would start ringing instantaneously,” the Northern Illinois junior said the morning after Steve Kazmierczak, a former NIU graduate student, killed five students plus himself in a lecture hall rampage. (For an update on developments at Northern Illinois, see the bottom of this article.)

Most of the incoming calls, Van Der Harst said, were from other media organizations. CBS News was looking for video of the snowy campus. Fox News sought footage of reporters working from the newsroom. Local affiliates searched for early reports.

By late Thursday, as Northern Illinois held the first of several press conferences, television stations and newspapers had many of their own reporters on the ground in DeKalb, Ill. Some members of the press corps stayed on the university’s campus over the weekend, just as they had 10 months earlier to report on the shooting spree at Virginia Tech University.

The Northern Illinois attack was immediately the lead story on national Web sites and broadcasts, and it was on front pages across the country Friday morning. Still, it was hard not to notice some differences in coverage. By 11 p.m. eastern time Thursday, most television stations had gone back to regular programming. In the days after the shooting, morning show anchors weren’t doing live shots from the quad. Newspapers in some areas carried just one or two stories — markedly different from the explosion of reporting from Blacksburg, Va.
Taking Their Medicine
Inside Higher Education

Among the very few early clues dropped by law enforcement officials in answer to the “why” behind Thursday’s deadly shootings at Northern Illinois University: The killer, Steven Kazmierczak, had recently gone off his medication (reported to be anti-anxiety medication by the Chicago Tribune), becoming “erratic.”

Nationally and across the board for all types of disorders, experts say about half of all prescribed or recommended health regimens aren’t properly followed. Outcomes like Thursday’s at Northern Illinois are highly unlikely and extreme — the motives and real reasons behind the murders still not understood — and clearly a student’s decision to stop medication doesn’t always or automatically pose risks to the self or others. But what are some of the particular challenges regarding compliance with prescribed medications among college students — or graduate students like Kazmierczak, who studied social work at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign?

“They may stop abruptly, they may not take it correctly, they may take things that they shouldn’t take with it, particularly alcohol,” said Stewart E. Cooper, director of counseling services and a professor of psychology at Valparaiso University, in Indiana, and co-editor of Pharmacological Treatment Of College Students With Psychological Problems (Haworth, 2007). Cooper said that between 30 and 50 percent of people taking medication for psychiatric disorders voluntarily — as most college students on those drugs are — don’t comply properly with prescribed regimens in one way or another.