Editorial: Pruitt has wrong ideas on improving education
02/25/2008 © Palm Beach Post

Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, has outlined a constitutional amendment that would do little to improve education in Florida but could provide a job for Sen. Pruitt when term limits force him from the Legislature.

Sen. Pruitt wants to change the state constitution to make clear that the Legislature - and not the board of governors that supposedly runs higher education - would have the power to set tuition. The issue is the subject of a lawsuit. Sen. Pruitt also wants to return to a system in which the education commissioner is elected rather than appointed by the state board of education. If the constitutional changes got on the ballot this November and were approved, the new elected post probably would be ready right around 2010, which is when Sen. Pruitt must leave the Senate. His office did not return a phone call asking whether he would be interested in the position.

It would be good to settle the tuition dispute. But the Board of Governors, not the Legislature, should have the authority. Voters created the Board of Governors after the Legislature killed off the old Board of Regents. Lawmakers took that drastic step for the purely political reason that then-House Speaker John Thrasher, a Florida State University alumnus, was angry that the regents rightly refused to approve a new medical school at his alma mater.

The Legislature continues to be driven by short-term political considerations. Tuition has remained damagingly low so the Legislature can give tax breaks rather than provide money to cover prepaid tuition contracts and Bright Futures scholarships. Sen. Pruitt, by the way, has been the major roadblock in reforming the Bright Futures program. Ideally, the Board of Governors would make tuition decisions - as well as decisions about providing adequate need-based aid - as part of a plan to move Florida's university system into the nation's top tier.
Arguments for keeping an appointed education commissioner are the same as the reasons for adopting that system 10 years ago. The governor - who appoints the state board of education, which chooses the commissioner - should be the primary voice on education policy. Although Sen. Pruitt says that an elected commissioner would provide more accountability, the separate office actually would give the governor an excuse for failing to improve education.

Ex-Gov. Jeb Bush, through choices such as Jim Horne and John Winn, proved that the system can produce lousy education commissioners. But Gov. Crist, who was the last elected education commissioner, let it be known that he wanted Mr. Bush's ideological appointee replaced with a professional. It is too soon to say whether the new commissioner, Eric Smith, will be a success. But there is no reason now to change the system.

Majority polled believe tuition hike is needed
02/24/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

TALLAHASSEE - Gov. Charlie Crist, the self-dubbed "People’s Governor," opposes higher university tuition because he says he wants to keep college affordable for the families he represents.

Leading lawmakers like Senate President Ken Pruitt say tuition should remain low enough that all residents here have a chance to earn a degree.

But a majority of Floridians recently polled by the St. Petersburg Times say the 11 public universities should charge more in tuition at their financially strained institutions.

Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed said they believe public universities here should raise tuition in response to shrinking operating budgets. That includes 44 percent of respondents who said schools should simultaneously grow enrollment, and 14
percent who favor freezing enrollment or reducing it, as the universities have been doing since summer.

"I think students and families are willing to pay more because they see the strain on universities," said Florida State University student body president Joe O'Shea of Dunedin. "When you start seeing them cut academic advisers or classes, I mean, that's critical."

Less than one-third of poll participants said tuition should remain where it is - the cheapest in the country.

The Times' survey also asked Floridians to rate the way the state's institutions are educating students. Sixteen percent rated them as "excellent," 50 percent rated them "good," 18 percent "only fair," 4 percent "poor" and 13 percent responded "don't know."

The Times education survey was administered to 702 registered voters Feb. 6-10 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

The survey did not ask participants how much universities should increase tuition or who should decide to raise it - a significant nuance that gets at the heart of current political wrangling between lawmakers and state university system leaders.

The board constitutionally charged with overseeing the university system is fighting with the Legislature over tuition-setting power, with both sides insisting the authority is theirs.

"The issue isn't so much the amount of tuition increase," said longtime Sen. Jim King, R-Jacksonville. "It's a question of who has the authority."

The Board of Governors wants a Leon County judge to decide once and for all, yet Senate and House leaders upped the ante this week by announcing they'll pursue a proposed constitutional amendment to "clarify" the Board of Governors' powers.

Translation: Curtail the board's reach, and cement in the Constitution that only the Legislature sets tuition rates.

The Legislature hasn't been opposed outright to tuition increases. Members just resist big ones, the double-digit kind that force them to set aside more money for the merit-based Bright Futures Scholarship program.
The politically untouchable program covers tuition for in-state undergraduates who meet GPA and SAT requirements, so when the tuition rate goes up, so does the state's tab.

Until this summer, the Legislature and Board of Governors had a sometimes uneasy but workable tradition of agreeing on modest annual tuition raises in the 3 to 8 percent range.

But when the Legislature proposed a 5 percent hike for this past fall, Crist initially vetoed it - effectively tipping the cart and sparking a rapid deterioration of relations between the board and leading elected officials.

Crist later allowed a 5 percent increase for spring, but by then the board was moving toward a showdown.

University leaders argue that especially with state support falling - from $14,039 per student 18 years ago to $10,728 today - they need to raise tuition so that it's at least closer to the national average of nearly $7,000.

In-state undergraduate tuition and fees are now about $3,600, the lowest in the nation.

In the Times survey, support for higher tuition was equal among college graduates and those without a college degree.

But those with incomes over $50,000 were more in favor of higher tuition 57 percent than those earning less than $50,000 a year.

Eleanor Hafer, 75, of Largo, says tuition should stay low. She has already seen some of her grandchildren forgo a state college "because the tuition was too high."

"Children today have enough of an excuse not to go to college, so I don't think we should raise tuition," said Hafer, a mother of three - two UF graduates and one USF graduate.

Rep. Joyce Cusack, D-DeLand, said raising tuition significantly is not a good idea when the state's economy is flagging.

"When do people go back to school? It's when the economy is bad," she said. "Is this the right time to raise tuition? I don't think so. It's like adding fuel to the fire."
Today's Letters: Watching education decline in Florida
02/24/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

In 1995, as a faculty member of the International Baccalaureate program at St. Petersburg High School, our governor's alma mater, I stopped advising my juniors and seniors to attend any of the state's schools of higher education. This was about the time when the erosion in the quality of higher education began with the mandatory summer school attendance for all undergraduates.

Remember 1987 when the University of Florida was one of the top 10 research and scholarship campuses in the country? Well I do. I stopped teaching in higher education - Chinese and Japanese history - in 2006 when I realized one of the unintended consequences of the FCAT system: Seniors at USF St. Petersburg didn't have a clue concerning the basic themes of world history and geography. I wasn't paid to teach that information so "the hell with it."

My neighbor, whose daughter is a high school junior, asked me about her attending UF. My response was that it would be a poor choice since the quality of education received would be pedestrian at best.

Since the state schools don't want any more students as it is, perhaps the governor should ask the Legislature to provide a scholarship usable only in out-of-state universities. I retired with 44 years of teaching high school and higher education students and at this time my only solace is that over half of it was in schools outside of Florida.

Dr. Wallace F. Witham, Belleair Bluffs

Bright Futures Growth Outpacing Funding
Lakeland Ledger © 02/23/2008

TALLAHASSEE | State spending on a scholarship program for about 150,000 college students is outpacing growth in the Lottery income that pays for it, so officials are considering changing the program to save it.

For the past seven years, Bright Futures costs have grown by nearly 165 percent, while Lottery money available for education grew at less than a fourth of that rate, according to an analysis by the Tampa Tribune for a story Friday.
Created in 1997, the merit-based Bright Futures scholarships have quickly become an essential element of how Florida students pay for college.

It currently pays for the education of nearly 150,000 college and university students at a cost of just under $350 million.

On a conference call earlier this week, state education officials, including Chancellor Mark Rosenberg, discussed the need to change Bright Futures because of its cost growth, although no definitive plans have been drawn up.

Lawmakers have discussed this issue for several years, but because the Bright Futures scholarship is so popular, nobody has been successful at shrinking it.

Reform Bright Futures scholarships
Florida Times-Union © 02/23/2008

The debate over Bright Futures is not what some think. It should not be about a fantasy that every parent can send their children with decent grades to Florida's universities without charge.

I wish the state could wave a magic wand to make that happen, because I have two adolescent children who work hard in school. My wife and I would love for them to attend college without our paying a cent. But we haven't believed in magic for a while, and neither should you.

Florida's Legislature has never paid for 100 percent of the costs of undergraduate education, and over the past 15 years, the Legislature has consistently reduced the instructional costs it reimburses universities for.

As Chancellor Mark Rosenberg says, up-and-down funding for our universities looks more like a yo-yo than the result of a thoughtful plan.

The structure of Bright Futures is part of the problem. A Bright Futures scholarship guarantees payment of either 75 percent or 100 percent of tuition and fees, and the lottery does not pay for all of those costs. Taxpayers pay the difference, and the Legislature has tried to maintain authority over tuition to reduce the taxpayer costs of Bright Futures.

The result is a financial mess, where universities do not have enough funding for the students currently enrolled. The Legislature has effectively pitted universities against students by refusing to change Bright Futures.
Some who value Bright Futures talk about the program as if it is a sacred promise to parents, when we should be talking about a sustainable funding model for colleges and universities.

I wish we could talk openly about the second issue, because it's crucial to the future of higher education in Florida.

Because of the state's budget woes this year, the university system's Board of Governors first froze entering-freshman enrollment and then asked universities to reduce enrollment to what is consistent with funding levels.

The Board of Governors had to take that step or start believing in magic.

Even with that step, class sizes have increased, summer schedules will be abbreviated and layoffs at universities have already begun.

Our choices in Florida as a whole are also limited.

We can have a university system open to all qualified students, or we can keep Bright Futures the same.

We can help students and their families manage the total costs of college, or we can ignore everything but tuition. We can focus financial aid resources on students and families of low and moderate income, or we can retain one of the most regressive student-aid systems in the country.

I will give up the fantasy of a full college ride for my children in return for a system that has space and classes for them, and where parents of their less fortunate classmates receive more financial aid than we do. And if you are a parent, you should give up that fantasy, too.

The truth is that if Florida's Legislature does not reform Bright Futures, Florida's universities will never be open to everyone capable of benefiting from college. This year, the University of Florida rejected 63 percent of applicants. Without predictable and stable funding for universities, a Bright Futures scholarship will never guarantee a college education; it will only be a hunting license for classes.

To think otherwise is to believe in magic.

*Sherman Dorn of Tampa is an associate professor at the University of South Florida and the father of two public school students.*
Scholarship dollars outpacing lottery funds
WMBB ABC 13 Panama City © 02/22/2008

The growth of Florida’s popular Bright Futures scholarship is far outpacing increases in lottery education money that pays for the award.

For the past seven years, Bright Futures payments have grown by nearly 165 percent, while lottery funding for education grew at less than a fourth of that rate, according to a Tampa Tribune analysis.

Without changes, some state leaders fear, lottery money that would go to other areas of education, such as public school construction, will have to be diverted to pay for the scholarships. One possibility, they say, is to change the criteria for the scholarships to award fewer of them.

“I don’t have anything against Bright Futures,” said former state Sen. Les Miller, who sits on a state commission that’s weighing changes to the scholarship. “What I have a problem with is its escalating costs. It’s breaking the bank.”

But many object to changing any part of a scholarship that currently bankrolls the education of nearly 150,000 college and university students at a cost of $347 million.

Every year, lawmakers and university presidents try to tweak the way the state pays Bright Futures scholarships. Every time, they fail. The scholarship’s political popularity, lawmakers argue, is bulletproof.

Now the state faces a $2 billion shortfall, however, and people such as Miller argue the scholarship is too expensive to maintain in its current form and could end up consuming most of the lottery education money.

The state university system chancellor on Thursday told the board that oversees Florida’s 11 public universities that the state must change Bright Futures to ensure it doesn’t take away money from students who need it. The state awards the scholarships to students based on their grades and test scores.

The chancellor, Mark Rosenberg, argues that the state fails to pay enough money to low-income students who need financial aid.

“Changing Bright Futures is the only way to save it,” Rosenberg said.
But state Senate President Ken Pruitt, perhaps Bright Futures’ strongest proponent in the Legislature, says Rosenberg and the state universities’ Board of Governors are trying to erode the scholarship’s effectiveness.

Universities have long argued that lawmakers are reluctant to raise tuition annually because they’ll have to increase the payout for Bright Futures. Rosenberg and university leaders argue that tuition remains too low because of that relationship.

“The overwhelming majority of parents and students in our state do not support cutting Bright Futures, and neither do I,” Pruitt told the Tribune in an e-mail.

Despite the momentum from those who seek to change it, it’s unlikely that anything will happen to the scholarship this year, said Sen. Lee Constantine, R-Altamonte Springs, who sits on the senate’s higher education committee.

“Bright Futures is a very powerful and popular program,” Constantine said. “Whenever you have something ingrained in the system, you have to be very careful about what tweaks you make.”

The Promise of Money

The Legislature created the scholarship in 1997 and promised to fund it from lottery revenues earmarked for education. Bright Futures covers 75 percent of tuition and fees for students who have a 3.0 high school grade-point average and earn an SAT score of 970. Students get 100 percent reimbursement if they earn a 3.5 GPA and 1270 SAT.

Over the years, the scholarship has consumed more of the lottery’s education money, which funds school construction, K-12 school operations, state university and other financial aid.

In 2000, the Bright Futures award took up about 15 percent of the lottery education trust fund. Last fiscal year, it made up 24 percent of the lottery’s education payouts.

“Left alone, we project that the total lottery revenue will be consumed by Bright Futures within seven years,” said Jade Moore, a member of the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission, which is examining the scholarship’s viability.

Lottery revenue increases every year, as do payments to the lottery’s education trust fund. But revenue transferred to the trust fund has increased by only 39
percent since 2000. Bright Futures payouts increased 163 percent, and the number of students receiving the scholarship increased by 109 percent.

Overall lottery expenses have increased at a faster rate than revenue, according to Florida Lottery figures. That’s largely because of the increased costs paid to vendors who help sell tickets, said Leo DiBenigno, the Florida Lottery secretary.

The share of money paid to the education trust fund also has decreased. Several years ago, the trust fund made up 38 percent of the lottery’s expenses. Today, it’s 31 percent.

The lottery has paid more into prize payouts, and just recently announced a bigger Lotto jackpot to players who spend more on each ticket. Lotto sales have been slumping.

“I could hope that players buy lottery tickets for the primary and sole purpose for funding education in the state,” DiBenigno said in an interview this week. “As nice as that would be, the bottom line, it’s not true. Players buy lottery tickets to win money.”

Proposed Changes

Miller, who sits on the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission with Moore, wants to revamp the way Florida pays financial aid entirely, erasing the set-up that’s skewed to awarding money based on students’ merit.

Miller has proposed awarding 45 percent to merit-based scholarships; 35 percent to need-based scholarships; and no more than 20 percent on other financial aid, such as state grants to students who attend private schools.

The commission has yet to consider Miller’s proposal, but if it agrees to the plan, the commission can bypass the Legislature and send the measure directly to voters.

Rosenberg also is proposing changes to include more need-based financial aid. In speaking to the Board of Governors on Thursday, he said tuition increases should not depend on how much is being paid to Bright Futures. That could allow the Legislature to cut back on Bright Futures funding and spend more on need-based scholarships.

Next week, the Board of Governors plans to launch a blog inviting public comment on the ideas before it pitches them to lawmakers.
In the end, it’s up to the Legislature to make changes to Bright Futures. And one legislator recently learned what happens when a change is proposed.

State Sen. Jeremy Ring, D-Margate, last month filed a bill that would increase the Bright Futures payout to students majoring in “high-need” areas, such as science, technology, engineering, nursing and education. It would reduce the award to students studying other subjects, such as those in the liberal arts.

A University of Florida student formed a group on the popular social networking web site Facebook objecting to the proposal. To date, nearly 20,000 people have joined the group in opposition to Ring’s measure.

The senator has since backed down. As soon as he’s able, he has promised to amend his bill so that no student would receive less.

“We will look to other revenue streams to fund the incentive program,” Ring said. “No student will lose any of their Bright Futures grant for choosing another academic major.”

ADAM EMERSON is a staff writer for The Tampa Tribune

Office of the Chancellor

Editorial: Dropping the reins
Gainesville Sun © 02/23/2008
These are the worst of times for the University of Florida and its sister institutions. UF President Bernie Machen made that point quite succinctly on Thursday when he showed faculty a chart indicating that per-student funding has been dropping steadily for two decades.

Continue to 2nd paragraph "We've diluted and deluded ourselves," Machen said, as he prepared faculty for yet another round of budget cuts.

University presidents are facing faculty layoffs and enrollment freezes. But if the prospect of thousands of Florida students being barred from Florida universities bothers the politicians there is precious little indication.

Asked by the St. Petersburg Times the other day about the presidents' worries over money, Gov. Charlie Crist replied, "If they're unhappy, maybe they ought to turn the reins over to somebody else."

Crist continued. "We have it pretty darn good here."
Is he kidding?

It gets worse. The Florida Legislature, facing a deficit of as much as $2 billion, isn’t likely to be sympathetic to the plight of higher education this coming session. Indeed, Senate President Ken Pruitt is so put out over the Board of Governors' efforts to raise money that he wants to pass a state constitutional amendment to take away the board's already ambiguous fiscal authority and restrict its ability to set policy.

No surprise there. Lawmakers much preferred the "good old days" when they were free to endow favored institutions with expensive new colleges and programs without regard to actual need.

Pruitt has a short memory. Legislative meddling and micro-management was precisely the reason Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment creating an autonomous Board of Governors in the first place. It is unseemly for legislators who, year after year, continue to reduce per-student funding to complain because they can no longer treat the universities like giant pork barrels.

And it gets even worse. This week, the Tampa Tribune reported that Bright Futures, the lottery funded scholarship program that finances the education of 150,000 Florida college students, is growing much faster than the lottery itself.

University presidents - those whiners that Crist would just as soon see go away - have been warning for years that Bright Futures is unsustainable.

Moreover, in an obviously failed effort to keep a lid on Bright Futures spending, lawmakers have kept tuition rates artificially low. The result is that universities lose both ways: Even as general revenue funding declines, tuition dollars fall short of making up the difference. That's a prescription for educational mediocrity.

In fact, Gov. Crist is very likely to get his wish. No doubt some of Florida's best and brightest university presidents will sooner or later depart for states that recognize the value of investing in higher education. And no doubt, a lot of Florida's best and brightest scientists, researchers and professors will exit as well.

Not to worry, though. As Crist says, "We have it pretty darn good here." Willful ignorance really is bliss.
Committee members appointed to Florida A&M's finance and operations task force wanted to look at a report Friday which clearly spelled out what has and has not been fixed at the university.

But that didn't happen. Instead, they received a mammoth 230-page report from a consulting firm that was thick with jargon that didn't fully outline improvements.

Task force members were concerned and critical of the firm's timing, saying they were just given a report due to legislators on March 1. The legislative session starts on March 4. Lawmakers granted the task force $1 million to verify corrections at FAMU. The report, however, is still a work in progress.

"It's extremely ponderous type of reading that you've given us now," task force member and retired Florida Supreme Court Justice Leander Shaw said. "I suspect it will not be well received by the Legislature. It looks like cut and paste at this point."

The timestamp on the corrected pages of the report given to task force members showed 7:25 a.m. Friday, just two hours before Friday's meeting was to start.

"Everyone has a degree of frustration of having a 230-page document that needs to be digested," Task force chairwoman Lynn Pappas said. "We're not going to solve the problem of the time table that's in our lap."

By the end of Friday's meeting, task force members and the consultants concluded that they would create a 10-page report which clearly specifies problem areas and improvements.

The task force plans to meet again Wednesday where they hope to finalize an initial report to present to legislators. Members have until June 30 to present a final report.

The report was written by Accretive Solutions, a Jacksonville consulting firm. The firm was hired nearly three months ago to verify whether FAMU administrators have taken proper steps to fix at least 62 financial and operational problems. Those problems have plagued the university and eventually led it to being placed on probation by the organization which accredits it.
Out of those 62 problem areas, 12 were rated below satisfactory. However, Tom King, of Accretive Solutions explained that the report was not final. The auditing firm has not completed work in some areas that task force members are most interested in, such as the oversight of contracts and grants.

At the end of the meeting, Pappas seemed to be more forgiving of the consultant's work.

"As much as we seemed rather dense when you entered the room, we understand better now," she said.

FAMU PD: Quarterback jailed after making up attack story
02/23/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Florida A&M freshman quarterback Michael Johnson was arrested Friday after he admitted to campus police that he lied about being attacked at gunpoint by three masked men in his dorm room earlier this week.

Johnson, 19, was taken to the Leon County Jail. He faces charges of filing a false report to law enforcement and making false official statements. Both charges are misdemeanors.

"During the course of the investigation, he decided to confess to committing the act," FAMU Police Chief Calvin Ross said Friday evening.

Johnson's mother, Mina Forte-Ferguson, told the Tallahassee Democrat and FAMU authorities Thursday that three men rushed in her son's room at Gibbs Hall about 4 a.m. Tuesday and pushed him on the bed.

Forte-Ferguson then said the intruders wrote "Mike + football = death" on his mirror, television and refrigerator. Johnson's parents returned to Durham, N.C. following several meetings on campus, including one with head football coach Joe Taylor.

Ross said Johnson confessed to writing the threatening messages and to ransacking his room. There was never a gun involved.
"We're still in the process of getting him to state his reason for doing this," Ross said. "His mental state is going to be determined when we hear what his reason was."

Forte-Ferguson and her husband, Neil Ferguson, told the Democrat Thursday that they were returning home after being satisfied that their son was safe and that the university was handling the situation.

Johnson enrolled at FAMU in January after transferring from the University of Tulsa where he was recruited to play quarterback out of Durham's Hillside High School. But he never played for the Golden Hurricanes.

His parents arrived in Durham at 11 a.m. Friday. Six hours later, Forte-Ferguson was calling the Leon County Jail to check on her son after hearing about his confession Friday to police. She said she was trying to hire an attorney to represent her son.

"I'm not doing too well right now," she said. "I have to find a way to get back down to him now."

University spokeswoman Sharon Saunders said she was pleased that Johnson had come forward, but saddened by the confusion and level of discomfort the incident brought to students and parents, especially after a recent shooting incident at the University of North Illinois.

"What Mr. Johnson alleged was very serious and I'm sure that now that the truth is out, students living on campus, and in that residence hall particularly, will now feel more at ease," Saunders said.

"With the recent approval by the FAMU Board of Trustees to hire four additional police officers, the administration has shown a high level of commitment to safety for its students and employees. We will continue to do all that we can to provide a safe environment for our students and our university community."

Taylor, the head football coach, was in Tampa Friday to meet with alumni and could not be reached for comment.

FAMU Athletic Director Bill Hayes said he and Taylor will soon discuss the incident.

"We're going to let campus police continue its investigation," Hayes said. "Then myself and Coach Taylor will sit down and discuss the matter and make a decision."
The 6'1, 208-pound, player was given a partial athletic scholarship at FAMU, but has been unable to participate in the team's offseason conditioning program because of a foot injury.

Johnson was a highly regarded quarterback in high school, making official visits to North Carolina and Arkansas before signing with Tulsa.

**Gillum implores FAMU students to tackle community issues**
02/23/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Speakers at Florida A&M University's Black History Month Convocation impressed upon students that community service and social awareness are among the most important ways to celebrate black history.

Friday's event in Gaither Gymnasium opened with an invocation that the FAMU community "be mindful they've been given a legacy of greatness."

This legacy was illustrated by the selection of Tallahassee city commissioner and former FAMU student body president Andrew Gillum as the keynote speaker. Gillum was introduced by his sister, current student body president Monique Gillum.

Gillum reflected upon his grandmother's intonation to "bring that college home" and inspire others. He said in light of Monday's shooting of a 15-year-old boy and Tuesday's arrest of a Rickards High student in possession of a firearm, there is a sense of hopelessness infecting youth in this nation.

"One of the things proven to help change their trajectory are people in their lives to hold them accountable to do something great," he said.

Not wanting to state a problem without offering a solution, Gillum challenged those with education to intervene. He asked for 500 volunteers to become mentors and donate an hour a week to a young person.

"We are in the academy of higher learning. It's intended to create the space for you to think," he said. "The reason we're situated here is to inspire the little black boys and girls running around outside that they can come here."

Gillum is the third youngest of seven children and the first to finish college.
For almost four years, the excitement swelled: An academic medical center was coming that would revolutionize health care in Palm Beach County.

The start of construction, originally set for this year, is now anybody's guess. It's unclear if Boca Raton Community Hospital, which had partnered with two South Florida universities, will ever build it.

The hospital, facing a bleak economy and internal problems, recorded a crushing $42 million operating loss last fiscal year. Administrators expect to spend 2008 figuring out how to salvage their dream of academic medicine.

The plan involves Florida Atlantic University and the University of Miami, which already are training doctors at FAU and considered the new hospital a centerpiece to their joint medical program.

"We had a $42 million loss. That's a slap in the face, and we have to do something about it," said Richard Schmidt, chairman of the hospital board and a trustee of his family foundation, which pledged $75 million toward the new medical center.

Such a considerable loss pulls attention away from the $600 million project. The hospital's new chief executive officer, Richard Van Lith, could not say when construction would begin and acknowledged the project could fall apart if revenue and the overall economy don't improve.

The Charles E. Schmidt Medical Center, planned on 38 acres at FAU, was slated to open in 2011. Originally planned for 530 beds, the medical center would have been the largest in the county. But now it would be smaller than Delray Medical Center, JFK Medical Center in Atlantis and St. Mary's Medical Center in West Palm Beach.

Administrators scaled back to 410 beds because of declining admissions at Boca Community, which has 400 beds. The hospital, near Glades Road, is less than a mile from the site for the new medical center at FAU. Schmidt Medical Center would replace Boca Community though it's undetermined what would happen to the current hospital.
"I talk with my staff about earning the right to move across the street," Van Lith said about moving the hospital across Glades Road. "We're committed to it but we have to deal with these issues now."

Lax billing procedures were central to the hospital's internal problems. Medicare and private insurers weren't getting patient bills on time, which resulted in more denials, said Steve Ruzika, chief financial officer. The hospital recently changed management in the billing department and hired a consultant to fix the problem.

Declining admissions, fees for temporary nurses and unpaid hospital bills also contributed to the hospital's poor performance last year. Administrators pared down the $42 million operating loss to $28 million with investment income from its foundation, which has more than $220 million.

Several consultants will be working to determine how Boca Community will become profitable again. It will take 10 to 15 months before things turn around, Ruzika said.

Design work on the new medical center continues despite the uncertainty. According to the agreement with FAU, the hospital has until Dec. 31, 2009, to opt out of the land lease and walk away from the deal forged in January 2006.

"They haven't determined yet what they're going to do to get the hospital built," said David Kian, FAU general counsel. "Our desire is to have the hospital open as soon as it is economically feasible to do so."

Construction must begin five years after FAU approves the hospital's plans, according to the agreement. Those plans have yet to be submitted. University officials would say only that they expect it to open by 2018, to fall within their 10-year development plan.

The pursuit of academic medicine — coveted for elevating health care — started when the hospital's finances were stable. In 2006, Boca Community netted $5.6 million, a stark contrast to last year. In 2005, financial advisers hired by FAU determined the hospital was fiscally strong enough for the project. The hospital's last slowdown was fiscal year 2002, when it lost $28 million.

"For anybody who's concerned about the future of academic medicine in Palm Beach County, there's an interest in what happens next," said Paul Gionfriddo, president of the Quantum Foundation, a grant-making organization focusing on education and health care. "If the delay extends, that's an impact. That's a valuable service Boca Community was going to offer."
Health care leaders have longed for academic medicine in the county for years because it brings the latest advances in medical care and more local doctors. The University of Miami opened its medical school satellite at FAU in 2004 and has since linked with other hospitals, such as JFK and Bethesda Memorial Hospital in Boynton Beach, to train its students.

Originally, Boca Community decided to wait for the new hospital to begin a residency program. Now, administrators plan to start it at Boca Community. But without the new medical center as the anchor, academic medicine will be dispersed. It wouldn't be ideal, said Dr. Steven Falcone, executive clinical dean for UM's regional campus.

Palm Beach County's lack of an academic medical center has created an opening for outside institutions. Johns Hopkins Medicine set up a liaison service in the town of Palm Beach last year to send patients to Baltimore, and Yale University's medical school is exploring an expansion in Palm Beach County.

Some wonder if Boca Community will get past its financial problems. Dr. Michael Dennis, chairman of the Palm Beach Medical Care Commission, said, "I really don't think it's going to get off the ground. The numbers were just overwhelming."

Dennis is part of a coalition working to bring an academic medical center to central Palm Beach County. He expects a deal is imminent but did not reveal details.

Even so, Boca Community recently ran a newspaper ad that read: "How to build an academic medical center." Touting its 1-year-old, open-heart surgery program, the ad said, "World class cardiac care is at the heart of the transformation" of Boca Community to the Schmidt Medical Center. The ad urged readers to donate.

"I really hope they're able to pull that back together," Suzette Wexner, president of the Palm Healthcare Foundation, said of the academic medical center. "That was a very exciting concept."

FAU Update: Barry Kaye College of Business keeps accreditation
02/24/2008 © Stuart News
The Barry Kaye College of Business at Florida Atlantic University has maintained its accreditation in business from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International. Founded in 1916, AACSB is the longest serving and largest global accrediting body for business schools that offer undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees in business and accounting. Less than 10 percent of the world's business schools are accredited by the AACSB.

Earning and maintaining accreditation is a multiyear process in which a business school undergoes meticulous internal review, evaluation and adjustment. The College of Business was last reviewed and accredited in 1997.

"Maintaining AACSB accreditation was one of my top priorities upon accepting the deanship of the Barry Kaye College of Business in 2006," said Dr. J. Dennis Coates, dean of the college. "Recognition of our academic rigor and integrity is more than just an accolade by peer reviewers; it is the essential ingredient to our ability to recruit top level students, build a nationally renowned faculty, and development of world-class facilities."

FAU is one of the only universities in the Treasure Coast region that offers AACSB-accredited business programs. The Treasure Coast campus in St. Lucie West offers accounting, business administration, finance, general management and marketing programs. The Virtual MBA, a graduate-level Web-based program, is also available. Contact Dr. Gregory Bushong, associate dean, at (772) 873-3314 or gbushong@fau.edu. Visit www.business.fau.edu for an overview of the college.

**Good for You: Feb. 24**
02/24/2008 © Stuart News

Indian River Community College was honored to receive recognition from the Florida Division of Community Colleges with the 2007 Chancellor's Best Practice Award for Exemplary Partnerships.

The award recognizes the creative, innovative partnerships which IRCC has initiated that are geared towards enhancing student learning.

The Power Plant Technology Institute is a partnership that meets the needs of current Florida Power and Light employees looking for professional development and also serves new students seeking a promising career with a local employer.
Another area recognized was the Living Science program. The Living Science program provides faculty development opportunities for area teachers, including laboratory and field activities that can be easily integrated into math and science instruction.

Also recognized was the IRCC Tech Prep program. Tech Prep allows area high school students who are in career and technical programs in their schools to smoothly transition and continue their studies with IRCC.

The award also recognized the Florida Atlantic University and Indian River Community College Joint Campus. At this joint campus, IRCC and FAU share a $22 million state-of-the-art facility that houses and supports a unique 2+2 partnership that provides students with convenient options to complete a four-year degree without having to leave home.

Expanding students options for continuing education close to home, IRCC now offers Bachelors Degree programs in nine areas focusing on teacher education, nursing, organizational management, public safety, and healthcare management.

These examples demonstrate the ways that Indian River collaborates to positively impact the communities that the college serves.

The Exemplary Partnerships Award is one of five Chancellor’s Best Practice Awards given by the Florida Division of Community Colleges. Thirty-five entries competed for recognition in award categories that demonstrate passion and energy for facilitating student success throughout the Florida’s community college system.

Jane Goodall to speak at FAU on Wednesday
02/24/2008 © Stuart News

BOCA RATON — World-renowned scientist Jane Goodall will visit Florida Atlantic University at 4 p.m. Wednesday in the University Arena on FAU’s Boca Raton campus, 777 Glades Road.

The event is part of the 2008 Peaceful World/Peaceful Mind series presented by FAU’s Peace Studies Program in the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters.

Goodall will address current work at the Gombe Stream Research Center in Tanzania, where research into the chimpanzee has been ongoing since 1960. She
also will discuss her global youth program Roots & Shoots, and the Jane Goodall Institute programs that have evolved to conserve precious forest habitat and improve the lives of people living adjacent to Gombe National Park and in other parts of Africa. As a United Nations Messenger of Peace, Goodall also will address her reasons for hope in these complex times and ways in which every individual can make a difference every day.

Goodall's books and information about the projects of the Jane Goodall Institute will be available. Admission is $15 for community members and free to FAU faculty, staff and students. Tickets can be purchased by calling (800) 564-9539 or visiting www.fauevents.com.

Florida Gulf Coast University

Editorial: New FGCU programs can wait for rosier financial days
02/24/2008 © Naples Daily News

True for households, true for Florida Gulf Coast University: When the flow of money coming in is reduced, something has to give.

The question also comes down to this: Should cuts be made in existing programs or add-ons?

Like many households, FGCU has decided to belt-tighten by postponing programs, namely three additional majors.

FGCU officials say they fear losing students who were expecting undergraduate majors in journalism and master’s degrees in mathematics and environmental science. Yet, FGCU’s decision to keep its foundation as strong as possible appears to be a sound one — taking care of what’s in place before branching out.

Also sound is a grass-roots student petition drive to let the Florida Legislature know that those to-be-added programs have value and are in demand.

We know that FGCU officials did not take this decision lightly. We also know that these cuts are part of an overall state economic downturn, with less real-estate and development activity meaning fewer taxes collected.
With FGCU’s importance to our region, and with expansion being part of the program now and in the future, we look for its setbacks to be few and far between.

First things first is the way to go.

Restaurants will offer free food, non-alcohol drinks to designated driver
02/24/2008 © Naples Daily News

Florida Gulf Coast University students are tackling the problem that caused the death of two classmates this school year and poses a continuing risk for the community inside and outside university walls: alcohol.

Today through Wednesday, the FGCU Student Government is sponsoring Eagles Rise for Sober Rides to teach attendees about responsible alcohol use. The event has been in the works for more than a year, but its need really hit home when a student died in a drunken driving accident in the fall semester and another died of alcohol poisoning in the dorms a few months later.

“A lot of people knew the student who lived in the dorms,” said Angela Rosado, student director of the event. “We all have something in common; we are all students.”

Irresponsible use of alcohol is a major issue among FGCU students, but some do stupid things when they’ve been drinking, such as driving, said sophomore George Aquila.

“People just need to be smart about it,” said Aquila, a communications major. “When I go drinking with my friends, no one drives. That’s stupid.”

Part of the issue is the university isn’t within walking distance of any bars but there are plenty within the immediate vicinity and students don’t think it’s too far to drive after they’ve had a few.

“They think they are invincible, and they’ve drove before, so they do it again,” said Chase Cotton, a freshman marketing major. “It is not that far of a drive.”

At Eagles Rise for Sober Rides, which takes place from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. next to the Student Union, there will be a crash car from the Lee County Sheriff’s Office that has been in a drunken driving accident.
The Lee County Health System is bringing beer goggles to the event and students can navigate a pedal cart course while wearing them.

“Not only is it fun, but it is important to realize what it is like to drive under the influence,” Rosado said. “They might not realize that after they have been drinking.”

In addition to several freebies, the student government will announce its sponsorship program with area restaurants for sober drivers. For any sober driver with a group of drinkers, the seven sponsorship restaurants will provide free non-alcoholic drinks and appetizers.

Cards will be handed out with the phone numbers of taxi companies on them. The cards will include information comparing the cost of a DUI to a cab ride.

The event comes less than a week before the university goes on spring break.

“A lot of kids on spring break, they party, and we want to make sure they make the right decision,” Rosado said.

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**Florida International University**

**No Articles Today**

**Florida State University**

**FSU film school hosts Oscar-night fundraiser**

02/25/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Faculty members and patrons of the Florida State University film school came out Sunday night for the school's first-ever Oscars party fundraiser.

Attendees dressed to the nines. They sat at round tables on the deck of Chez Pierre and watched the Academy Awards as the televised ceremony was projected onto a large screen.

A silent auction included film posters, props and other memorabilia from films the film school's faculty members have worked on. Tickets to the party cost $30 a person and $50 a couple.
Frank Patterson, dean of the film school, said he thinks the school will have raised about $5,000 by the end of the night. Some of the money will be used to pay for students to travel to film festivals across the country.

"We've been talking for years about finding a way to get our patrons and donors together for a night of fun," Patterson said. "The Oscars was the obvious (time) to do it."

Several Oscar winners were in attendance. Rexford Metz, a professor of cinematography, won an Oscar for documentary and was part of several teams that won eight Oscars in the visual effects and cinematography categories. He is well known for filming the underwater footage of "Jaws." He still carries a scar on his left hand from when the mechanical shark nicknamed "Bruce" bit him in an accident.

Richard Portman, a professor who teaches sound, was part of a team that won an Oscar in 1978 in sound for "Deer Hunter." He has been nominated for an Oscar 11 times.

"There's not a better film school than in Tallahassee, Florida," Portman said. "If you want to make a movie, you come here."

Reb Braddock, associate dean of the film school, shared what films he favored for the Oscar this year.

"I root for 'Juno' because it's the underdog, but my favorite is the film 'No Country for Old Men,'" he said.

**Mag Lab's open house attracts an eager crowd**

02/24/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

The 10-minute wait between each demonstration of "The Incredible Shrinking Machine" was too long for seventh-grader Jonathan Grisiaffi.

Jonathan was among a big crowd of people attending the 14th-annual open house at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory. The event featured more than 60 experiments and exhibits as well as lectures for scientists.

Research designer Russell Wood oversaw the "shrinking" demonstration. He placed a quarter between two fiberglass cylinder pieces, then put the pieces into a copper coil and finally a bulletproof cube.
He then injected 7,200 volts of electricity into the cube, expanding the magnetic field around the quarter and shrinking it into the size of a dime. Wood explained that it was all because of Newton's third law — for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

At the end of each demonstration, the quarter was raffled off. Jonathan lost out to someone else.

"Don't worry we'll be back," Jonathan said. "I want the quarter really bad."

The Mag Lab is a research facility for faculty, visiting scientists and engineers. It's operated by Florida State University, the University of Florida and the Los Alamos National Laboratory, and it's sponsored by the National Science Foundation and the state of Florida.

Cars and school buses quickly filled areas around the Mag Lab. Thousands of people came to the event, said Mag Lab Director Greg Boebinger, who wore a tie-dyed shirt.

Sarah Harris came with her sons, George, 5, and Harrison, 3.

"I thought it would be fun," she said.

Her sons' favorite exhibit was the "Electro-Magnetic Launcher," which used stored electricity to propel a metal cylinder toward the ceiling of the lab.

Other exhibits included "Build a Comet," where a replica of a comet was created using dry ice, soda, ammonia, water and sediment. People lined up to shoot potatoes into a pond via a potato cannon.

The event drew everyone from kids to seniors. Theresa Hughes came with her daughter, Lauren.

"I think the grown people like it as much as the kids," she said

New College of Florida
No Articles Today
University of Central Florida

Voting: All the cool kids are doing it
The dust has finally settled on the yellow-and-blue-streaked battlefield. The large wooden signs are taken down, and millions of fliers sit in trash cans.

The 2008 Student Government Association presidential elections got off to a rocky start with all the allegations and mud slinging, but in the end, the student body came out in force, showing their power in numbers at the voting stations.

And, boy, did you ever show your numbers.

The total of student votes this year was just shy of 12,000.

So how impressive is this number? What is the comparison?

Just look to the campus population, which is roughly 48,000 students. That means about one-fourth of the students at the University of Central Florida took the time to cast their votes. Look around and find three other students; at least one of you voted last week.

What makes this even more impressive is the growth of the voter numbers from past years. During the 2004 SGA presidential election, fewer than 6,000 students voted.

Look at it from an outside perspective, as well. More UCF students voted for an SGA president than the number of students enrolled at the University of West Florida or Florida Gulf Coast University.

This same kind of voter enthusiasm can be seen in the 2008 presidential primary elections. While primaries usually have disappointing turnout numbers, this year has broken the mold. In some states, such as New Hampshire, polling places actually began running out of ballots. State parties are breaking records.

It seems that everybody is starting to find a voice this year.

Maybe, finally, we are beginning to take strides toward ultimate student involvement in the things that matter to our university. For too long, SGA was just a foreign concept that brought about awkward glares from the student body.

The key to having a successful SGA is having a large base of students who care. After all, it is supposed to be about the students; it even says so in the title.
TALLAHASSEE -- Higher fees could be coming to University of Central Florida if lawmakers in Tallahassee get their way.

Bills working their way through the State House would allow UCF to join the University of Florida, Florida State and the University of South Florida in charging a premium on top of tuition, a hike that could be as high as 30 percent.

The money from the premium would be used to improve undergraduate programs.

Currently, only the three largest schools in the state can charge this "differential tuition."

Samantha Friefeld misses her lava lamp.

For months, the decorative lamp cast a constant and comforting pink glow in Friefeld's University of Central Florida dorm room. It burned day and night.

But with the possibility of being part of a winning energy-conservation team, Friefeld flipped the switch on the pink light and the rest of her electronics.

Friefeld, 18, is one of thousands of UCF students taking part in a monthlong, energy-savings competition.

Students who live in on-campus housing are charged with trying to save as much energy as they can in February. The winners, who will be announced in March, could receive scholarships from the Student Government Association, gift certificates from local businesses and a pizza party.

In its second year, the competition was taken up a notch this year when the organizers -- UCF's Center for Energy and Sustainability and the university's Housing and Residence Life Department -- included two residence halls at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management campus near International Drive.
Stacey Radnor, with the Center for Energy and Sustainability, said the contest is a great way to make the students more aware of energy consumption.

"It shows the students how they can take some personal responsibility," she said. "There are things they can do every day that are not major life-altering changes."

UCF has 46 residence halls on the main and International Drive campuses with about 5,700 students. The one steadfast rule of the contest is simple -- save energy. For the contest judging, campus housing will be broken down into three zones.

At the end of February, authorities will compare each building's energy consumption. The winning buildings -- one building in each zone will be chosen -- will have "the highest percentage reduction in electricity consumption relative to a baseline period for each respective building in February of 2005, 2006 and 2007," according to the rules.

Each student in the three top energy-saving buildings will have two weeks to submit a two-paragraph essay and a weeklong log, describing the measures they took to conserve electricity.

Of those students who submit essays and logs, 10 will be chosen from each of the winning buildings -- a total of 30 winners -- to receive a $200 scholarship each, Radnor said. Members of the Student Government Association and the Center for Energy and Sustainability will review the essays and logs to determine the winners.

The students in the one building that reduces energy consumption by the greatest percentage will also get a pizza party and gift certificates to Best Buy and Wackadoo's Grub & Brew restaurant.

Friefeld, who lives at the on-campus Lake Claire Apartments, in an apartment she shares with three other women, said she has learned to shut off lights, unplug electronics once she is done with them and open the curtains in the apartment for natural lighting.

Friefeld, who is a member of the SGA, is not eligible for any of the scholarship money if her building should win. But she is gung-ho for the contest to help her fellow students and the environment.

"I think it's a good way to conserve energy. It's good for the environment," she said.
As for her beloved lava lamp -- it will be turned back on Saturday.

**New law would let UCF shine with tuition premiums**
Orlando Sentinel © 02/23/2008

Lawmakers are setting the stage for the University of Central Florida and two other universities to join the trio of top-ranked state schools that can charge a premium on tuition.

If proposed legislation becomes law, UCF students could eventually face a 30 percent fee on top of the base price of tuition.

"It's important that UCF not be left behind," said state Sen. Lee Constantine, R-Altamonte Springs, who co-sponsored the Senate version of the bill that could open the door for research-oriented schools such as UCF to charge the fee.

UCF administrators were disappointed in June when Gov. Charlie Crist approved legislation allowing only the University of Florida, Florida State University and the University of South Florida to charge the fee, also known as differential tuition.

The schools sought the fee to improve undergraduate education, which could include hiring more instructors. The improvements are needed to help the trio compete with top schools in other states, officials said.

Crist's decision was surprising because he had earlier vetoed a 5 percent across-the-board tuition increase and blasted increasing costs to students. Crist said student support for the fee helped change his mind.

It's not clear whether Crist would support a measure allowing more schools to charge the fee. The governor recently submitted a proposed budget that did not include tuition increases.

A call for comment was not returned Friday, but one legislator who backs the bill is worried.

"We do want to try to get UCF included, but that may be very difficult because of the governor," said Sen. Evelyn Lynn, R-Ormond Beach, co-sponsor of the Senate bill and a sponsor of last year's legislation. Rep. Stephen Precourt, R-Winter Garden, is sponsoring the House version.
The proposed bill was filed this month amid an acrimonious struggle over who controls tuition -- the Legislature or the Board of Governors that oversees state universities. The board has joined a lawsuit to take control of tuition, which is the lowest in the nation. Senate President Ken Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, countered with a call for a constitutional amendment cementing the Legislature's control.

Unlike regular tuition increases, the fee is not covered by the state's lottery-funded Bright Futures merit scholarships, nor would the expense be covered by most pre-paid tuition contracts bought after July 1, 2007. Students have to pay the difference out-of-pocket.

Students last year said they supported the fee because the money must be spent on improving undergraduate education, which could include hiring more instructors.

Maria Pecoraro, director of governmental affairs for the UCF Student Government Association, said she favors a law that would allow UCF to charge a premium based on tuition, as long as the state doesn't use that as an excuse to cut the amount of money it gives universities.

"What we don't want to see is the state lowering allocations because schools are getting more money from tuition," Pecoraro said this week during a campus seminar on tuition.

The proposed legislation doesn't single out specific universities that can charge the fee. Instead, it establishes a set of criteria that would allow them to do so.

One proposed criterion gives schools the go-ahead if they spend at least $100 million on research. Officials at UCF said Friday that they expect to cross that threshold in a few years. They expected Florida International University could follow a few years later, and Florida Atlantic University in five to 10 years. The bill would make it virtually impossible for other Florida Universities to charge a tuition premium. Schools that focus on undergraduate education, such as New College in Sarasota, would not qualify without a major shift in academic focus.

The original three -- UF, FSU and USF -- are still deciding how to phase in the increases, which take effect in the fall. The law allows them to impose increases in increments of 15 percent of base tuition a year until they reach the maximum fee of 40 percent of tuition at UF and FSU and 30 percent at USF.

The fee applies to freshmen and transfer students entering school in the fall. Students enrolled prior to the fall are exempt.
Greek Week returns to UF's campus
02/25/2008 © Gainesville Sun

On Thursday, the games will officially begin.

Greek Week 2008 is back at the University of Florida for the second consecutive year after taking a four-year hiatus.

More than just Greek-related games and trivia questions, the week provides the Greek community with the chance to interact while helping the Gainesville area with its various service-related activities, said history senior Emily Bogenschutz, vice president of programming for Order of Omega, the Greek leadership honor society.

The entire Greek community - the Interfraternity Council, Multicultural Greek Council, National Pan-Hellenic Council and Pan-Hellenic Council - has been divided into eight even teams to encourage unity and friendly competition.

The teams, which are named after Greek gods and goddesses, such as Zeus, Apollo and Aphrodite, are comprised of men and women, and, unlike previous years, also include at least three council representatives, Bogenschutz said.

The kickoff will take place Thursday morning at Turlington Plaza. Participants are encouraged to partake in as many events as possible in order to gather points for their teams. They gain points by wearing their team's T-shirt, playing various games and by winning.

Events include the kickoff at Turlington, a case study competition, Greek feud trivia, a social at the Swamp, a community service day and, to mark the end of the weeklong celebration, a Greek field games day on Sunday, when the winning team will receive its trophy.

Most of the games will stay within the Greek-related theme, such as building chariots and attempting to ride them, relay races and dressing in a toga in the fastest time.

Bogenschutz said this year's organizers added a canned food drive to benefit those in need in Gainesville.

Greek Week 2008 also aims to infuse a friendly yet competitive feel, Bogenschutz
"Everyone wants to win. Last year we didn't, so there definitely is a competitive edge," said Anthony Crawford, a UF building and construction junior who will be competing on team Athena.

"I'm a little nervous," said political science freshman Lauren Edman, "but I am ready for the unknown."

**UF Update: For 60+ years, UF has worked alongside agricultural industry**
02/24/2008 © Stuart News

Since 1947, The University of Florida/IFAS Indian River Research and Education Center has served the Treasure Coast's prominent agricultural industries. University researchers and administrators have labored together with citrus and vegetable growers, improving yield, quality and pest- and disease-management strategies. Citrus remains the region's most important crop, with more than 170,000 acres dedicated to its production. Among the citrus crop varieties produced here are grapefruit, oranges, tangelos, tangerines and lemons.

As the years have passed, additional commodities have been added to Treasure Coast growers' lists: farmers in Indian River County grow squash, snap beans and tomatoes. In St. Lucie County, cucumbers and strawberries are produced in greenhouses using hydroponics. An ornamental nursery industry has become equal in size to the citrus industry, with nearly 6 million square feet of greenhouse space in use for agricultural purposes.

Most residents are aware of the region's renowned citrus industry but many are unaware of the nursery industry's new prominence. Other interesting facts are that more than 7,200 acres along the Treasure Coast are in use for bee colonies; a 4-acre mango farm is located in Martin County; more than 65,000 heads of cattle graze in the region, most in St. Lucie County. Twenty-seven sheep are in Indian River County. These facts are according to recent surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

As the crops have changed, the university's services to the industry have adjusted accordingly. Within the last five years, the greatest area of university research growth has been with the protection of natural resources. Because farmers and ranchers contribute significantly to the stewardship of the state's
land, wildlife and natural resources, the university is assisting them with this mission. Agroecology is a new word used to describe these efforts. Agriculturalists are pioneers in proper land use for the sustainability of an industry as it interfaces with the region's natural resources. They are to be congratulated for centuries of devotion to the cultivation of food and the protection of the land upon which we all depend.

**Bugged out**  
02/24/2008 © Lake City Reporter

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences extension office has been a part of Columbia County’s growth and development for almost a century.

In the 1800s, the United States government granted federally controlled land to educational institutions. In turn, these land grant universities were required to include agriculture in their missions, which later expanded to include agricultural research stations and extension offices.

Today IFAS includes the University of Florida College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, research institutes and extension offices.

Recently the future of the program has come under scrutiny along with UF President Bernie Machen.

Machen was quoted in the online agriculture newspaper Farm and Ranch News as saying “agriculture is a dying industry in the state of Florida” and “not worthy of the investments being made by the Legislature.”

The story also said that Machen planned to cut IFAS faculty positions, extension offices and research centers.

The comments were first reported by the Tampa-based newspaper Feb. 5 on its Web site.

Machen denied making the statements and sent a letter to the publisher, dated Feb. 7, stating that he never made any of the statements concerning agriculture that Farm and Ranch News attributed to him.

In the letter, Machen went on to say that agriculture is important to the Florida economy and that UF would continue to support agriculture in any way possible.
But the university is facing mandated budget cuts that have to be finalized by July 1, which could trim as much as $50 million from UF’s budget.

Even though the statements were denied by Machen, the fight to protect IFAS and its programs is brewing at a local level.

Colleen Finley’s four boys have been active in the 4-H program in Columbia County for years, she said.

“It is appalling to me if the president said what he was quoted as saying,” Finley said. “It sounds like he doesn’t understand the Florida economy at all and he certainly doesn’t understand the beginnings and purpose of UF.”

The Florida Farm Bureau Federation states that the state’s agricultural industry has an economic impact of close to $100 billion annually.

“Agriculture is the basis of what the school is supposed to be teaching,” Finley said.

Funding for the University of Florida for IFAS is a partnership between state, federal and county governments to provide scientific expertise to the public.

In 2006/2007 IFAS received $159 million through the state, with 22 percent of the funds being used for the extension programs, according to the IFAS Web site.

Federal grants also generate moneys for the programs, which is funneled through the university and into IFAS.

Grass roots rumblings

Each county in Florida has an extension office that provides information critical to that area. Master Gardener programs and 4-H programs are also funded and operated through IFAS.

Family and Consumer Science agent Corien Peavy said the purpose of IFAS is to provide the research information formulated through the university to people in the community.

“We present the information in a way that is relevant to them,” Peavy said. “This way they don’t have to go to the university to get the information they need.”
Adults and children benefit from the classes and research provided by UF through IFAS, Peavy said.

For many children, 4-H programs and activities are a learning outlet away from school, designed to provide hands-on experiences and beneficial social training.

Putting some of those skills to use, the Star Wars 4-H club are writing letters to Machen, touting the benefits of 4-H clubs and IFAS. The letters will be sent to University of Florida by the end of February.

The group has collected about a dozen letters so far.

One of Finley’s sons, Jacob, learned about money during a 4-H camp that took the children to the Federal Reserve and educated them on how to budget money and write checks.

In Jacob Finley’s letter he asks Machen not to cut 4-H funding because of the valuable information and skills he has learned by participating the last two years. In addition to learning more about the natural environment, he said he learned how to make sweet pickles and strawberry jam and has even taken a class on photography.

Cutting programs from IFAS and especially 4-H would leave a gap in education and be detrimental to Florida communities, she said.

Finley writes about the benefits her four children received by being involved in programs offered by IFAS and especially 4-H in her letter to Machen.

In addition to the benefits her children have received both socially and mentally, Finley said, classes on farming, agri-tourism and pine tree farming have been beneficial to her family as they prepare to farm recently acquired acreage.

“Agri-business is alive and well in our county, and we are doing our part to insure it remains so for years to come,” Finley said in her letter.

The enthusiasm of the extension agents and what they do also makes the programs worthwhile, Finley said.

Teaching tools

Their are five program areas within the Columbia County IFAS office: agronomy; horticulture; agricultural and natural resources; family and consumer sciences; and 4-H youth development.
Dr. Cynthia Higgins, Columbia County Extension director and 4-H coordinator, describes IFAS as the educational and research arm of UF.

Research conducted by extension agents pertains to their area of service and to the environment they are a part of, Higgins said.

“One of the best things is, we respond to the needs of the community and because of the way we do things, programs respond quickly to the things that happen to the people we serve,” Higgins said.

Agronomy is Bill Thomas’ area, which covers peanuts, tobacco and row crops. Thomas helps farmers find alternative enterprise development, gives advice on crop nutrition and protection and keeps farmers up to date on rules, regulations and laws regarding operation and production. Elena Toro works with local residents on livestock management and care and does research and studies on the areas natural resources.

Peavy teaches classes on food safety and certification, finance management and nutritional needs.

The extension agents serve as the community’s voice at the university, Peavy said.

“We let the people at UF know what services are needed in the community,” Peavy said.

Each county extension office has an advisory committee composed of local representatives that help assess the needs of the community and decide what programs the extension agency will offer.

Volunteers help

Volunteers keep the extension office running by providing services as 4-H volunteers or by imparting advice about how best to keep bugs out of the rose patch through the master gardener program.

Curriculum is imparted on would-be volunteers through UF. Once they pass the training exam, 75 volunteer hours have to be completed in the first year of service, with 35 hours required for the second year, Higgins said.
The Master Gardener’s program uses volunteers to help answer questions and provide information to homeowners and aspiring green thumbs.

Yvette Graham, master gardener volunteer and master 4-H director, has been volunteering through extension agencies across several states for more than 40 years and was shocked when she read the supposed statements made by Machen.

“I thought, ‘here we go again,’” Graham said. “The money is out there, it’s just put in the wrong places.”

Any dollar that could be spent on education and is not lessens the next generations ability to make good decisions, Graham said.

While all the programs offered by IFAS are important tools within a community, the learning environment the programs provide for kids are the most important to Graham.

“Schools don’t teach (students) to think, they teach them the FCAT,” Graham said. “So you have to have programs like this.”

Finley urges everyone in the community to write letters to Machen and local legislatures about the importance of IFAS in Columbia County and Lake City.

Letters to Machen can be sent to the Office of the President at the University of Florida at 226 Tigert Hall, P.O. Box 113150, Gainesville, FL 32611, or call Jennifer Chasteen at (386) 755-4027.

**Farmers unite to blunt UF's ax**
02/25/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

Florida farmers are banding together to keep imminent budget cuts from affecting county extension service offices and agriculture research sites.

Farmers and agriculture advocates rallied after a Tampa-based agriculture publication quoted University of Florida president Bernie Machen as saying "agriculture is a dying industry" in Florida and "not worthy of the investments being made by the Legislature" in the university’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences.

The institute helps pay for extension services, which advise farmers and gardeners as well as run 4-H programs, in every county. It also subsidizes
agricultural research centers, including the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center in Wimauma.

Machen has denied making the antiagriculture comments and said he was appalled that Farm & Ranch News didn't print a correction. Publisher George Parker said he stands by the story.

Still, Machen has left open the possibility that the institute will face a disproportionate budget cut when UF reduces spending by about $50-million this summer, and that's what worries farmers.

When the cut trickles down to the counties, extension agents could lose their jobs, and services such as the Master Gardener program could be eliminated.

A 6 percent cut, which is what Machen said Thursday to expect, would be about $9-million, institute spokesman Jack Battenfield said.

Florida Farms Bureau executive director Pat Cockrell said if the institute's budget is slashed much more than 6 percent, it will be crippled.

Jobs, programs at risk

In Hillsborough County, that means some extension office agents could lose their jobs, Hillsborough County extension office director Joe Pergola said, and their programs would leave with them.

"If you lost, say, the 4-H agents, you'd lose the capability of reaching the youth in your community," he said. There are about 28,800 children in the county's 4-H program, he said.

Pergola doesn't know which positions might be lost because he doesn't know how much the budget will decrease. His office got about $1.3-million from state and federal funds in 2007. County governments also provide some funding for local extension offices.

UF will finalize its budget cuts April 15, and the institute will have to decide how they trickle down. Battenfield said it's too early to discuss details, especially because layoffs will be involved. Salaries account for about 80 percent of the institute's budget.

"You have to be careful because you're talking about losing programs and about layoffs," he said.
For now, Pergola is working on a revised budget that will shift the extension service's priorities, though he declined to give specifics.

Local officials weigh in

Programs offered by the extension service include 4-H, the Master Gardener program and services that help families plan nutritious meals. Extension agents also tell farmers how to make their crops more profitable and how to fight pests and diseases. Agriculture officials say these services have helped Hillsborough County farmers make more money in the past decade.

While program directors are preparing for the cuts, politicians and advocates are fighting to minimize them. Machen has received about 60 letters in the past two weeks from people concerned about disproportionate cuts, spokeswoman Janine Sikes said.

Hillsborough County officials are also weighing in with Machen. County commissioners agreed Wednesday to send a letter, along with one from county Environmental Protection Commission Chairman Al Higginbotham, asking that the institute's budget cuts not be disproportional.

The county depends on the institute for its research and extension services, for things like tips on how to conserve water and for help dealing with last fall's ammonia leak, Higginbotham said.

Farming is big business in Hillsborough County: Farmers sold $763.2-million worth of agricultural products in 2006, according to a recent county report.

Hillsborough County helps fund the institute's programs. It helps pay some of the faculty, donated the land for the Wimauma research center and gave about $1.8-million for the extension service in 2007. But Higginbotham said with tough times ahead, the county won't be able to replace the money UF takes away.

"You will not be able to look at the county for picking up slack," he said.

A graduate course in favoritism
02/24/2008 © St. Petersburg Times
The University of Florida, beset by financial struggles of historic proportion, has managed to find enough money to keep Senate Finance and Tax Chairman Mike Haridopolos off the soup line. Haridopolos, who had otherwise been unemployed since the summer, has just landed a job as a full-time UF lecturer in a move both sides are proclaiming as a match made in academic heaven.

Maybe. Then again, there are enough winks and nods in this deal to make a taxpayer's head spin:

- The nonapplication. Jane Adams, UF's vice president for university relations, told the Gainesville Sun she heard through a mutual friend that Haridopolos was looking for work. She sent his name to an interim dean with the question: "Is there anything that would be a good fit there?"

- The blindsider. The chairman of political science at UF says his department was not consulted, as is the routine, and told the Sun his dean presented the hiring to him as a "fait accompli."

- The salary. Haridopolos will get $75,000, which is $5,000 more than the person he replaced. But Haridopolos has no Ph.D., unlike the assistant professor he replaced, and two other political science lecturers who do have doctorates earn an average of $46,580 each.

- The job schedule. Haridopolos spends the spring in Tallahassee for the 60-day legislative session and, in any event, doesn't plan to move to Gainesville from his home in Indialantic. So university officials now say he will help establish internships while he is away from campus.

Haridopolos, who holds the purse strings for universities and is in line to become Senate president in 2010, says that UF will get no special favors from him in his legislative capacity. That hardly seems fair, given the special favor the university clearly has bestowed on him.

**America Saves Program Tackles College Debt**

02/24/2008 © Tallahassee-WCTV (CBS)

Experts say the average American has nearly $8,000 in credit card debt and little in savings.

Now a new program at the University of Florida is working to educate one group at the greatest risk for falling into debt...college students.
A national campaign called the America Saves program runs from February 24th through March 2nd.

UF researchers hope educating college students now will help them prepare for life after they leave school.

The program focuses on teaching people how to build wealth, and control debt.

UF Financial Management Researcher Michael Gutter says "one of the fastest growing groups for bankruptcy statistics is those under the age of 25. College kids are quadrupling the number of credit cards that they have and their debt is going up every year that they are in school."

At the state level, the Florida Saves program will host events in every county across the state.

Click the link below to visit the America Saves website.

**UF may cut number of transfers**

Gainesville Sun © 02/23/2008

Under pressure to cut enrollments in light of pending budget cuts, the University of Florida is poised to reduce the number of transfer students it will admit for the fall of 2008.

In a memo sent out to UF leaders this week, UF Provost Janie Fouke instructed deans and department heads to delay accepting transfer students because the university probably can't afford to take as many next year.

"It is highly likely that UF will admit fewer of these students. This means each of you will have to make some difficult decisions, requiring you to weigh the transfer students against local capacity," Fouke wrote.

UF typically admits between 2,500 and 3,000 transfer students. UF officials expect a budget cut of about $50 million come fall. The university was told in January by the state Board of Governors, which oversees public universities, to prepare to curtail enrollment. Since that time, UF has admitted a full class of freshmen, expecting about 6,600 to enroll in the fall.

There was also no reduction in graduate student admissions. As such, transfer enrollment is the only near-term group UF can trim.
The final deadline for transfer applications is June 7. Unlike freshmen applicants, who receive notice of admission on a common deadline, UF does not have a set deadline for notifying transfer students of acceptance. Fouke's memo asks that transfer applicants not be informed if they've been admitted until April 15 at the earliest.

**University of North Florida**

**UNF offers an MBA program with global implications**

02/24/2008 © Florida Times-Union

THE FEW, THE PROUD Students join a group for intensive study both here and overseas.

Traveling across the world while earning two master's degrees used to be a rare undertaking less than a decade or two ago. But in today's globalized world, universities are increasingly competing for the attention of the business graduate student.

They offer international programs, study-abroad sessions and intense curriculums to make their students one step above the rest.

The University of North Florida is one such school, offering a unique GlobalMBA program that thrusts its students through 15 months of rigorous course work at three international universities and a final semester at their home institution. To make the program a truly global experience, UNF partnered with three schools - Cologne University of Applied Sciences in Germany, University of Warsaw in Poland and Dongbei University of Finance and Economics in China. DUFE became a part of the program in early 2007 after the University of Provence in France withdrew in 2006.

The program "is different from any other program that we've seen anywhere in that it requires students to spend multiple semesters abroad," said Jeff Steagall, UNF professor of economics. "We're the only ones that have an integrated program where the curriculum is completely designed ahead of time, and the students have to spend an extended amount of time in four different countries."

A global exchange

The program is designed for a group of about 40 students - 10 from each university - who stay, work and study together throughout the entire program. The strategy is an advantage because it offers students a broader learning
experience outside of the classroom by allowing them to interact with students from another culture on a regular basis, Steagall said.

"My favorite aspect of this program so far is our class," Katie Modzelewska, a GlobalMBA student, said via e-mail. "The German classmates shared with us their traditions and experiences and it's a lot of fun."

In the classroom, students take international business courses taught in English such as management, marketing and business environment based on the resident country. But, a unique offering of the Global-MBA is its courses on intercultural communication, Steagall said. These courses are offered in every country. They focus on cultural issues and how they influence interactions in society and business, he said.

The students take multiple courses each semester and are required to work on a thesis throughout the program. Steagall said the typical course load for a graduate student is three, so GlobalMBA students must be able to manage a heavy workload. Upon completion, the students receive two master's degrees: the UNF MBA and a Master of Arts in International Management and Intercultural Communication from Cologne, Steagall said.

A competitive process

Obtaining two degrees in 15 months is not the ordinary offering for most international business schools in the United States, so getting into the program can be competitive. The process starts with an application, which must be submitted by Jan. 1 of the year you intend to participate. Prospective students are interviewed in January or February and notified whether they are chosen to participate.

"I was sold just by the way I was treated when I was applying for this program," Modzelewska said.

Prospective GlobalMBA students have a few requirements they must meet to be eligible for the program. These include a bachelor's degree, a GMAT score of 480 or higher, the ability to speak English fluently and seven business courses usually acquired in a business-based undergraduate degree, Steagall said. The program is not limited to previous business majors, and will accept individuals with other undergraduate degrees if they take the classes to meet the requirements, he said. Students must also meet any visa requirements for travel.

If students like the sound of the program, they must find a way to meet the $30,510 cost if they are an in-state or $67,340 if they are an out-of-state student.
Steagall said the cost of the program is comparable to what a student would pay in the United States for tuition, books and supplies and room and board during the same period.

"Schools are trying to make a huge amount of money off of the international programs - we're not," he said. "We take our public charge very seriously here."

A flagship program

The University of North Florida has taken the GlobalMBA seriously by making it part of a flagship program in hopes that it will draw students from all over the world. Steagall said the diversity and unique educational experiences the program offers makes its students highly attractive to potential employers.

"Businesses want to hire people who are already able to go and drop into a new situation and deal with all of the culture shock issues associated with it," he said.

Part of what Modzelewska enjoys - but struggles with the most - is learning to adapt quickly to the new cultural environment. She said it is important to learn these skills because they are keys to being successful in business and in life.

For some students, what resonates the most is the people they meet and the memories they share.

"I had the opportunity to live with a wonderful German and Polish family, and that experience alone has been indispensable," Modzelewska said. "I leave Germany having formed a family and friends for a lifetime."

University of South Florida

**Today's Letters: USF's need for a teaching hospital is genuine**
02/25/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

New USF hospital wrong on all counts Feb. 18, editorial

As a Florida taxpayer, an alumna and immediate past president of the Faculty Council of the USF College of Medicine, I have serious concerns about the comments made in this editorial. Let me address some of its points.

- "Universities, including USF, are turning away students and imposing hiring freezes."
Actually, Florida desperately needs more opportunities for residency training to attract high-quality physicians. What's unsaid is why state budget cuts are now affecting Florida medical schools. The University of South Florida and the University of Florida lost several million dollars in their budgets because the Florida Legislature siphoned those funds into two new state-funded medical schools. The "need" for them is not a lack of educational options for highly qualified premedical applicants, but local economics and perhaps desire for prestige for the alma maters of some legislators. The net effect is a lowered bar for doctors-in-training and university staffing cuts. What a deal for Florida taxpayers.

- Legislation exempting medical schools from the state's certificate of need (CON) "would remove a major barrier by allowing the university to lobby for a hospital while avoiding the most important criterion: need."

This is a complete mismatch of missions. CONs use population numbers, local economies and politics to determine immediate "need," not the mission of educating and training the next generation of first-rate health professionals.

- "Giving USF or other medical schools a freebie on certifying need only invites a rush toward empire-building."

The Legislature effectively funded "empire-building" when it divided an already limited budget to start up two new and unnecessary medical schools built from the ground up.

- "Why not expand residencies with USF's existing hospital partners?"

Because USF has tried. It is naive to believe that a perfect union exists when partners must necessarily protect their own interests. Tampa General Hospital and H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center have different missions, as well as financial and political agendas. It's no surprise that private affiliates and the Florida Hospital Association should impede USF's growth. Because USF, hiring top physicians in academia, will become highly competitive and earn its keep.

- "But the issue here seems to be more about independence and self-image than medical necessity ..."

Sour grapes over USF's "independence and self-image"? Knowing the facts, it's obvious why the Florida Hospital Association aggressively opposes Sen. Dennis Jones' forward-thinking bill. Any trade organization will act to protect its interests. The real question is whether the Florida Legislature should budget only
"just enough" to maintain private interests and a mediocre status quo. Shouldn't we invest wisely in the growth of state universities and higher education for our children? Can Florida taxpayers really afford not to?

_Sandra G. Gompf, M.D., Plant City_

**Finding common ground, chic crowds and garbage**

02/25/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

The tug of war between the University of South Florida and the Tampa Bay Sports Commission will be a major topic at today's Tampa Sports Authority meeting.

At the core of the dispute? Does USF have the right to ask the city to forgo an economic opportunity just to satisfy its football team? Conversely, does the Sports Commission have the right to ask USF to sacrifice its football desires so it can play host to the Atlantic Coast Conference football championship?

If we were talking the Super Bowl, I would definitely say USF doesn't have the right. But the ACC game doesn't have nearly as much cachet. Still, siding with USF not only alienates the ACC, but potentially hinders efforts to bring other events to town.

In the end, both entities need to find common ground. This is more complex than simply supporting the "hometown team" or generating tourists....

For any Outback Steakhouse to close is surprising. For one on Clearwater Beach to shutter its doors cries out for more tourists, fewer condos and better parking.

But I bet an Outback in Centro Ybor wouldn't close....

I'm no expert on cool, but you can't say you're among the area's chic crowd until you've been to the Push Ultra Lounge in downtown St. Petersburg.

Seen on a bumper sticker: Vote Democrat, It's Easier Than Working.

Mayor Pam Iorio wants to increase garbage fees by a $1.58 a month, but some City Council members think cutting pickup to once a week is a better alternative. Why?

It's a nickel a day, and if you miss your pickup day, you're stuck with two weeks of garbage.
LAKELAND - More than 100 regional leaders visited the University of South Florida Lakeland this week for the Tampa Bay Partnership's Chair's Leadership Breakfast on the Polk Community College-USF Lakeland campus. The Leadership Breakfast is held monthly, but Thursday morning's event marked the first time it has been held in Polk County.

In his opening remarks, Roy McCraw, chairman of the TBP, the regional president of Wachovia Bank and a former Lakeland resident, said, "I'm very optimistic about economic development in our region."

"We are in perhaps the most exciting area of the United States for development," he said.

"The Tampa Bay Partnership aims to bring all attributes and advantages of the region together so we can grow and go forward," he said.

State Rep. Seth McKeel, the newly elected vice chairman of the Bay Area Legislative Delegation, shared his views on this year's legislative session and how the region can work together on advocacy to support its priorities.

"I see opportunities for legislative initiatives than can bring this area together," he said.

"Transportation is the number one focus of the Tampa Bay Partnership, and my vision is for a reliable commuter rail system connecting and uniting Tampa and Orlando."

Another high priority, McKeel said, is the new campus USF has planned for the intersection of Interstate 4 and the Polk Parkway.

"This project is critical. It's going to be the most important economic development tool Polk County has ever had in its toolbox," McKeel said.

"This is truly a critical year in the Legislature, and I believe we're going to get it done," he said.
In addition to leaders of TBP, the event included representatives of USF Lakeland, Polk Community College, at least seven area chambers of commerce, four economic development organizations, Lakeland Vision, Polk Vision and Leadership Polk and the Central Florida Regional Planning Council. 

The Tampa Bay Partnership is a regional organization encompassing seven counties - Hernando, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota.

It also includes three metro areas - Tampa, St. Petersburg and Clearwater; Lakeland; and Sarasota and Bradenton.

Within that region the partnership works with its partners to market the region nationally and internationally to conduct regional research and to coordinate efforts to influence business and government issues that impact economic growth and development.

**University of West Florida**

**iTenWired wants to spark the Gulf Coast**

02/24/2008 © Pensacola News Journal

Put the Pensacola Bay Area economy under a microscope these days and what you'll see isn't a pretty picture.

There are some bright spots, but the anemic housing market, flat retail sales and a rising unemployment rate all signal a rocky road ahead to economic recovery.

Zoom out, however, to a broader regional view of the central Gulf Coast - Mobile to Fort Walton Beach - and it's a much rosier picture, with Pensacola straddling one of the fastest-growing regional economies in the nation.

Increasingly, local business leaders, investors and entrepreneurs are looking beyond county and state borders to find business opportunities and partnerships.

That's exactly the idea behind iTenWired, the brainchild of the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce.

The group held its first-ever summit in Mobile last week, attracting 75 entrepreneurs, investors, business owners and academics. They heard from a panel of regional experts discussing everything from patent laws to attracting venture capital.
So, what exactly is iTenWired?

It's an effort by the Pensacola chamber to bring together entrepreneurs, ideas and capital to help launch start-up, tech-related companies and create high-paying jobs.

By partnering with economic development councils in Mobile, Baldwin, Santa Rosa and Okaloosa counties, the chamber hopes to cross-pollinate entrepreneurial ideas and investment capital among the growing tech companies along the Interstate 10 corridor between Mobile and Fort Walton Beach.

That the event was held in Mobile, recently ranked as the fastest-growing mid-sized metro market in the country by Forbes magazine, was not lost on the Northwest Florida audience. Just a 50-minute drive from downtown Pensacola, Mobile's stunning success over the past few years in attracting industry and high-paying jobs is garnering national and international headlines.

Linking Mobile's industrial and academic assets with Pensacola's growing high-tech sector and the University of West Florida is one of the principal goals of iTenWired.

"The idea behind iTenWired is to provide a forum for linking people, ideas, talent and capital so that we start to build a critical mass around our technology entrepreneurs, help them grow and connect with each other," said Charles Wood, senior vice president of the Pensacola chamber.

Wood, one of the driving forces behind the creation of iTenWired, said the time is right to forge stronger economic ties between Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.

"The magnitude of the innovation and entrepreneurship going on along the Gulf Coast right now is very impressive," Wood said.

For example, Wood said the fastest-growing tech company in Florida is AppRiver, a Gulf Breeze Internet security company with a substantial international client base.

Niels Anderson, CEO of KAMedData and VeritasHealthCare, both started in Pensacola, said one of the most important aspects of iTenWired is the chance to network with other entrepreneurs, investors and academics.
But beyond networking, Andersen said iTenWired provides a means to brand Pensacola as a nationally recognized tech hotbed, and a haven for entrepreneurs and start-up companies.

Wood wants Pensacola to become known as a great place to start, grow and maintain a tech company.

If iTenWired advocates beat that drum long and loud enough, Andersen believes "we can create this technology superstructure. And I think it's something we can brand, like a Silicon Valley."

University of West Florida economic professor Richard Hawkins said his reason for attending the event was to find out what is happening with the economies of Baldwin and Mobile counties.

"I'm trying to find something to steal and take back home," Hawkins joked.

The tone of multi-state regionalism struck by this first iTenWired meeting ? the second summit is set for May in Destin ? resonated with Andrea Moore, regional manager for international trade development for Enterprise Florida Inc.

"I'm a strong believer in regionalism," Moore said. "I don't see boundaries when it involves business opportunities."

Moore said iTenWired is a way to leverage existing talents, ideas and opportunities in Northwest Florida and "connect the dots" with Mobile and Baldwin counties.

"I think this is a great idea," said Jay Massey, president and CEO of Coco Design Associates in Pensacola. "The idea behind iTenWired is that it's very strong on entrepreneurial development."

Massey believes Pensacola is poised for an explosion of tech growth, fueled by progress on a proposed downtown tech park, and the start of construction of the new $31.3 million, 92,000-square-foot Science and Technology Building at the University of West Florida.

Woods believes iTenWired's efforts to connect entrepreneurs and ideas is setting the stage to brand Pensacola as a major regional, if not national, tech center.

"My goal for Pensacola is that it become of the center of everything along the Gulf Coast," said Wood
The value of a college education is undeniable in terms of greater earning potential for graduates. But the state gets an outstanding return on its investment as well because successful students become greater contributors to the communities in which they live and work."

If that sounds like the philosophy of any university president you know around this college town, you might be surprised to learn that it's the opinion of the president of a nonprofit private college in North Miami, Johnson & Wales. That's just one of Florida's hundreds of private for-profit as well as nonprofit independent colleges and universities that, contrary to another popular opinion, do not specialize in educating the children of the wealthy, but are increasingly providing close-to-home university classes for minorities and families earning less than a modest $60,000 a year.

This year, the role of these nonpublic institutions of higher learning is big, in large part because the state universities are having to limit their enrollment, double class sizes and otherwise cut back on offerings because of the state's financial crisis. They've been underfunded for about five years in terms growth, with more and more students knocking at the door, holding Bright Futures scholarships in hand each year. Finally, the universities are saying they can't squeeze in any more — not and expect to graduate current students on time. And this build-up of trouble is exacerbated by the demand this spring that the State University System reduces its budget by $48.6 million. That's an estimated $6.5 million less at Florida State and $2.2 million less at Florida A&M.

But the independents are hurting, too, because the governor's proposed budget devastates a tuition-assistance program called Florida Resident Access Grants (FRAG) that the state provides to full-time undergraduate students at the 28 Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida that produce about one-third of all college degrees in the state.

The FRAG grants, about $3,000 a year, are at risk of being cut in half.

Also at risk are Access to Better Learning and Education (ABLE) grants (about $1,250 a year), which help fund mostly lower-income students who are enrolled in both diploma and degree-granting programs in myriad areas in some of the
200 institutions in the Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges.

These relatively small grants provide the state with a huge return on its investment — in part because these students are not otherwise using taxpayer dollars that support the public universities.

It's imperative that lawmakers, when confronting what are unquestionably complex budget problems, make careful distinctions between stopping programs to reduce waste or duplication, and cutting expenditures that are true investments, from which nothing but a positive payback can be expected.

**Briefs: Progress pumps cash into state universities**
02/24/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

Facing a nationwide shortfall of new nuclear workers, Progress Energy decided to train some, giving cash to universities throughout the state. Educating new nuke workers isn't the only thing the St. Petersburg utility is up to with the more than $1-million it plans to donate to university programs this year. The University of Florida in Gainesville received $460,000 for its Water Institute, a program founded by Progress Energy to help address water resource issues in the state. The funding also supports a nuclear reactor training program. The University of Central Florida in Orlando will receive $416,100 for a business leadership program; the University of South Florida will receive $150,000 for its new Power Center for Utility Explorations, a program targeted toward innovative solutions to energy issues. In Ocala, the Central Florida Community College received $50,000 for a training program for technical professionals.

**National Higher Education Issues**

**Seeking the lesson, the answer in wake of latest college shootings**
02/24/2008 © Naples Daily News

First thing Feb. 15, Editorial Page Editor Jeff Lytle sent me an e-mail:

“Want to write a column on the NIU tragedy?”

I e-mailed back that I didn’t know what I could say.
I hate to babble without furthering the discussion, but that’s all I can do here.

For the seven years prior to my coming to Naples, I served as publisher of the Daily Chronicle newspaper in DeKalb County, Illinois.

The paper is uniquely tied to Northern Illinois University, where a gunman, according to the latest reports, killed five and injured 16, before taking his own life, on Valentine’s Day.

For one thing, the paper’s founding editor, Clinton Rosette, is credited with leading the efforts to recruit NIU to DeKalb more than 100 years ago, when Illinois was expanding the state university system. Sound familiar to Florida Gulf Coast University followers?

The story is that he and other town officials dammed the Kishwaukee River, which is on par with the Cocohatchee in terms of its relaxed flow. They unleashed it just prior to the visit by state officials, and even stationed anglers along its banks, in order to augment the natural beauty.

The first structure at the university, the iconic Altgeld Hall, is nicknamed “The Castle,” because it looks like a castle and it sits in a bend of the Kish. Just before I left DeKalb, the university had completed renovations of the beautiful old building, complete with frescoes in the banquet hall of important figures, including senators, presidents and Clinton Rosette.

I know John Peters, the school president, as well as a publisher can get to know a university president. I know a number of faculty and staff and police and fire officials. In a special arrangement, we published a phone book, called the Communiversity Directory, in conjunction with the university, which was distributed to all students on campus and to all community residents. It is a communiversity there.

Peters has done a remarkable job of upgrading the university’s faculty, buildings and national image. In my seven years, the overall pride in the university went from mild to fanatical and much of that is due to Peters. It also didn’t hurt that the Huskie football team, under much beloved Coach Joe Novak, who just stepped down, beat schools like Alabama, Maryland and Wake Forest in recent years.

From all accounts, Peters and the university did everything to upgrade the security of the university, following threats and racial slurs written on a bathroom wall in December which authorities believe are unrelated to the
shootings. They shut the school down early for the holiday break, in order to prevent a tragedy.

A professor friend told me he had an armed guard stationed outside his office when he wrapped up work before the break. It sounded extreme at the time. When I examine the emergency response, it seems as if it was remarkably swift and professional.

Timing is everything and in the past few years, DeKalb County had formed a single 911 center with good, coordinated response to major emergencies. The local agencies and university had spent time on disaster training and upgraded their professionalism. The area had supported through fundraising a brand new hospital that opened in October with state-of-the-art equipment.

It’s also an area that embraces mental-health work. The top civic leaders are outspoken in their support and fundraising. This will prove vital in the days ahead.

I don’t know why the tragedy occurred. But I do not know if any university or town could have been better prepared or have handled it so well.

One of the reasons my family and I love Naples is the community-oriented Midwestern values that exist here. The two feel very similar.

So here’s all I can say.

NIU is a wonderful university in a wonderful town. My heart aches thinking about what happened.

By all accounts so far, I don’t know if we are going to find anyone to fully blame here.

I don’t know about you, but that is probably the scariest prospect.

Naples Mayor Bill Barnett told me two weeks ago that he was looking at reviewing security at City Hall, following the shooting in Kirkwood, Mo., of a mayor and the murder of two council members, the public works directors and two police officers by a disgruntled citizen. And that’s a good idea.

In our society, we like to find someone or something to blame, and that has proved useful in terms of our improving cars, food, schools and airports, children’s toys and so on.
But there are so many ways to do harm when someone sets his mind to it.

One need only read “Romeo and Juliet” or one of the almost daily reports of suicide bombers somewhere in the world to see young men committing mass violence when they feel rejected and angered, whether by the world or a woman. I’m not saying we don’t try to fix it. We must. But we shouldn’t distract ourselves by thinking this is a new or uniquely American problem.

In this case, it looks like there was a good student, a good person, who stopped taking medications he needed to keep him healthy. And he became something evil.

I don’t know a family today who can honestly say they haven’t been touched by mental illness. Unlike other communicable illnesses, which kill or harm by transference to another, mental illnesses also can turn the sufferers into their methods of harm.

As with many other illnesses, there are only treatments, not cures, and it sounds as if this student had lived a purposeful life with medication until this recent, out-of-character breakdown.

As a crime and courts reporter in the Florida Keys, I did a yearlong series that followed the number of people killed on Keys roads. The number far exceeded murders or any other accidental or violent means. That’s the case pretty much anywhere. But we tend to take it for granted, getting in our cars and going about our business every day.

The experience left me marveling at how easy it is for a simple driving mistake or even purposeful action to cause so much destruction and pain.

One person can easily destroy what it has taken years of effort by many to create. Destruction is easy. Creating something takes so much more effort.

It’s really remarkable, when you consider, on balance how much goodness we are able to enjoy in our everyday lives, when it is so easy for harm to occur.

How much can we focus on preventing harm? Is it justified to do bad and unfairly imprison people or harm those we think could be a threat someday?

Perhaps we can’t cure evil, but instead treat it with an overabundance of doing good?
We want to find a way to right a wrong. To fix a problem so it doesn’t happen again.

But I am at a loss here.

So, although I have written a column, I don’t think I have anything to add.

Perhaps some of you, wiser than me, can find something to learn, something to fix here.

**Administrators' Pay Rises 4%, Beating Inflation for 11th Consecutive Year - Chronicle.com**
02/25/2008 © The Chronicle for Higher Education

The median salary of college administrators increased by 4 percent during the 2007-8 fiscal year, outpacing inflation for the 11th consecutive year, according to a report released last week by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources.

The pay raise for positions including presidents, chief academic officers, deans, and various vice presidents and directors was the same as in the 2006-7 academic year. Salary data were reported between September 2007 and January 2008.

"Employees are the most important assets of any college or university," said Andy Brantley, chief executive of CUPA-HR. "I am very pleased to see that 2007-8 salary increases match or slightly exceed increases provided during the previous two fiscal years."

Salaries were reported for 73,575 administrators in 272 different positions at 1,307 colleges and universities. Data were collected from about 81 percent of doctoral institutions, 63 percent of master's-degree institutions, and 51 percent of bachelor's-degree institutions. Some 400 specialized and two-year colleges also participated.

Half of participating institutions were public, half private. Salary increases were slightly higher at public institutions. The biggest differences were in athletics positions, which rose 4.3 percent in public institutions compared with 4 percent at private colleges.

Leaders of doctoral institutions earned an average of $365,190. The average for chief executives at master's-level institutions was $226,000, while those leading
bachelor's-level colleges earned $220,000, on average. Presidents of two-year institutions earned an average of $156,870.

The position with the highest reported median salary was dean of medicine, at $385,461. The lowest median salary was for assistant director of student activities, at $40,218.

Education Department Agrees to End Controversial Upward Bound Study - Chronicle.com
02/25/2008 © The Chronicle for Higher Education

Yielding to pressure from Congress and grant recipients, the U.S. Education Department has reluctantly agreed to abandon a controversial evaluation of the Upward Bound college-preparation program.

The study, which began last year, was designed to measure whether Upward Bound would have a bigger impact on college-going rates if it were refocused on higher-risk students. The program helps prepare low-income and first-generation students for college.

But the evaluation, which required grantees to recruit twice as many students to their program as normal and assign half of them to a control group, was unpopular from the start (The Chronicle, August 17, 2007). Critics, led by the Council for Opportunity in Education, a lobbying group for the federal TRIO programs for disadvantaged students, said it was unethical, even immoral, of the department to require programs to actively recruit students into programs and then deny them services.

"They are treating kids as widgets," Arnold L. Mitchem, the council's president, told The Chronicle last summer. "These are low-income, working-class children that have value, they're not just numbers."

He likened the study to the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiments, in which the government withheld treatment from 399 black men in the late stages of syphilis so that scientists could study the ravages of the disease.

But Larry Oxendine, the former director of the TRIO programs who started the study, says he was simply trying to get the program focused on students it was created to serve. He conceived of the evaluation after a longitudinal study by Mathematica Policy Research Inc., a nonpartisan social-policy-research firm, found that most students who participated in Upward Bound were no more likely to attend college than students who did not. The only students who
seemed to truly benefit from the program were those who had low expectations of attending college before they enrolled.

Mr. Oxendine concluded that the program was serving too many high-achieving students—students who really belonged in Talent Search, a less-intensive, less-expensive federal college-preparation program that is also part of TRIO. To test this theory, he proposed a study comparing Upward Bound participants who were at high risk of not attending college with a control group of nonparticipants and with Upward Bound participants who were more likely to enroll in college.

"Upward Bound has lost its focus," Mr. Oxendine, who retired last summer, told The Chronicle in July. "My hypothesis is that we're serving the wrong students now, and if we serve the right ones, we will see significant improvement."

**Battle Against a Study**

But the Council for Opportunity in Education, which says the Mathematica study was "contaminated" because students were allowed to participate in other college-preparatory programs, including Talent Search, fought the plan tooth and nail. In May, it began a lobbying push that sought to undo the department's actions through legislation. The effort, which the group dubbed Operation Rolling Thunder, focused on members of the Congressional Black Caucus, including Rep. Robert C. Scott, a Democrat of Virginia who sits on the U.S. House of Representatives education committee.

Their fight bore fruit last summer, when both chambers of Congress adopted amendments to legislation to reauthorize the Higher Education Act that would prohibit the department from proceeding with the study, or at least from forcing institutions to participate in it.

Then, in December, Congress passed an omnibus spending bill for the 2008 fiscal year that barred the Education Department from spending any of its budget on the evaluation.

**Changing Course**

But the department did not knuckle under until last Thursday, when Assistant Secretary Diane Auer Jones sent a letter to grantees saying she had decided "to terminate the evaluation and to engage stakeholders, including Congress, in discussions about a new evaluation that would be responsive to our collective needs and concerns."
Ms. Jones said that the department had already set aside enough money to continue the study through the end of the year, but that "in the context of the controversy surrounding the evaluation," had decided to end it sooner.

Mr. Oxendine could not be reached for comment on Friday.

In a statement, Mr. Mitchem credited Congress with the department's reversal.

"With those strong bipartisan messages, it was clear that the department could not continue on its current path," he said. "We are greatly relieved that this ill-advised evaluation is finally behind us."

Blackboard Inc. Is Awarded Payment From Competitor in Patent Case - Chronicle.com
02/25/2008 © The Chronicle for Higher Education

A federal jury in Texas awarded Blackboard Inc. $3.1-million on Friday, saying that a smaller Canadian competitor, Desire2Learn Inc., had infringed its patent for a system of delivering course materials online. The jury also found that Desire2Learn had not shown clear and convincing evidence that Blackboard's patent was invalid.

Blackboard's general counsel, Matthew Small, said the verdict validated the company's assertion, which has been challenged by many higher-education technology experts, that its system was unique when the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office granted Blackboard the patent in 2006. The office agreed last year to take another look at the patent after Desire2Learn and others challenged its validity. That review is still pending.

"They won this round, but the battle is not over by any stretch of the imagination," John Baker, president and chief executive of Desire2Learn, said in an interview Friday. "We'll continue to fight and hopefully remove from the educational community this very dark cloud."

The company is considering several options, including appealing the verdict, continuing to challenge the patent at the federal level, and modifying its software so it does not infringe Blackboard's patent.

Mr. Baker said he was "shocked" when the jury announced its decision after deliberating for nine hours over two days in the U.S. District Court in Lufkin. The trial lasted two weeks.
The case has been closely watched by campus-technology officials, many of whom have feared that a Blackboard win could stifle innovation and leave colleges and course-management software providers vulnerable to more legal challenges by Blackboard.

Next Steps

Mr. Small said colleges have nothing to fear. Blackboard isn't seeking an injunction against any of Desire2Learn's already-installed products. It is hoping, however, to persuade the court during a hearing scheduled for March 10 to ban the company from future sales of its course-management system in the United States.

If the judge rules against an injunction on that matter, Blackboard will ask that Desire2Learn pay royalties on any new sales, in addition to the $3.1-million awarded for lost profits and back royalties. At the start of the trial, Blackboard was seeking $17-million.

Blackboard, which is based in Washington, sued the smaller, Canadian-based company in 2006, saying Desire2Learn had infringed its patent and taken away customers that should have been Blackboard's (The Chronicle, Aug. 2, 2006). The Canadian company has been one of Blackboard's primary competitors since Blackboard took over another rival, WebCT, in 2006.

'Prior Art' Dispute

Desire2Learn, which has its headquarters in Kitchener, Ontario, argued that Blackboard's patent was invalid and should never have been granted in the first place. Lawyers for the company said that Blackboard officials were aware of similar technology, or what's known as "prior art," that existed before it filed its patent application, and that the company had failed to divulge that information to the patent office.

The judge in the case, Ron Clark, rejected that argument.

Mr. Small said Blackboard never claimed to have invented the course-management system. What the company did invent, he said, is "a course-management system where a single user with a single log-on could have multiple roles across multiple classes." For instance, a person who was a student in one course and a teaching assistant in another could log on once and access all of his course materials.
"It really was transformative for the industry," Mr. Small said. "We knew we were the first doing it at the time, and that's why we applied for the patent. People look at the technology now and say that's obvious, but at the time, we were the first, and we're very proud of it."

**Adverse Effects Predicted**

Most of the higher-tech experts commenting on blogs or reached for interviews over the weekend were not as pleased as Mr. Small with the verdict.

"This is a signal event in educational technology," said Alfred H. Essa, associate vice chancellor and deputy chief information officer for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities. "It means that the big boys are playing for keeps and will use their patent portfolio at any cost to crush and deter new entrants. As a community, it will take us a long time to recover from this mess."

Blackboard, which has nearly 1,000 employees to Desire2Learn's 180, has about 80 percent of the course-management software market in the United States, according to testimony.

Eben Moglen is founding director and chairman of the Software Freedom Law Center, an advocacy group for open-source software that has challenged Blackboard's patent. Mr. Moglen, who is also a professor of law at Columbia University, said there is plenty of evidence, presented both in the trial, and to the federal patent office, of similar technology that existed before Blackboard's patent was issued. He added that his group plans to continue fighting to invalidate Blackboard's patent.

"We see this attempt to strangle or force licensing of Desire2Learn on the basis of an invalid patent as clear evidence that Blackboard cannot be trusted," Mr. Moglen said.

**A Question of Geography**

Mr. Moglen and others have suggested that a defendant cannot get a break in the East Texas district, which is frequently selected by big-city patent lawyers on the East and West Coasts because of its reputation for fast patent trials and plaintiff-friendly juries.

When the trial started, Desire2Learn's home newspaper, in Kitchener, wrote, "Everything Desire2Learn has built over the past nine years will soon be in the hands of 12 randomly selected people from an area where pro-rodeo-circuit stops outnumber sizable software companies two to zero."
But Mr. Small, the Blackboard lawyer, said the "highly educated jury" included two people with master's degrees in information systems, two others who were academic-computing administrators, and the city's postmaster."

Their decision left many in the industry wondering just how much power Blackboard now wields.

Peter A. Schilling, director of information technology at Amherst College, said colleges may decide it's too risky to use any course-management system other than Blackboard's. The patent, he said, is so broadly written that professors may be afraid to even use wikis or blogs.

Blackboard's president, Michael L. Chasen, testified during the trial that his company will not sue colleges that use open-source software to create their own online learning systems. Mr. Small repeated that promise during the trial and pointed out that his company signed a legally binding pledge promising that it would not take action against colleges that use free, open-source software.

"Now that we've won, we want to reiterate that we stand behind our patent pledge," Mr. Small said. "We are first and foremost an education company and we are committed to respecting the intellectual-property rights of our clients. We only ask that others do the same for us."

Desire2Learn's CEO said the verdict won't break the company or harm its clients.

"We're still a financially sound company," Mr. Baker said. "We're not going anywhere. The only real impact on us is that there's going to be a lot of job security for our in-house counsel for a while."

**Antioch U. Board Confirms Decision to Shutter College, But Rescue Plans Continue - Chronicle.com**
02/25/2008 © The Chronicle for Higher Education

Antioch College will close after all, the Antioch University Board of Trustees ruled on Friday. The decision confirms the board's original plan, announced last June, to suspend operations at the 155-year-old campus for the 2008-9 academic year.

Alumni had hoped to keep the college open. A key sticking point in their continuing negotiations with the trustees was their demand that the college become a freestanding liberal-arts institution that would be independent of the
Antioch University system, whose five campuses focus on students older than traditional undergraduates.

Although alumni groups have raised almost $20-million in pledges and gifts, they "ran out of time" to reach an agreement with the board on the transfer of the college to an alumni board, university officials said on Friday.

**Not Giving Up**

The board will continue discussing the transfer, and said it remains committed to trying to reopen the campus at some point.

Eric Bates, co-chairman of the Antioch College Continuation Corporation, the alumni body that would assume ownership of the college, said that a deal could still be struck to prevent even a temporary closure of Antioch.

"We would've liked to have reached the agreement by now," Mr. Bates said, referring to the transfer negotiations. But, he added, "we have everything in place that's necessary to keep the college operating."

The board’s announcement came on the second day of a three-day board meeting held in Los Angeles. Mr. Bates said the corporation had been waiting to hear if the board would continue to make progress during the meeting on plans to rescue the college.

In a telephone interview with *The Chronicle* during a break in the meeting, the university's chancellor, Tullisse A. (Toni) Murdock, praised efforts by alumni and the corporation to rescue the college, but said sorting through the details of a possible transfer was labor-intensive.

**Avoiding Limbo**

"We have reached that point that we cannot guarantee an open college" after this semester, Ms. Murdock said.

Arthur Zucker, the board’s chairman, agreed. He said the board confirmed the shuttering of the college because of the "critical need" to clarify the situation for the college’s remaining 200 students, 41 tenured professors, and 85 staff members (*The Chronicle*, June 21, 2007).

"The board has really bent over backwards" to avoid closing the college, said Mr. Zucker. "But we're dealing with people's lives here."
Both Mr. Zucker and Mr. Bates said they expected negotiations to continue, and neither said any specific disagreements had derailed the process.

The board agreed in December to consider Antioch's transfer to the corporation. Previously, trustees had signed off on a plan that would allow the college to remain open but not as a separate entity from the university. Alumni have pushed for an independent college, with some donors linking their gifts to that demand.

After the board budged and put the transfer on the table, Mr. Zucker said, the deal making essentially had to start from scratch.

"We just didn't have enough time to get through the complexities," Mr. Zucker said. "We didn't get there, yet."

In Lawsuit, College Board Accuses Company of Circulating Copyright-Protected SAT Questions - Chronicle.com
02/25/2008 © The Chronicle for Higher Education

A test-preparation company in Texas is being sued by the College Board for what it calls "one of the largest cases of a security breach in our company's history," according to Edna Johnson, a senior vice president of the nonprofit group, which owns the SAT.

In a lawsuit filed last week in U.S. District Court in Dallas, the College Board is seeking unspecified damages against the company, Karen Dillard's College Prep LP, which it says illegally obtained copies of SAT and PSAT tests before they were available to the public. The lawsuit also accuses the company of violating copyright-protection laws by circulating and selling materials that included test questions owned by the College Board.

The lawsuit arose after a former employee of the test-preparation company reported information to the College Board. Karen Dillard, the owner of the company, said the employee was disgruntled but would not elaborate on why.

Ms. Dillard did not deny that one of her employees obtained a copy of the SAT that was administered in November 2006 before the test was given. But Ms. Dillard said her company did not use any questions from that test in preparatory materials it provided to clients.
The lawsuit states that the employee got the test from his brother, the principal of a high school in Plano, Tex. The principal has been put on paid leave while the Plano school district investigates the matter, according to the Associated Press.

**Copyright Confusion**

In reference to the copyright allegations in the lawsuit, Ms. Dillard said in an interview on Friday that she had believed she was lawfully allowed to use materials she had purchased from the College Board before 2005.

Part of the confusion may stem from a shift in the College Board's policies regarding circulation of previous test materials. Until 2005, the company would sell copies of previously given SAT's to companies. After the SAT was revamped that year, the College Board no longer sold those materials. At that time, the company also began to offer its own online test-preparation course to students, which now costs $69.95.

"We believe part of the motivation of the College Board in bringing this lawsuit," Ms. Dillard said, "is to drive test-preparation companies like ours out of business so they can dominate the industry with their own test-preparation materials, which are for sale."

Ms. Dillard said she also thinks that the College Board is going to great efforts to publicize the lawsuit to make an example out of her company. To support that point, she said that Justin Pope, a higher-education reporter for the Associated Press, received a copy of the lawsuit and contacted her for comment before it was filed.

When contacted by *The Chronicle*, Mr. Pope said he could not confirm how or when he received the lawsuit, and could not comment further about the matter.

The lawsuit is the culmination of a four-month investigation by lawyers for the College Board. Two lawyers from the firm Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP, along with a representative for the Educational Testing Service, which administers the SAT, visited Ms. Dillard's office several months ago.

Ms. Dillard said that, at that time, her company fully cooperated with all requests for information and interviews with employees, and that she also provided personal financial records to the lawyers.

Ms. Dillard also said that her company offered to settle the matter for $300,000, but that lawyers for the College Board made a counteroffer of $1.25-million, a sum her company could not afford.
Ms. Johnson, of the College Board, said she could not comment on any offers made in settlement negotiations.

**Uncertainties for Students**

The attention the lawsuit has drawn in the news media has been devastating for her business, Ms. Dillard said, because students who took her test-preparation course and their parents are now concerned that the students' scores will be canceled.

Ms. Johnson said that the College Board may cancel some students' SAT scores if it determines that any of Ms. Dillard's clients had received practice tests that were identical to the actual tests they later took.

Furthermore, Ms. Johnson disputes Ms. Dillard's assertions that she has been forthcoming about company records and materials. Ms. Johnson declined to elaborate about the specific information the College Board was seeking, but in an e-mail message to *The Chronicle*, she wrote: "We have been attempting for almost four months to resolve this matter and have met with nothing but obstacles and delays."
Anti-Cheating Crusader Vexes Some Professors - Chronicle.com
John Barrie probably doesn't have many fans at Princeton University. It's easy to understand why.

About two years ago, Princeton officials announced that they had no intention of using Turnitin, the popular antiplagiarism software sold by Mr. Barrie's company, iParadigms LLC. When an enterprising reporter at the student newspaper called the company's founder to ask for a comment, Mr. Barrie obliged: He called the university soft on cheating.

"The disturbing thing," he told the newspaper, "is that Princeton is producing our society's future leaders, and the last thing anyone wants is a society full of Enron executives."

The parallel between plagiarism and corporate crime raised eyebrows — and ire — on the campus. But for Mr. Barrie, the comparison was a perfectly natural one. In the 10 years since he founded iParadigms, he has argued — forcefully, and at times combatively — that academic plagiarism is growing, and that it is a societal blight that only his software can cure.

Mr. Barrie's vehemence may have made him a persona non grata at Princeton, but it has helped him persuade instructors at more than 8,000 high schools and colleges — including two of Princeton's Ivy League rivals, Harvard and Columbia, the University of California system, and the University of Oxford, in England — to use his service. Last year professors and teachers submitted a whopping 30 million papers from their students to Turnitin. The software then compared those writings with texts in a giant database of books, journals, Web sites, and essays, and checked for evidence of plagiarized material.

When Mr. Barrie founded Turnitin, just over a decade ago, few professors had even thought about, let alone clamored for, plagiarism-detection software. In essence, iParadigms has built a fast-growing business out of almost nothing. "It's safe to say that Turnitin is now a part of how education works," Mr. Barrie says.

But critics say that's a fact to be lamented, not a cause for celebration. Not only does Turnitin grab student papers for use in its database without compensating the students, they argue, but it also encourages professors to spend time policing their students instead of teaching them. "Turnitin does sound wonderful on the surface," says Charles Lowe, an assistant professor of writing at Grand Valley State University, "but a lot of faculty members aren't even aware of why they might not want to use it." He helped write a statement, sent to the university's
Academic Senate on behalf of his department, urging colleagues at the Michigan institution to be wary of Turnitin.

Growing Empire

Mr. Barrie was not much concerned about plagiarism when he enrolled as a graduate student in biophysics at the University of California at Berkeley in the mid-1990s. But his stint as the lone teaching assistant in a large undergraduate seminar put the issue front and center.

The seminar, an elective course dealing with the effects of drugs on the human brain, culminated in a 10-page research paper, and Mr. Barrie realized that he would have time to offer students only limited responses to their work. So he designed software that let them post their papers on a Web site and review one another's work.

The review process was a hit, Mr. Barrie says, but it caused some students to question their classmates' integrity. "I had a parade of students come in during my office hours and say, 'Hey, this guy is selling his papers,' or 'This guy took papers from last year's class,'" Mr. Barrie recalls.

The teaching assistant hadn't fancied himself much of a disciplinarian, but the idea that students were expecting him to grade plagiarized work angered him, he says. "I was pretty insulted."

So, for the next year's course, he and some friends designed a program that used pattern-recognition tests to see if students were, in fact, ripping off material from their peers or other sources. About 20 percent of the papers Mr. Barrie analyzed were "flat-out plagiarized," he says.

It was a revelation: "I thought, This is an upper-division elective class at the nation's number-one public university, and this is what I'm seeing? What's going on elsewhere?"

Compared with today's Turnitin, the original Berkeley software was crude. It simply searched the Web for language identical to that of the students' papers and alerted Mr. Barrie when there was a match. But while he was completing his doctorate, professors were beginning to realize that the Internet had become a remarkably efficient tool for plagiarists.

So the biophysics expert and his friends started marketing their program on the Web. A decade later, Mr. Barrie's company employs 70 people, and its office here — which, with its abundance of computer servers and whiteboards, still has the feel of a dot-com startup — has become the heart of a burgeoning
antiplagiarism industry. Each day about 100,000 papers are submitted to Turnitin, and each one is cross-checked against the billions of Web pages, articles, and essays contained in the company’s growing database.

Each paper is returned to the professor or teacher with a "similarity index," specifying the percentage of the material that appears to have been copied from other sources. Purportedly plagiarized passages are highlighted and matched with links that let professors compare the suspicious portions with the original works. That way, Mr. Barrie says, instructors can determine whether passages are "cut-and-paste jobs," as he calls them, or innocent, if poor, attempts at paraphrasing.

Intellectual-Property Concerns

Before he released Turnitin to the public, Mr. Barrie says, he knew that the tool would work only if it were built on "a database so massive that it creates a deterrent." Turnitin keeps tabs on billions of Web pages and crawls through about 60 million of them every day, checking for new or updated material.

But Internet scans alone won't necessarily catch papers that students sell to one another or buy from term-paper mills; those papers never make it onto Web sites. So Turnitin has built much of its database with the help of clients. The service archives every paper that is submitted to it.

That policy has led some students and professors to argue that Turnitin is routinely violating students' intellectual-property rights. Because federal law automatically bestows copyleft to the authors of written works, even unpublished papers are protected. Students and instructors who are critical of the company say it ought to compensate people for the papers that it absorbs.

Some of the critics have taken that argument to court. At the start of the 2006-7 academic year, McLean High School, in Virginia, decided to require students to submit papers to Turnitin, as many nearby schools had done. But at McLean, students rebelled against the decision. More than 1,000 signed a petition urging administrators not to use the software, and the school eventually flew Mr. Barrie to Virginia, hoping that he could smooth things over. Unmollified by Mr. Barrie’s visit, however, two McLean students, along with two students at an Arizona high school, filed a joint suit against iParadigms, seeking $900,000 as compensation for six papers that they said had been added to Turnitin’s database against their will.

In their complaint, the students, who had secured copyleft for the papers sent to Turnitin, said they had been unfairly compelled to submit the essays. What’s
more, they noted, iParadigms was profiting from their works: Turnitin's main selling point, after all, was the sheer breadth of its database.

The company argued that its decision to archive the papers was protected by fair use, the notoriously murky legal doctrine that allows for "transformative" uses of copylefted material, whether for purposes of satire, criticism, or, in the company's view, plagiarism detection.

The lawsuit was the first major test of Turnitin's stance on intellectual property. For now, it looks as if the company has prevailed. Last month Judge Claude M. Hilton, of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, issued a summary judgment removing the case from the trial calendar. Mr. Barrie celebrated the ruling as a "smackdown" of the students. But Judge Hilton has not yet released a decision explaining the ruling, so it is not yet clear whether he was swayed by Turnitin's fair-use argument, or whether the plaintiffs lost on a technicality. Robert A. Vanderhye, a retired lawyer in Virginia who took on the students' case pro bono, says that "there's a 100-percent possibility I will appeal" if the ruling finds that Turnitin's storage of student papers qualifies as fair use.

Mr. Vanderhye says the plagiarism-detection service tarnishes its claim of fair use by redistributing papers in its database: Turnitin offers to send professors complete copies of works that it identifies as the sources of plagiarized material.

Turnitin also has argued that, if the students had a bone to pick, it was not with the company, but with their schools, which had compelled them to submit their essays to the service. That argument might seem like an attempt to pass the buck, but there's something to it, says Mr. Lowe, of Grand Valley State. In his position statement, he warned that colleges might face lawsuits from students who feel aggrieved that they are required to hand papers over to Turnitin.

The possibility is not far-fetched. In 2003, Jesse Rosenfeld, a student at McGill University, in Montreal, refused to submit papers for an economics course to Turnitin, and his professor responded by giving him failing grades for that work. After a protracted dispute, the university offered to grade his papers without running them through the antiplagiarism software.

'Analog Solutions'

Even if Turnitin is legally vindicated, the company must still convince colleges that antiplagiarism software is a modern necessity. Mr. Barrie has, at the very least, some statistical support: In a 2005 study conducted by Duke University's Center for Academic Integrity (which has since moved to Clemson University), 70 percent of college students admitted to having cheated in some form.
Faculty members who are critical of Turnitin, however, say the software comes with a cost beyond the effective fee of about $1 per student for unlimited submissions of work. Professors' classroom relationships are damaged, they say, by the suggestion that students must be constantly policed.

"Turnitin depends on a culture of fear about plagiarism," says Mr. Lowe, of Grand Valley State. "Faculty might want to ask themselves how they would feel if their departments asked them to submit everything they wrote to a plagiarism-detection service."

'Extra Guidance'

Two years ago, Mount Saint Vincent University, in Nova Scotia, decided not to use Turnitin, in part because of intellectual property concerns, but also because students and professors alike felt that it would drive a wedge between them. Members of a task force evaluating the service worried that it would create "a cloud of suspicion that most students who were doing their best would resent," says Elizabeth R. Bowering, an associate professor of psychology who chaired the group. Rather than pore over papers for signs of plagiarism, Ms. Bowering says, professors should spend more time helping students avoid plagiarizing material in the first place. "You can build a better mousetrap to try and catch students," Ms. Bowering says, "or take another approach, of spending more time educating students, supporting the development of their writing skills, and teaching about appropriate citations and plagiarism."

Professors who do choose to run papers through Turnitin should use the service to help students fix rough drafts, not to vet completed papers, says Mr. Lowe. Mr. Barrie says he agrees. Professors should assume that their students are "trying to do the left thing," he acknowledges, adding that Turnitin is best used not as a punitive tool but as a way to identify students who need extra guidance.

Yet, as he considers the institutions that have been reluctant to use Turnitin — the Ivies, the honor-code enthusiasts, the small, liberal-arts colleges — he can't help questioning their commitment to resolving the issue that now drives his career.

"They can have the best faculty, the best books, the best lawns," he says, "but none of that means diddlysquat if the students aren't doing their own work."

Paula Wasley contributed to this article.
Several Web-based services review students' papers and compare them with material found elsewhere at three of the most-popular programs:

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Turnitin</th>
<th>SafeAssign</th>
<th>PAIRwise</th>
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<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>iParadigms, the leader in the plagiarism-detection industry, boasts users in about 100 nations.</td>
<td>The learning-software giant Blackboard Inc. bought SafeAssign (originally known as MyDropBox) and now offers it.</td>
<td>None. The open-source tool was designed by computer scientists at the University of California at Santa Barbara in 2005.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>About $1 per student. Checks billions of Web pages (updated daily); publications collected by ProQuest, a database company; and more than 10 million papers already submitted to the service.</td>
<td>Free to institutions that use Blackboard's Learning System software.</td>
<td>Free.</td>
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<tr>
<td>How it works</td>
<td>Uses Microsoft's Live Search engine to check Web pages. Also searches the ProQuest database, the FindArticles search engine, past papers submitted by students to SafeAssign's &quot;global database&quot; and to separate, campuswide archives.</td>
<td>Checks other assignments, a database of past papers, and &quot;Internet&quot; searches.</td>
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<td>What happens to students' papers</td>
<td>Automatically become part of Turnitin's database.</td>
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