Florida's 11 public universities are bracing for a money crunch so severe that some higher-education leaders have started describing it as an "unnatural disaster."

A slumping housing market is forcing state lawmakers to propose overall budget cuts of $2-billion during the legislative session that begins next week. The university system is already running lean, with hiring and enrollment freezes that followed recent state-budget reductions. Predictions of even deeper cuts loom for next year.

The 300,000-student system may have to be pared back by as many as 17,000 students next fall, an extraordinary development in a state with surging student demand. The resulting overflow of students to Florida's community colleges could compound problems for those cash-strapped institutions.

The budget debate has been nasty at times. Charlie Crist, the state's governor, recently responded to the worries of university presidents about more cuts by saying: "If they're unhappy, maybe they ought to turn the reins over to somebody else," reported the St. Petersburg Times.

The crisis, however, may have a silver lining. The scarcity of slots for qualified in-state students has caught the attention of Floridians. This growing awareness is helping university leaders make the case for higher tuition and other long-term budget fixes.
"This is by far the worst fiscal crisis I've seen" in 15 years as a university administrator, says J. Bernard Machen, president of the University of Florida. "But we might come out in a better situation."

**Boom or Bust**

Higher education is often first on the chopping block when a slowing economy is felt at the state level. In addition to Florida, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities reports that California, Kentucky, Maryland, and Nevada face substantial budget deficits this year.

Florida's situation is worsened by a boom-or-bust economy. Without a personal income tax, the state relies heavily on sales and real-estate taxes, both of which are producing less revenue during the economic downturn, which has hit Florida especially hard. Even tourism, one of the state's most-reliable moneymakers, was down last year. But tax increases are unlikely, as they are generally opposed by Governor Crist, a Republican, and the Republican majorities in Florida's House and Senate.

"As much as the Legislature might want to help us," said T.K. Wetherell, Florida State University's president and a former state lawmaker, "they don't have the money to do it."

Tuition revenue has long been a problem for public universities in Florida, which has the nation's lowest average tuition rate. The state's major public universities, including the University of Florida and Florida State, each charge about $3,400 in tuition and fees.

Attempts by the system's Board of Governors to raise tuition rates have resulted in epic tussles with lawmakers. And university presidents say their budget woes are so severe that modest tuition increases won't fix anything. A 5-percent tuition increase by Florida State works out to about $150 per student, says Mr. Wetherell. By contrast, he says, the private Tallahassee kindergarten his grandson attends costs $8,000 a year.

"You can't run a major public research university on half of a kindergarten tuition," he says.

Mr. Wetherell and other Florida university presidents recently asked the Legislature for a $200-million increase in the system's $2.2-billion annual budget in each of the next five years. They are also looking for more flexibility in spending and setting tuition, and are pushing for the creation of "compacts" for individual universities, like similar agreements in Virginia and Pennsylvania.
Breaking Point?

Bargain rates and high student demand have made Florida's top universities enviably selective. Each now receives more than 25,000 applications for 6,500 freshman slots. Demand has also helped other institutions, such as the University of South Florida and the University of Central Florida, both of which have expanded rapidly in the past decade.

But the "pack them in" strategy has reached its limit, university presidents say.

"We've deluded ourselves, and we've diluted our institutions," says Mr. Machen. He likens the University of Florida to a grocery store that loses money on every item yet hopes to cover its losses with high volume.

Word is getting out that Florida's higher-education financing is broken. A recent newspaper poll found broad support for tuition increases, which several student groups now support.

"This is not a scare tactic. This is a serious problem," says Aubrey W. Jewett, a professor and associate chair of the department of political science at the University of Central Florida. A breaking point has been reached, he says, now that increasing numbers of middle-class students are being turned away by the state's public universities.

Florida's community colleges, too, are suffering from the budget and enrollment crunches.

"The same thing that's causing revenue to decline is bringing students to the college in droves," says Sanford C. Shugart, president of Valencia Community College, where enrollment has grown by 10 percent in the past year. With jobs drying up in the weak economy, students are seeking to improve their marketability by attending community colleges.

Valencia should be able to weather some cuts, Mr. Shugart says, thanks to belt-tightening moves that include a hiring freeze, the elimination of a campus television station, and temporary measures such as allowing adjunct professors to teach as many as five or six classes. He says he no longer hears questions from lawmakers about wasteful spending.

"We're way past that," Mr. Shugart says. "Water's coming in over the gunwales."
Poaching Professors

Faculty members on Florida's campuses are joining forces with university presidents in the quest for more state support.

Erin C. Belieu, an associate professor of English at Florida State, wrote a column for the St. Petersburg Times describing the state's problems as an "unnatural disaster," a term that Mr. Wetherell now uses.

In the column, Ms. Belieu described how she regularly scours the halls for desks to use for her poetry classes. She also wrote about attempts by other universities to hire nervous faculty members away from Florida State.

"There's a kind of mild paranoia going around," Ms. Belieu said in a telephone interview. She has been approached by three institutions in the past eight months. "Everyone has heard that everyone else is leaving."

Faculty members at other Florida colleges echo Ms. Belieu's concerns. David R. Carr, a professor of history at the University of South Florida at St. Petersburg, says cuts there have given his fellow faculty members incentive to look for new jobs. "There's enormous pressure on people to up their teaching loads," he says.

For now, however, Mr. Carr and Ms. Belieu are staying put. And she plans to keep using her rhetorical skills to help Florida's universities spread the word that a disaster is brewing. Thankfully, she says, "people are sort of waking up to it."

Florida's Bright Futures changes meeting resistance
02/28/2008 © Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel

Florida's most expensive scholarship program is proving to be one of its most untouchable.

Some state officials say it's time to rein in the lottery-funded Bright Futures program, especially since the state faces a potential $2 billion shortfall for 2008-09 because of the sluggish economy.

But so far, two proposals to change the program, possibly taking money out of the pockets of students and their parents, are meeting heavy resistance. Some state officials propose handing out a larger portion of the money to students based on need rather than merit.
They also are considering increasing the award to students who study in high-demand fields.

"If it wasn't for Bright Futures, I couldn't have gone to college," said Josef Palermo, 23, of Delray Beach, who is a senior at Florida Atlantic University. "My parents are middle-class and have another son in college. To pay for two students at the same time would have crippled them financially."

The scholarship pays full or partial tuition for more than 150,000 students who meet academic requirements. Its budget, about $400 million this year, balloons every year because of rising tuition and an increasing number of eligible students.

The Florida Board of Governors, the policymaking board for the state university system, has proposed freezing Bright Futures funding at its current level. The state then would direct half of the budget to financial-aid students for poor families and those going into certain high-demand fields.

But only the Legislature can change the program. Senate President Ken Pruitt has blasted the board's proposal.

"It is an attempt to chip away at the funding," Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie, said in a statement. "The overwhelming majority of parents and students in our state do not support cutting Bright Futures, and neither do I."

A second proposal came from state Sen. Jeremy Ring, D-Parkland. His bill would decrease the Bright Futures scholarship award by 20 percent for most students, while increasing it by 10 percent for students in high-demand areas such as math, science and technology.

The idea spurred outrage, with students and parents flooding legislators with calls and e-mails, urging them not to support the bill. A group on the social networking site Facebook, called Protect Your Bright Futures, generated 19,000 members opposed to the change.

Ring agreed to back off on the cuts.

"It's a sacred cow, a third-rail issue," said Ring, vice chairman of the Senate Higher Education Committee. "You try to tweak it and everyone comes out and opposes it. Imagine if you really went out and overhauled it."

Bright Futures supporters say the program gives students incentive to do well in high school and is crucial to making college affordable.
Bright Futures, created in 1997, covers 100 percent of tuition and fees for students who have a 3.5 grade point average and a 1270 SAT or 28 ACT. A 75 percent scholarship is available to students with a 3.0 GPA and a 970 SAT or a 20 ACT score. Some critics have argued the criteria are too low.

Will Anderson, a University of Florida student from Plant City who started the Facebook group, said the standards could be raised. But, he said, any changes to Bright Futures shouldn't happen for at least five years, so students now in high school aren't affected.

"That would give kids in lower grades time to prepare themselves to do a little better," he said.

Members of the Board of Governors say they support phasing in changes slowly.

The board is to discuss Bright Futures at meetings March 26 and 27 in Tallahassee. The proposal to cap the program at $400 million would redirect $100 million to financial aid for students from poor families. Another $100 million would go to students pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Board members say they think the state does not allocate enough for students with financial hardships. The state spends about $125 million in need-based aid from the general fund, less than a third of the Bright Futures budget. The board proposal doesn't say if the merit-based payments of Bright Futures would be reduced by lowering the scholarship amount, or changing the criteria.

State university officials say thousands of students who receive the Bright Futures scholarships come from families who could afford to pay more for college.

"The fact is we have so many people who are not [financially] able to attend college. They might qualify for Bright Futures, but that isn't enough" because the scholarship doesn't pay for books, housing or food, said Carolyn Roberts, chairwoman of the Board of Governors. "I think it's our board's responsibility to show how this great amount of money could be used to educate more students."

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**Office of the Chancellor**

**Colleges are short of counselors**

02/28/2008 © St. Petersburg Times
In wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, a state report urges larger mental health staffs at state schools.

TAMPA - Ten of Florida's 11 public universities need more mental health counselors to serve their growing student bodies, with the University of South Florida among the most understaffed, according to a new Board of Governors report commissioned in the wake of last year's Virginia Tech shooting massacre.

All but tiny New College in Sarasota have higher-than-recommended student-to-counselor ratios, the board's mental health group found.

Some universities, including USF, would need more than a dozen additional counselors to reach the student service levels recommended by the International Association of Counseling Services.

The association recommends one counselor for every 1,500 students. But USF has one for every 3,500 students, including its branch campuses like St. Petersburg. It would take 22 additional counselors to get to the recommended level.

The University of Central Florida in Orlando would need 16 additional counselors, according to the report.

The Board of Governors group recommends several changes, such as colleges seeking more money for additional staff members - be it state dollars, federal grants or other sources. One option could be a new student fee, or a higher health fee, to cover the costs.

But state law caps the existing health fee and how much it rises each year. Many institutions are already at or near the limit. USF charges $7.91 per credit hour.

Tracy Tyree, associate vice president for student affairs at USF, said the counseling center's budget comes from general operating dollars and from the health fee.

"But USF grew very fast in a relatively short period of time, and those resources just didn't keep up," Tyree said.

USF always has counselors on hand to immediately see one of its 45,000 students in an emergency. But the shortage of staff members means a student seeking a first-time appointment likely will wait two weeks or more.
"It might affect how many appointments a student has, how short the appointment is," Tyree said.

Things are improving at USF from last year, though, Tyree said. The university added 30 hours of counseling availability each week by hiring outside counselors part-time. That has cut down on appointment wait times, which reached a peak of four weeks last year.

"We wanted to respond to Virginia Tech, so this was, 'What can we do right away?" Tyree said.

USF also is exploring the use of postdoctoral interns who have just finished their degrees.

"They are less expensive than hiring a Ph.D. psychologist," Tyree said. "If we had all the money in the world, we'd work very hard to get to that 1 to 1,500 ratio."

Florida A&M University

'Blackout' promotes black-owned businesses
02/28/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Instead of eating at a commercial restaurant like McDonald's this weekend, Florida A&M University asks that you spend that money at a black business.

From Friday through Monday, FAMU's Department of Economic Development and the Florida State University Black Student Union seek to increase support of black-owned businesses for an event called "Blackout 2k8."

Blackout co-chair Kianta Key said the goal is not to support only black businesses, but rather to increase awareness. Key is secretary of FAMU's department of economic development, a division of SGA. Her duties in the student government include planning educational activities.

"This is our way of saying farewell to Black History Month 2008," said Key, a senior public relations student from Atlanta. "It's a little more proactive than just reading a list of facts about what someone did in the 1800s. When you look at it, the civil-rights movement was really about money and giving black people a fair chance."
FAMU is modifying the initiative of national radio host Warren Ballentine, who tried to show the power of the black dollar in November by asking blacks to stop spending for a day.

FAMU hosted events that began Wednesday with the "Black is Green" Student Business Expo at the FAMU School of Journalism & Graphic Communication. The expo was a networking event for student entrepreneurs and potential investors.

The Wildfire Financial Series, an educational seminar, is today.

Capital City Chamber of Commerce President Terrence Hinson supports the Blackout's goals.

"It's like trying to start 'the wave' at a football game," he said. "It doesn't start right away, but eventually it catches on and you get a movement. The key is not to get discouraged if you don't see immediate results; you want to try to get the wave going."

A kick-off celebration on FAMU's campus Friday at noon will feature free samples from restaurants such as Mr. T's Barbecue and D&Z's Cafe.

Throughout the weekend, FSU and FAMU student organizations will staff restaurants, salons and other establishments that have agreed to offer special discounts.

Simply Soulful owner Matrell Hawkins said she hopes the Blackout will be good exposure for her restaurant on West Tennessee Street, which opened Dec. 1, 2007.

"I think once students eat here they'll like it and tell their friends," she said. "Right now it's an issue of they don't know we're here."

FAMU task force faces lawmakers' deadline
02/28/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat
The task force responsible for overseeing Florida A&M's financial and operational problems is fast approaching a deadline to submit a report of their work to state lawmakers.

For the past week, task force members have worked with the consulting firm they hired to finalize the report. The Jacksonville-based auditing firm has completed a 230-page report and a 10-page report of recommendations.

The firm confirms FAMU administrators have corrected more than 80 percent of its financial and operations problems. But that doesn't mean that the task force's work is complete.

Return to tallahassee.com for more details.

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**Florida Atlantic University**

**Famed chimp researcher wows FAU**

02/28/2008 © Palm Beach Post

BOCA RATON — Martina Potlach's eyes shone with anticipation as she waited in line for her idol to sign her book. It wasn't Hannah Montana or one of the cast of High School Musical that lured the 11-year-old all the way to Boca Raton from Hollywood, but a 73-year-old woman with a gray ponytail and British accent.

"I would love to be a primatologist, a conservationist, a zoologist and maybe a veterinarian, said the fifth-grader, her proud mother watching.

Martina was among the 1,500 people attending Wednesday's lecture at Florida Atlantic University by the woman who discovered that chimps know how to use tools and are more like us than we'd like to think - Jane Goodall.

It was nearly 50 years ago that Goodall ventured into the wilds of Africa, her mother in tow, to launch a career that would take her around the world and win her numerous honors, including the title of Dame of the British Empire and the French Legion of Honor.

"Oooh, oohh, ooooh oooh ... hello," said Goodall to the crowd who chuckled at her greeting in two languages, that of the chimps she has come to know as family and her native English. She spoke of her first meeting with David Greybeard, an older male chimp who first befriended her and whose trust in her gave other chimps the courage to approach and eventually trust "the white ape."
"He helped me into the world of chimpanzees," she said of her old friend.

At FAU, she regaled with stories of how at 23, without a college degree, she was given the chance to go into the bush with little more than a tent, a pair of binoculars and her mother's love and support, to make scientific discoveries even those with Ph.D.s had not.

She talked about how much chimps are like people in that they are loving and kind, but also have a dark side that's capable of violent and brutal behavior, of how they can be aggressively territorial.

But she also related a story of how a loving male adolescent chimp named Spindle saved the life of a motherless 3-year-old chimp she named Mel by feeding and caring for him.

"Spindle would come to Mel's defense when he got in the way of the big older males who were behaving aggressively. There is no doubt that Spindle saved Mel's life," Goodall said.

Earlier in the day Goodall stopped by Lion Country Safari to visit an old friend, "Little Mama," a 74-year-old chimp she met about 30 years ago.

These days, Goodall spends about 300 days a year on the road giving speeches and promoting her Jane Goodall Institute as well as her "Roots and Shoots" program, a youth-driven global network with more than 8,000 groups in 100 countries.

Kyle Shope, vice president of the Roots and Shoots Club at Claremont Montessori in Boca Raton and another 100 or so kids who are part of the group, said they raise money for chimps and "just try to support the environment and our community."

These kids, said Goodall, are what gives her the energy to keep going.

**Students, faculty happy to have Indian teachers back in St. Lucie County**
02/28/2008 © Stuart News

FORT PIERCE — Although the school year is more than half over, it was more like the first day of class Wednesday for the 16 Indian teachers returning after a near three-week absence because of a visa error.
"I'm so happy, and I'm really excited," said Meenakumari Rangaraj, a science teacher at Dan McCarty Middle School.

The teachers, who are participants in an exchange program with Florida Atlantic University and the St. Lucie County School District, were facing deportation March 9 because FAU gave them incorrect short-term visas that did not allow for extension requests.

On Tuesday, the U.S. State Department completed processing the visas for the Indian teachers, about a week after approving extending the visas to June 15 so the teachers can finish the school year.

FAU created the exchange/internship program to help the district fill vacancies for experienced math, science and special education teachers. Besides Dan McCarty, the teachers were placed at Southport Middle School, Treasure Coast High School, Oak Hammock K-8, Allapattah Flats K-8 and Samuel S. Gaines Academy.

Dan McCarty's staff greeted the teachers' return with a mini party of hugs, cheers, coffee and doughnuts.

"Our family is united again," said principal Kerry Padrick, who in addition to Rangaraj, welcomed back three other teachers — Kamesh Senthamilselvan, Anggayarukanyee Subramaniam and Durai Sathanan.

Student Karen Duran, 13, was looking forward to her afternoon science class with Rangaraj.

"I'm really glad she's back because she's really nice and gives good advice," she said.

While back in the classrooms, the teachers didn't take over their classes but allowed the substitute teachers to complete the day. Also, FAU sent mentors to help the Indian teachers' transition back into the classroom.

Since Feb. 8, the teachers had been out of their classrooms and on unpaid administrative leave because they could not legally work or receive a paycheck without a current visa. The district hired substitute teachers at $70 a day to fill in for the Indian teachers.

At Tuesday's school board meeting, Superintendent Michael Lannon said the district's human resources officials are looking at options to pay the teachers for
the missed work. Also, he said staff is working to keep the teachers here past June 15 to fulfill a promise an outside party made to the teachers when recruited that they would automatically be allowed to stay in the U.S. for a number of years once hired full time by the district.

TIMELINE

May and June 2007: St. Lucie County School District partners with Florida Atlantic University in a teacher exchange program that brings 17 teachers from India to teach in math, science and special education.

Late July: The 17 Indian teachers arrive in Florida.

Late July or early August: Indian teachers attend a school district orientation addressing district policies, procedures, programs.

Aug. 20: First day of school for St. Lucie County Schools.

Oct. 26: The International Committee of the College of Education at FAU decide not to renew the program for next school year because the program is too "labor intensive."

November: FAU officials learn of a problem with visas issued to Indian teachers. Also, during this time, the school district conducts its own evaluation and hires 16 of the 17 teachers for the remainder of the school year.

Jan. 24: U.S. State Department sends FAU a letter reprimanding the university for paying the teachers low pay and calls the visa problem an "egregious misuse" of FAU’s privilege.

Feb. 8 or 9: Visas expire for the teachers, and they are barred from their classrooms, forcing school district officials to hire substitute teachers.

Feb. 19: State Department receives paperwork to extend the visas until June 15, the end of the current school year.

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Feb. 27: Indian teachers return to their classrooms

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Feb. 27: Indian teachers return to their classrooms

To some, proposal for FAU stadium sponsor a real hoot
02/28/2008 © Palm Beach Post

BOCA RATON — It started out as a joke. Just a few guys sitting around debating who would pony up an estimated $20 million to buy the naming rights for Florida Atlantic University’s proposed football stadium.

Home Depot? Comcast? Best Buy?
"Then someone said, 'How about Hooters?' and we all kind of laughed," said
FAU freshman Colin Valada. "But then I was like, you know, that's actually a
great idea."

And so, the "Get Hooters to Sponsor Our Stadium" campaign was launched and
since mid-January, nearly 350 FAU students have signed on to the project's
Facebook page pledging their support.

It just makes sense to Valada, an Orlando native who was disappointed when the
University of Central Florida sold the naming rights to its new stadium to Bright
House Networks, a cable and communications company.

"What does that have to do with UCF?" Valada asked.

UCF's nickname is the Knights.

But Hooters, the orange and white Florida-born restaurant famous for wings,
and, well, um, women - its logo is an O-eyed owl.

And FAU's mascot, "Owsley," also is an owl.

"It's a brilliant idea," said Kyle Butler, a 19-year-old FAU student from
Melbourne, who signed on to help sell the Hooters idea. "I was like, wow, that's
perfect."

Whether FAU gets a 30,000-seat, $62 million football stadium depends largely on
fund raising.

Tentative naming price tags include $5'million for the field, $3 million for the
scoreboard and $3 million for the press box.

"Necessity is the mother of all invention," FAU Athletic Director Craig Angelos
said earlier this month, commenting about an FAU online auction hawking New
Orleans Bowl memorabilia to raise money for scholarships. "I think that applies
to the way we go about generating revenue. We're trying to be as creative as
possible being a young athletic department."

Florida State University's stadium is named for former school President Doak S.
Campbell. The University of Florida has benefactor Ben Hill Griffin's name on its
stadium, also known as "The Swamp."
FAU students advocating for Hooters to buy naming rights are just now contacting corporate headquarters and getting together a petition.

"Obviously you're going to have some opposition with people thinking Hooters is derogatory toward women, but right now FAU doesn't have a lot of options and people should be educated enough to know it's just a restaurant," Butler said.

FAU alumnus Chloe Daniels, who graduated in December, is a little more sensitive about the Hooters logo and what it represents. She said it's a "very clever" idea and that she wouldn't fight naming the stadium after the restaurant.

"But it's not my restaurant of choice," Daniels said. "They serve the type of food that is appropriate for football games, but it also promotes a certain sense of masculine dominance."

When asked if Hooters would be accepted by the FAU administration, the answer wasn't an outright "no."

"The university will explore all viable sponsorship and naming opportunities with ideal partners made up of established, legitimate companies and individuals who share our goals and want to be part of creating a vibrant campus atmosphere," said Susan Peirce, vice president for university advancement.

Despite student enthusiasm, Hooters itself may not be up for the idea.

A South Florida spokesman said the stadium price tag was a little high for the restaurant chain. "It would be a neat thought though to have the naming rights," Hooters representative Jim Upchurch said.

Maybe a locker for the home team then? They're going for just $5,000 a pop.

**Florida Gulf Coast University**

**Plans for FGCU branch on hold**
02/28/2008 © Ft. Myers News-Press

Cape Coral City Councilman Tim Day says the city needs to stay committed to bringing a college campus to Cape Coral.
Tim Day wants to give away seven to 10 acres of land to Florida Gulf Coast University to kick start stalled plans for an Academic Village in the northern part of the city.

But severe budget problems facing Florida universities make the opening of an FGCU branch campus in the Cape unlikely this year or next.

Day met this month with Joe Shepard, Florida Gulf Coast University's vice president of administration and finance, about putting a campus on city-owned land at Kismet Parkway and Del Prado Boulevard.

While school officials remain committed to the concept, Shepard told Day budget cuts across the state made expansion unlikely anytime soon.

"We all see great possibilities with FGCU coming here, but it's just a matter of timing," Day said.

Florida's Board of Regents froze FGCU's freshmen enrollment at 1,735 this year. Shepard said earlier this year that continued problems could force the school to lower enrollment caps.

FGCU has already received $1.8 million in cuts from the state this year, and is bracing for more before June, according to university spokeswoman Susan Evans.

"The budget situation is making it hard enough to take care of our main campus," Evans said.

She said plans for a Charlotte County campus have been stalled for about two years. Plans for a center in Naples are being supported through private fund raising, Evans said.

FGCU does offer some courses at the Lee County School District's High Tech North on Santa Barbara Boulevard.

Among the FGCU freshmen accepted for the coming school year is Day's 17-year-old son T.J. The councilman said he wants to increase the size and prestige of the university where his child will receive an education. He thinks the city can help.

In 2005, the City Council purchased 171 acres for $6.8 million for the Academic Village, but the land has not been developed, mainly because of environmental problems.
This week, District 5 Councilman Eric Grill said the council should trade part of the land to McGarvey Development in exchange for the Mid Cape Corporate Center on Pine Island Road, which McGarvey officials want to sell to the city for use as a new police building.

"We could still have room for a university to come here," Grill said.

Day said he could see allowing a private developer to have some of the land with frontage on Del Prado, but does not want to lose a majority of the property.

Grill said a private developer could better mitigate wetlands issues which have plagued the site for years.

Cape Coral economic development director Mike Jackson said that the city has been working with the Army Corps of Engineers regarding wetlands issues, but needs a plan to develop the site before officials know what else needs to be done to offset environmental concerns. Jackson is confident to city can resolve the issues, he said.

Grill and Day both would like to see a charter high school built at the Academic Village site so a tight relationship could be developed with universities.

Day would like to see the city give enough land to FGCU for a 40,000-square-foot building with a parking lot. He said that could get the ball rolling for a college campus.

But he wants the city to leave room for other educational institutions as well.

Jackson said the city has spoken with private colleges about having more facilities in Cape Coral. Nova University already leases space at a city business park by City Hall. Jackson’s office has explored luring European universities to establish overseas campuses here.

Day noted a workforce study recently completed for the city which showed a need for more higher learning facilities in Cape Coral.

"When a university can offer some programs in locations permanently, there is a direct positive impact for the community a facility goes into," Day said. "It is attractive for real estate or businesses to be around a college or university."
Garrett Johnson says Sentinel 'misrepresented' view on FSU NCAA violations
02/28/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Garrett Johnson, former NCAA track national champion at Florida State who is now a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University, issued a statement this morning via e-mail to the Tallahassee Democrat, saying comments he made in an interview with the Orlando Sentinel Wednesday were “misrepresented.”

Johnson was quoted by reporter Mike Bianchi as saying that academic misconduct by FSU student-athletes was no secret and that university officials were aware of what was happening. An investigation by FSU resulted in the university suggesting that its athletic department be placed on two years probation by the NCAA.

In his e-mail this morning Johnson said:

“There was a controversial article published in the Orlando Sentinel containing quotes from me that I feel misrepresent the essence of my comments. I have drafted a reply which is attached. I would really appreciate it if you would publish this so my position is communicated through my own voice.”

The controversy was reported on Tallahassee.com on a blog by Mike Boone. A story will be published later today on Tallahassee.com and in tomorrow’s Tallahassee Democrat.

The following is Johnson’s statement in its entirety as sent to the Democrat:

On Wednesday, an article containing criticisms of the NCAA and Florida State’s efforts to address academic misconduct appeared in an Orlando newspaper. While I stand by what I said my comments were misrepresented. I’d like to take this opportunity to explain my position and express my distaste for generalizations made by the author.

Student-athletes who cheat and advisors who turn a blind eye should be held accountable, but punishing the guilty without reforming the culture will ultimately lead to similar disastrous outcomes in the future. Throughout my conversation with the author I emphasized the systemic and entrenched
problems that plague college athletics, because they exist as the ‘elephant in the room’ everyone sees but fails to acknowledge. At the end of the day, student-athletes must take responsibility for striking the proper academic/athletic balance, and most do, but the onus of ensuring the academic integrity of the university should not be exclusively theirs to bear.

Academic institutions exist to inspire the minds and enhance the educational lives of students. Unfortunately, within some NCAA universities, their responsibility to promote the intellectual and personal development of student-athletes has been reduced to an unhealthy focus on simply maintaining the basic GPA required to stay eligible. Since the goal is now to keep student-athletes academically eligible so they can influence the team’s performance, which is directly tied to revenue levels for individual institutions as well as the NCAA, those who excel academically often do so in spite of the system and not because of it. Institutional pressure to keep student-athletes eligible prompt advisors to give less motivated students whatever course load is required to keep them on the field. Subsequently, less motivated student-athletes do whatever it takes, even cheating, in order to achieve the same goal. This is a system predisposed to scandal, ultimately serving nobody?

The vast majority of student-athletes are remarkable contributors to the vibrant academic community at FSU, a point I stressed repeatedly but was conveniently ignored in the article. They take the difficult courses, are engaged in the community and I am honoured to call many of them friends. However, as long as bonuses and budgets are influenced by win-loss records and bowl game appearances there will exist an urgent need to protect less motivated students from the institution. As long as the ‘easy’ courses, rather than a re-prioritization of focus, remain a solution to academic eligibility concerns there will exist a need to look out for the less motivated students. As long as blaming less motivated students is used to deflect and diminish the NCAA’s failure to combat this flawed system, concerned individuals must hold them accountable by speaking truth to power.

I never stated or even suggested that I had the ability to identify specific individuals involved in academic misconduct at FSU. The author asked me to implicate individuals, I explained that my knowledge is restricted to the systemic issues rather than specific names, he responded with a sensationalized story. I condemn his erroneous attack on the invaluable support provided by tutors, from which I personally benefited, and his assault on the student-athletes and staff who comprise my FSU family. While I remain sceptical of the system, I will always be a proud Seminole and am committed to supporting FSU as we work to make a good program better.
Haridopolos not enrolled since 2000, University of Arkansas says
02/28/2008 © Orlando Sentinel

State Sen. Mike Haridopolos, responding to his controversial hiring at the University of Florida, said last week that he was working toward a Ph.D. in history at the University of Arkansas.

UF said the same in a news release announcing his $75,000-a-year job as a lecturer.

But officials at the University of Arkansas said Wednesday that Haridopolos hasn't been enrolled there since 2000.

Haridopolos now says he is giving up on Arkansas and planning to switch to Florida State University.

Continuing to pursue his doctoral dreams at Arkansas "is not feasible," he said Wednesday after the Sentinel asked about his status there.

The academic status of Haridopolos, who is scheduled to become Senate president two years from now, came under scrutiny after faculty and watchdog groups questioned his hiring at UF amid budget cuts.

Haridopolos has a master's degree from Arkansas, which meets the minimum job requirement for lecturers. But his salary is more in line with tenured professors who typically have doctorates, faculty members say.

UF officials say putting Haridopolos on the payroll gives students access to an experienced legislator working in the upper echelons of state government.

Haridopolos, R-Indialantic, said Wednesday that he intends to enroll at FSU as soon as the legislative session that begins Tuesday comes to an end. He said he
thinks he can get his degree in a year because he completed the required course work in Arkansas and already has a jump on his dissertation about the rise of the Republican Party in Florida.

"I'm well versed in the subject," he said.

One faculty member who is critical of Haridopolos' hiring at UF says he should have been more upfront about his progress toward his doctorate in Arkansas.

"You've got to have a home institution and be enrolled in a graduate program to make that claim," said Jack E. Davis, an associate professor in UF's history department.

"What I see in all this is backpedaling."

A UF spokesman disagreed.

"I don't think he misrepresented himself," said Steve Orlando. "You can be actively working on a doctorate without being enrolled."

Davis added that Haridopolos' hiring left some faculty upset because budget cuts are forcing UF to hire fewer adjunct, or temporary, instructors. That will lead to larger class sizes and make it more difficult for instructors to spend time with individual students, he said.

Whether Haridopolos had a doctorate or was close to earning one didn't come up during the job-interview process because it wasn't a job requirement, said Joe Glover, interim dean of UF's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

"I had no idea he was working on a dissertation," he said. "What we saw was someone with extensive real-life experience that would be very valuable for students."

It's not unusual for working people such as Haridopolos to take 10 or more years to complete a doctorate, he added.

Haridopolos left the Arkansas graduate program in history in 2000, the year he was first elected to the Florida House of Representatives.

Haridopolos said Wednesday that he has kept working on his dissertation intermittently through the years. He said he expects to be able to transfer his Arkansas course work to FSU.
He says he's confident he can juggle his work at UF with his leadership role in the Legislature while also working on his degree at FSU. As Senate president, Haridopolos will be expected to maintain a high profile and raise money for Republican candidates and the state party.

"I think I'm going to surprise a lot of people," he said.

He also will wield considerable influence over the state budget, including money given to state universities, as Senate president.

Haridopolos will split his time between UF's political-science department and the university's Bob Graham Center for Public Service. The center trains students to work in government.

Haridopolos isn't teaching classes this semester because his leadership role in the Senate doesn't leave him time. Instead, he might teach an undetermined number of classes in the fall. Meanwhile, he will dedicate any spare time he has to lining up internships in government for UF students, he said.

Haridopolos taught a course at UF in 1995 as an adjunct instructor in the political-science department.

"I've been a full-time professor since before I was elected to office," he said last week. "This is just continuing my career."

Haridopolos was on the Brevard Community College faculty from 1993 until 2003, when he won his Senate seat.

Before landing the UF job, Haridopolos had earned nearly $40,000 a year from 2005 to 2007 under a contract with Brevard Community College.

His duties centered on writing a book combining history with his experiences in government. The new book -- his first as sole author, he said -- is finished and ready for publication. His first book -- 10 Big Issues Facing Our Generation -- was written with former Brevard Community College colleague Amy E. Hendricks and published in 1998.

UF students helping out in Caribbean - News - GainesvilleSun.com
02/28/2008 © Gainesville Sun
No pencil. No notes. No progress. This is what some school children throughout the Caribbean deal with on an everyday basis.

Continue to 2nd paragraph Caribbean Gator Aid, a new student-run organization at the University of Florida, has a goal to supply school-aged children in the Caribbean with the school supplies they are lacking.

The organization, which was officially established by the UF's Center for Student Involvement in mid-January, is currently targeting six Caribbean countries to aid in school supplies.

The non-profit organization's primary mission is to help impoverished children in the Caribbean islands through service projects and initiatives.

By aiding young children with educational empowerment families will become self sufficient and better their communities, said David Rowe, the group's treasurer.

“There are groups all over campus aiding in supplies to places like Africa and other underprivileged areas of the world,” said Rowe. “Many people overlook the Caribbean as an area that needs assistance.”

President Jessica Donawa said she started the organization in December, saying she wanted to make a change.

“It was important for me to be apart of something cultural but wasn't completely social like the other Caribbean groups on campus,” Donawa said.

Donawa, of Jamaican and Trinidadian descent, said the group wants to collect money to buy basic school supplies for elementary school children who are in need. Simple necessities like pencils, paper and backpacks are the main items to be shipped and disbursed in the islands. Currently the organization is focusing on getting school supplies to Jamaica, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Grenada and Antigua.

“Many of us who are of Caribbean heritage don't realize how fortunate we are to live in America and have parents or caregivers who provide for us,” said Donawa, a second-year student. “And if we don't have someone to provide for us there, are scholarships and grants for those who are less fortunate but just as deserving.”

Donawa, 20, said a lot of people see Jamaica and other Caribbean islands as vacation spots but do not see the real side of things.
“Many people are negligent to the fact that there is a Caribbean population that suffers and does not get the adequate necessities to survive,” she said. “People spend thousands of dollars to luxuriate at these resorts not realizing that half of the people who are serving them have children going to school without simple things like a pencil.”

The organization is hosting events with other student groups to build up a membership base, Donawa said.

“We want to spread the word so that others can understand why it is so important to give back to the Caribbean,” Donawa explained. “If people understand then they will step up and help. If we don't help them then who will?”

Donawa encourages anyone interested in participating in the organization to join the Facebook group Caribbean Gator Aid.

**Atomic bomb survivor visits UF - News - GainesvilleSun.com**
02/28/2008 © Gainesville Sun

A survivor of the atomic bomb dropped in Hiroshima during World War II will visit the University of Florida's Reitz Union tonight to talk about her experience and her life afterward.

Continue to 2nd paragraph Sadae Kasaoka was 13 during World War II and she lived in Ote-machi, near the center of the bombing, according to her Web site. Kasaoka will speak about her life before the bombing, and she will talk about the moment when the atomic bomb destroyed her home, how she escaped and the chaos on the street.

Kasaoka began to tell her experience to elementary school children in 2000, according to her Web site. In 2005, she joined a foundation that advocates the elimination of nuclear weapons and world peace.

Beth Waltrip, director of student activities at the Reitz Union, said Kasaoka will visit Gainesville Mayor Pegeen Hamrahan as part of her Gainesville stop and that she invite the mayor to join an organization called "Mayors for Peace."
Waltrip said Kasaoka's speech will be in Japanese, but there will be English translation for the audience.

Susan Kubota, senior lecturer in Japanese at UF, said there will be a 30-minute question-and-answer session after the speech. Organizers will hand out papers to the participants and hope they would write a message about peace.

The messages "will be taken back to Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which people from all over the world visit and leave messages there," Kubota said.

Kasaoka's speech, free and open the public, is in the Rion Ballroom and set for 7:15 p.m. Prior to the speech, a video of Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba addressing the danger and abolition of nuclear weapons will be played. Kubota said the committee organizing Kasaoka's visit is expecting 200 to 300 in attendance.

The speech is part of the series "Voices for Peace: the Legacy of Hiroshima & Nagasaki," hosted by UF in conjunction with the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation's delegation and its advocacy organization, Mayors for Peace. The events are taking place today through Sunday in the Reitz Union.

The main purpose of the "Voices for Peace" events is education, Kubota said. It will be an opportunity for students to see first-hand consequences of the atomic bomb.

On Friday in the Reitz Union gallery, a photo display will show the destruction the atomic bomb caused, Kubota said.

"I think students can definitely see what kind of pain people suffered," said Rachael Jaspan, a UF sophomore majoring in Japanese. Jaspan, who plans to attend today's talk, said most people in America see the use of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima in a positive light, yet they don't realize the impact the bombs had on Japan.

Nori Yamada, a UF economics major from Japan, said she will attend the event, although she has heard a speech from another atomic bomb survivor in Hiroshima before.

Yamada said she visited Hiroshima on a field trip in middle school. She said it is common for schools in Japan to arrange field trips in Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Students in Japan are required to study the history of the two places before the field trip.
Yamada said it is important to know the history of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and it is "something everyone should know."

"I hope people will come and be open-minded," Waltrip said. "These are some of the most negative consequences (of nuclear bombs) that you can imagine, and we need to think about that before it's done again."

Learning to binge - News - GainesvilleSun.com
02/28/2008 © Gainesville Sun

University of Florida students learn a lot during the course of their academic careers, including how to tie on a major buzz for game day, according to new research.

As they progress from their freshman to senior years, UF students are increasingly likely to engage in extreme binge drinking on game day at The Swamp, according to recent data compiled by UF researchers.

"Win, lose or draw, people are drinking (on game day)," said Tavis Glassman, a co-author of the study.

Glassman, coordinator of alcohol and other drug prevention programs at UF, sampled 740 UF students between the ages of 18 and 24 for the study. On one hand, the results just quantitatively confirmed what seems obvious to any onlooker: Drinking and football go hand in hand in Gainesville. Beyond that, however, the study suggests that the ritual of drinking to excess on game day may be learned behavior for students.

The "good news" is that 51 percent of those sampled said they didn't drink at all on game day, Glassman said. Among those who did, however, there were troubling trend lines. Of the freshmen who said they drank on game days, 6 percent said they were extreme drinkers. That percentage increased every academic year, culminating in 25 percent of seniors who described themselves as extreme game day drinkers.

Extreme drinking was defined as eight drinks throughout the day for women and 10 for men.

UF researchers say they're intrigued and troubled to see that game day drinking appears to intensify among UF students as they get older. That could be because alcohol is more available as students reach the legal drinking age, but it also
suggests students gradually embrace "the culture" of game day debauchery, Glassman said.

It's important to note that the measures used to define extreme drinking in this study were elevated above the levels of traditional alcohol studies to account for the peculiar binging that football season seems to invite, according to Glassman and Virginia Dodd, the study's co-author.

For alcohol researchers, "high risk drinking" has long been defined as five drinks in one sitting for males and four drinks in one sitting for females. The UF study employed a new term, "extreme ritualistic alcohol consumption," which is defined as 10 drinks for males and eight drinks for females over the course of an entire day.

To the surprise of researchers, graduate students also self-identified in significant numbers as extreme game day drinkers. Of those surveyed who drank on game days, 19 percent of graduate students said they were extreme drinkers.

"It's very atypical for graduate students to say they drink at this level," Glassman said.

The unpublished research, which will be presented on campus today was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant was aimed in part at helping to curb game day drinking, as well as reducing drinking rates throughout the year.

The research is the result of a 2006 e-mail survey, where students graded their drinking behaviors and provided comments as well. One student noted, "Drinking a six pack is not high-risk drinking; it is just a warm-up before you go out."

Glassman and Dodd, an assistant professor of health education and behavior, are touting the research as evidence that enforcement efforts need to be strengthened. The drinking levels students testify to in the study clearly indicate that the risks of alcohol-related injuries and deaths are significant on game day, and that means more strictly enforcing open container laws is an important next step, the researchers say.

In the wake of several student deaths related to alcohol, two of which were tied to the weekend of the UF game against the University of Georgia in Jacksonville, UF has increased alcohol awareness efforts.
UF's Athletics Department has embraced the alcohol awareness campaign by placing head coach Urban Meyer in anti-drinking advertisements, but the researchers concede that they're fighting against a long-standing and powerful culture that links football and booze. Indeed, the wealthy alumni who tailgate alongside Ben Hill Griffin Stadium on game days are part of the group that's sending the message that pre-game binge drinking is the norm, Dodd said.

"It becomes an expectation that if you're an alumni of this university, you come back on game day and party hearty," she said.

Gator Party wins SG election - News - GainesvilleSun.com
02/28/2008 © Gainesville Sun

The Gator Party increased its string of victories to three early today, claiming all three executive positions and 35 of the 47 open senate seats in this semester's Student Government election.

Continue to 2nd paragraph Gator Party presidential candidate Kevin Reilly, vice presidential candidate Yooni Yi and treasurer candidate Paul Drayton all were elected.

The Orange and Blue Party captured 10 senate seats, with two seats having no candidates running for them.

A total of 8,129 students voted in the election, compared to 7,692 in last spring's election.

Promptly at midnight, supporters of both parties poured out of the Orange and Brew in preparation for the announcement of the results.

Then the waiting began.

The crowd of more than 100 grew restless in the cold because the announcement of the results was delayed for more than an hour.

At one point, Gator Party supporters hoisted party president Steven Hoffstetter into the crowd as they chanted, "It's great to vote the Gator Party."

The Orange and Blue Party answered right back with a chant of "Orangeâ€”Blue."
Absent from the ballot during Tuesday's and Wednesday's voting was the constitutional amendment involving online voting, a major issue in this semester's election.

Earlier this month, the UF Student Supreme Court ruled that the online voting initiative that was supposed to appear on this semester's ballot is unconstitutional.

Also in Wednesday's election, a majority of UF students voted no on the referendum asking students if UF should officially denounce the invasion and continued occupation of Iraq, while two other measures were approved.

Students passed the referendum asking whether UF should create a committee to advise the Board of Trustees, UF's highest governing body, on socially responsible investing of the university's $1 billion-plus endowment.

In addition, students passed a proposed Student Body constitutional amendment initiative to reduce the maximum number of senators in office at a time from 120 to 100.

The amendment also places the addition or subtraction of senate seats at the direct discretion of the Student Senate itself rather than the faculty senate, with the logic being that student senators are more sensitive to and aware of students' needs than faculty members.

University of North Florida

Ajax begins UNF project
02/28/2008 © Tallahassee Democrat

Ajax Building Corp. has started construction of the $27 million College of Education and Human Services Building on the University of North Florida campus. The three-story, 98,000-square-foot building will house classrooms, teaching labs, faculty offices, auditoriums, meeting space and student services. Tallahassee-based Ajax is serving as the project's construction manager. Completion is expected in the spring of 2009, the company said. "The new building will enable College of Education and Human Services faculty, staff and programs to be together under one roof for the first time in years," said Bill Byrne, Ajax president.

Pinch A Penny opens new galleries: The Pinch A Penny pool, patio and spa store at 2473 Greer Road in Tallahassee will open two distinctive galleries of outdoor
products in March, owner Bob Pittman has announced. The Summer Classics
gallery will consist of outdoor home furnishings and the Jacuzzi gallery will
feature hot tubs made famous by inventor Joe Jacuzzi. General manager Tom
Potter said the new additions give customers a larger, more diverse array of
outdoor products in one location. The galleries open to the public March 14.

**University of South Florida**

**Merge Byrd and USF**
02/28/2008 © St. Petersburg Times

The time has come to bring political calm and financial stability to the Johnnie B.
Byrd Sr. Alzheimer's Center and Research Institute in Tampa. Finding a cure to
this debilitating disease is far too important for the institute to continue in a
perpetual tug of war over power, money, turf and ego. State lawmakers should
fold the institute into the University of South Florida. That would add
accountability, protect Byrd in these difficult economic times, provide stable
leadership and further the institute's research mission.

Five-million Americans, including nearly a half-million Floridians, suffer from
Alzheimer's, and these patients and their families deserve the fullest that the
Byrd institute can deliver. That cannot happen now, in part because Johnnie B.
Byrd Jr., the former Florida House speaker, burned too many bridges creating
the institute with his raw abuse of power. It is time to move on. The institute has
established a reasonably solid record in a short time. It can build on those
achievements by having the focus on curing people not diminished by the
settling of political scores.

State university system chancellor Mark Rosenberg has the right idea: Put Byrd
under the auspices of USF. The institute's expensive new building sits at USF's
Tampa campus, and the move would benefit both institutions. Byrd could cut
overhead by availing itself of the university's support operations, from
purchasing and information technology to human resources, lobbying and legal
help. It could save by pooling insurance, spreading administrative costs and
sharing offices and equipment. Having the university imprimatur also could
expand research, internship and fundraising opportunities.

Byrd opposes the move, as does state Sen. Durell Peaden Jr., the health services
appropriations chairman. Byrd said making the institute an arm of the university
would water down its global appeal and make it harder for legislators from other
parts of the state to justify supporting it with state resources. Peaden said
independence was key to ensuring that the institute would serve its legislative
intent - research - and not be drowned by the university's larger mission, campus politics or budget battles.

But those concerns pale compared to the challenges Byrd faces and the potential a merger has for both institutions. Having USF as the parent would bring some much-needed accountability to Byrd's governing structure. It would enable Byrd to achieve its mission of coordinating research on Alzheimer's by integrating the institute with departments at the university already doing that very work. The USF umbrella would insulate the institute from political attack and the annual legislative fight over its budget.

Indeed, the mission and identity Byrd and Peaden long for is best guaranteed by joining the university. Gov. Charlie Crist proposed spending $5-million next year on the institute - a far cry from the $15-million anticipated during these start-up years. While the institute, like other tax-funded programs, needs to tighten its belt in these lean economic times, it should not have to face, as a matter of routine, cuts of between half and two-thirds of its budget. Peaden vowed to provide more than $5-million and to guarantee a funding stream from the state. But going year to year in the dark is no way for managers to plan. It is no way to attract talent to move here, no way to impress private-sector partners and no way to impress on the people at Byrd that they are serving a public mission.

USF will need some state money to cover the costs of administering Byrd, so the merger does not hurt existing university operations or reduce what's available for research. But the argument that integrating with a respected university would shrink Byrd's academic stature simply doesn't fly. The opposite is true, and it is doubtful Byrd can survive in the long term in its current form. It is time to talk about the Byrd institute in terms of its research instead of the politics of its survival.

**Upward Bound Program Revived**
02/28/2008 © Tampa Tribune

TAMPA - A long-standing mentoring program at the University of South Florida has returned after the federal government last year declared it dead.

Congress recently renewed $3.5 million in grants to USF's Upward Bound, which guides low-income, mostly minority high school students from the Tampa area into college.
Upward Bound had been at USF for 41 years. But last spring, the U.S. Department of Education killed its funding, ruling that the program's directors failed to properly show why they needed the money and that their plan of success was "overly ambitious."

USF wasn't alone. The Education Department eliminated funding for about 100 Upward Bound programs nationwide, including those at the University of Florida, Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

About 130 students in grades 10 through 12 participated last year in USF's program, and the university plans to enroll the same number this summer. Students spend six weeks living on the Tampa campus and are provided with tutoring and exam preparation. After six weeks, they receive instruction on Saturdays.

USF leaders had said that an average of 95 percent of high school students in the program entered college.

Funding for the program nationally, however, has been a political target. In the past, President Bush unsuccessfully pushed to eliminate the program, which began as a Great Society program 40 years ago. Bush preferred directing more grants to states for use in their own college programs.

Two years ago, the White House Office of Management and Budget pronounced Upward Bound "deficient."

USF leaders applauded Congress' move to restore funding. The $3.5 million grant is good for five years.

"Thanks to the renewal of the grant, we now have funds necessary to support initiatives to help students realize their full potential," USF Provost Ralph Wilcox said in a written statement.

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**University of West Florida**

**No Articles Today**

**State Higher Education Issues**

[ Suspected meningitis case found at Daytona college](https://www.miamiherald.com)

02/28/2008 © Miami Herald
An 18-year-old student at Daytona Beach Community College is being treated at a hospital for a possible case of bacterial meningitis.

School spokesman Glyn Johnston said the college was working with the county's Health Department to contact all who were in close contact with the student, but he said there was never a public health threat.

Bacterial meningitis is a potentially fatal infection transmitted by respiratory secretions and by direct contact with an infected person.

A 19-year-old University of South Florida student died in September of meningitis.

A proposal before the board of governors would require all new students at Florida's universities to be vaccinated against meningitis and hepatitis B.

**Brevardians send lawmakers on a mission**
02/28/2008 © Florida Today

From property taxes and school funding to research centers that could transform Kennedy Space Center, local leaders and citizens on Wednesday peppered Brevard County's legislative delegation with a slew of priorities they want taken to Tallahassee for the session starting next week.

New spending is considered a tough sell as the state prepares to cut about $3 billion from its $72 billion budget because of the sagging economy.

But that didn't stem the flow of requests, and space-related initiatives remained a top focus as efforts continue to limit job losses from the shuttle's retirement in 2010.

One proposal unveiled Wednesday would require $50 million in public funding but held the promise of creating 1,300 jobs and diversifying KSC into a hub for alternative energy research.

Florida Tech would lead four area universities involved in the proposed Florida Advanced Combustion Energy Center. Its initial focus would be improving the efficiency of utilities' turbine technology through partnerships with Siemens Power Generation and Florida Turbine Technologies.
"It adds a whole new dimension to what we're doing on the Space Coast, and it augments the space center," said Rep. Thad Altman, R-Viera, the seven-member delegation's chairman.

The center was one of several strategies space experts asked the delegation to pursue. Others included money for space research and development and legislative changes that would help the state compete for commercial space launch business.

Originally scheduled in December, the meetings were delayed so the winner of Tuesday's special election to replace Bob Allen in District 32 could participate.

On Wednesday morning, Altman welcomed Tony Sasso of Cocoa Beach, who won the election to become the first Democrat elected to the delegation since 1996.

"I think Tony's going to be a great addition," Altman said during a break. "He thinks like a Republican in a lot of ways."

Sasso attended the full day of meetings while trying to return congratulatory phone calls, plan interviews with potential staff members and get clothes laundered before he heads to Tallahassee.

He's also settling on the six bills he's allowed to submit during the session, a process drawing solicitations from lawmakers who have already reached their limit.

"I'm the most popular guy in Tallahassee right now," Sasso joked.

One option presented itself at the meeting with the Brevard County School Board members saying they wanted control over when to start the school year.

Sen. Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, suggested Sasso sponsor an old bill of his that sought to give districts back control of their calendars, while noting it would face a tough fight from tourism interests.

School board members also warned the legislators to keep promises that Amendment 1, the five-year, $9.3 billion tax cut voters approved Jan. 29, would not force cuts in school funding.

The delegates said cuts are coming regardless of the amendment because of the state's weak economy.
"If you think you're not going to get some budget cuts next year, you need to rethink that right now," said Rep. Stan Mayfield, R-Vero Beach, adding that he expected cuts to education spending of 3 percent to 5 percent.

The day concluded with proposals from citizens and community groups on topics ranging from adoption to services for seniors suffering from Alzheimer's disease.

John Ells, a 58-year-old Merritt Island retiree, was one of several speakers who wanted to make sure the Legislature didn't consider its work on property tax reform to be done after the passage of Amendment 1. He said his property taxes doubled after he moved in 2005 and that the amendment didn't do enough to help recent homebuyers who experienced similar increases.

"Are we going to fix it? Is there a plan that we can correct this inequity?" he asked.

The delegation assured him that tax reform would remain a top priority.

"There's a lot of work that still needs to be done," said Rep. Ralph Poppell, R-Vero Beach. "The problem is not fixed."

**Career colleges meet demand**

Floridians are demanding that their tax burden be reduced and that government spend less money. Tax cuts, combined with a downturn in the economy, mean we have less money to spend. As a result, Florida's state colleges and universities are facing budget cuts, enrollment caps and higher tuition. Will these cuts result in fewer degreed, skilled employees entering Florida's workforce? The simple answer is No.

Florida has more than 750 licensed private career colleges and schools that provide practical education and workforce preparation for the 235,000 students attending our schools. They study fields demanded by Florida businesses such as nursing, teaching, medical assisting, radiation technology, criminal justice, information technology and business.

Our students earn degrees, enter the workforce and start contributing to Florida's economy much faster than their government-educated contemporaries. In 2005-2006, more than 80,000 students received certificates, two- and four-year degrees, masters' degrees and Ph.D.s from our schools.
These taxpaying colleges and schools do not burden taxpayers. In 2005-2006, only 3 percent ($13,888,429) of all state financial aid followed our students; that same year we paid more than $131 million in local, state and federal taxes and offered $1.5 million of our own funds in scholarships to high-school seniors. We, not taxpayers, pay for our own buildings.

Our continued growth indicates there is strong demand for career-focused education, especially from working parents, minorities and first-generation college students. Our students look to us for the skills they need to succeed in Florida's workforce, and because of our low student-to-faculty ratio, they get those skills.

KATHY MIZERHECK, executive director, Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools, Tallahassee

**Few Colleges Follow Ivies with Aid to Middle Class**

02/28/2008 © WWSB ABC Sarasota County

Well-endowed colleges have discovered they love the middle class.

Following recent announcements by Ivy League heavyweights Harvard and Yale that they were cutting costs for families earning in the low six figures, a growing number of competitors have fallen in line to offer comparable packages to middle-class families.

On Jan. 31, Cornell became the fifth Ivy League school to announce a new financial aid initiative for students, closely following on the heels of Dartmouth and the University of Pennsylvania. Even schools outside the Ivy League, such as Northwestern University, are following suit. On the same day that Cornell weighed in, Northwestern announced plans to eliminate student loans and replace them with grants for undergraduate students with the greatest financial need.

These institutions say the moves are designed to make it easier for middle-class and upper-middle-class families to pay for college. For example, Harvard University describes the news as a "sweeping middle-income initiative" on its Web site, while other schools made similar pronouncements. But despite this big talk, real help for the middle class, at least for the majority of families with students at colleges with fewer financial resources than the Ivies and other elites, will not be coming any time soon.
"It's basically a very few privileged people who will be helped by this initiative," says Sandy Baum, senior policy analyst for the College Board and a professor of economics at Skidmore College. "There aren't many colleges that can remotely afford to do this."

Affordable for the Richest Colleges

The move to increase endowment spending by top schools comes amid political pressure to do something to cushion the high cost of college education. On Jan. 24, Senators Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) and Max Baucus (D-Mont.) asked the nation's 136 wealthiest colleges and universities for detailed information on their endowments, tuition hikes, and financial aid. Their requests came shortly after the National Association of College & Business Officers released a report that a record 76 schools had endowments topping $1 billion or more in the last fiscal year. As tuition continues to outpace inflation at the nation's colleges (BusinessWeek.com, 10/22/07), the pressure is on for schools to distribute more of their wealth among students.

"I think the discussion in Washington reflects what Congress hears from students and parents. Yale hears from students and parents as well," Tom Conroy, a spokesperson for Yale University, wrote in an e-mail. "Both Congress and the school are reacting to the same voices."

But while the tuition aid by the big schools is welcomed by students and their families, comparable largesse is not a feasible option for most of the nation's schools, which have endowments significantly below Harvard's $34.6 billion. For the foreseeable future, it appears just a small percentage of the nation's 18 million college students attending elite universities-less than 1%-will be affected by the financial aid decisions at some of the nation's top schools. The reason? Most higher-education institutions, including small private colleges and state universities, simply can't compete with the vast financial resources of the Ivies and their peers. The majority don't have endowments anywhere near the size they would need to offset the cost of tuition for middle- and upper-middle-class students, experts say.

In fact, pressure at less-wealthy state schools to compete for top students could have the perverse effect of hurting those students most in need. In the worst-case scenario, schools could choose to divert money from low-income students in favor of more financial aid for middle-class and affluent students, says Richard Vedder, director of the Washington (D.C.)-based Center for College Affordability & Productivity. "In that sense, low-income students are a little bit at risk," Vedder says.
Pressure on All Schools

Under Harvard's plan, families earning between $60,000 and $120,000 will pay a small percentage of their annual income for tuition, room, and board, jumping to 10% for those earning between $120,000 and $180,000. At Yale, families with incomes below $120,000 will see their financial contribution slashed by more than 50%, while most families with incomes between $120,000 and $200,000 will see their costs drop by 33% or more.

But very few of the nation's private colleges and universities can follow this example, says Tony Pals, a spokesperson for the National Association of Independent Colleges & Universities (NAICU). Of his organization's 1,600 member schools, only 40 have an endowment of $1 billion or more. The remaining 1,560 schools have a median endowment of $14 million, he says, and only three of those schools have announced plans to replace loans with grants. "That tells you right there and then what the disparity looks like between the haves and the so-called have-nots," Pals says.

That doesn't mean that presidents of private colleges and universities haven't been following the financial-aid news with keen interest, wondering what it will mean for them down the road. Jackie Jenkins-Scott, president of Wheelock College in Boston, says it's nearly impossible for a small liberal arts college like hers-with an endowment of $50 million-to offer students financial-aid packages comparable to those announced in recent weeks. However, she plans to raise the issue of how to best allocate the school's limited financial-aid resources among low- and middle-income students at the school's next trustee board meeting in March.

"[W]hen parents pick up the newspaper and see these things happening, it raises the expectation of what all institutions will make available," Jenkins-Scott says. "And many of us don't have the resources to make that available, which is one way we get a lot of pressure."

Feds May Have to Intervene

Even presidents at private schools with endowments above $200 million, such as Ithaca College, which shares its hometown with Cornell, say they can't match the heavyweights. Ithaca President Peggy Williams says she could replace student loans with subsidized grants if she was able to get an additional $24 million in earnings from the school's $237 million endowment. But to do that, she would have to raise an additional $500 million in endowment funds from alumni and donors, a nearly impossible feat, she says.
"The impact on us will be people saying, 'Why do I have to take out a loan at your school when other schools are giving grants?'" says Williams. "We'll have to explain why to them. I think they'll look around and realize that it is less than 1% of the institutions in the country that are able to do any of these big headline strategies."

Ultimately, the federal government will need to step in and help address the inequities between the schools with large endowments and smaller ones, says Richard Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at the Century Foundation, a nonpartisan public policy group based in Washington and New York. The number of schools capable of following Harvard's lead will likely trail off in the coming months, but that does not mean demand for lower tuition at colleges across the country will fade, he says.

"Part of the reason that the Senate held hearings about the endowments is that they hope that even if legislation doesn't pass, it spurs some voluntary action," Kahlenberg says. "I think we've seen some evidence that this worked in this case."

**National Higher Education Issues**

**Spellings Seeks to Reassure Colleges as Pheaa Joins Student Lenders Who Are Scaling Back - Chronicle.com**

02/28/2008 © Chronicle of Higher Education

Education Secretary Margaret Spellings is moving to reassure colleges on the availability of student-loan money following the withdrawal of another major lender, Pennsylvania's state-controlled agency, from the federally guaranteed loan market.

The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, or Pheaa, announced its withdrawal on Tuesday, joining the College Loan Corporation, Nelnet, and Sallie Mae among the lenders that in recent weeks have either left the federal program or scaled back the types of loans they offer to students. All four are among the 20 largest suppliers of student-loan money through the federal program, according to Education Department figures.

Bankers quickly cited the decision by Pheaa as one of the strongest pieces of proof yet that the combination of the subsidy cuts approved last September by Congress and the continuing mortgage-driven credit crunch could leave some students without the money they need to attend college.
"This group is generally convinced there is going to be an access problem this fall," Christopher G. Cronk, managing director for education finance at Banc of America Securities LLC, told a conference of student-loan companies in Arlington, Va., on Wednesday.

Yet Ms. Spellings remains to be convinced, and is writing this week to college presidents hoping to reassure them, said her under secretary in charge of higher education, Sara Martinez Tucker. Department officials have checked with colleges each time a loan company announces a pullback from student lending, and each time they've seen no cause for alarm, Ms. Tucker told The Chronicle.

"None of the institutions have had any problem lining up new lenders," she said.

Ms. Spellings plans to check again this week for any signs of problems while assuring colleges that the department remains vigilant and confident in its ability to handle any problems that may develop with access to loans, Ms. Tucker said. "We're going to stay on top" of the matter, she said.

Colleges themselves appear uncertain whether to listen to the doomsayers or the pleas for calm.

"This really is a potential crisis for large numbers of students," the University of Pittsburgh's chancellor, Mark A. Nordenberg, told the Centre Daily Times, a newspaper in State College, Pa., in response to Pheaa's announcement.

However, Pennsylvania State University, where 78 percent of students receive some form of financial assistance, issued a written statement telling its students that both the university and Pheaa stood ready to help them find new lenders.

Pheaa, in its announcement, agreed that its action should have minimal effect on students. Pheaa will keep servicing loans it already has issued, and it will steer prospective new borrowers to banks still participating in the federally guaranteed loan program, said James L. Preston, the agency's acting president.

Pheaa said its decision was driven primarily by the overall credit crunch stemming from the subprime-mortgage crisis.

"Right now, it's not profitable for us at all" to finance federal student loans, Mr. Preston told state lawmakers in Harrisburg, Pa., on Tuesday during a hearing on Pheaa's budget.

The withdrawals by Pheaa and other major lenders have led both bankers and some lawmakers to suggest federal intervention. Twenty-one members of Congress, led by Rep. Paul E. Kanjorski, a Pennsylvania Democrat who is
chairman of a House of Representatives subcommittee on capital markets, wrote this month to Ms. Spellings and Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson Jr. to suggest the use of existing government-sponsored enterprises like the Federal Home Loan Bank System to infuse cash into the lending system.

And some lenders believe the Education Department should be prepared to trigger "lender of last resort" provisions, said John Dean, special counsel at the Consumer Bankers Association, which represents many of the nation's largest student-loan companies, including Pheaa.

Such provisions could let banks lend money to students with a 100-percent guarantee of repayment from the federal government if the borrower defaults, Mr. Dean said. Under current law, the government guarantees the banks repayment at rates between 95 percent and 98 percent.

An even more aggressive form of the lender-of-last-resort provision would let guarantee agencies—the nonprofit entities that use federal money to repay lenders in cases of default—use their federal money to lend directly to students.

Mr. Dean, whose association sponsored the daylong student-loan conference on Wednesday, said in an interview that department officials had made it clear they were "monitoring the situation and reviewing" whether to invoke the lender-of-last-resort provisions.

Ms. Tucker agreed that department officials were closely monitoring student-lending issues, but said the department saw no need to begin considering lender-of-last-resort provisions. "We think we're far, far, far from getting to this point," she said.

On the contrary, she said, Pheaa is just one lender among more than 2,000 that provides federally guaranteed student loans. The Pennsylvania agency's portfolio accounts for only about 1 percent of the total market, Ms. Tucker said, and its departure might just mean more opportunity for other lenders.

"Some banks will probably welcome this announcement," she said.

Lenders in that category could include Chase Education Finance, the student-loan division of JP Morgan Chase & Company, which announced plans this month to cut borrower rates and eliminate the origination fee on all federally guaranteed student loans (The Chronicle, February 15).

As a bank with customer deposits, Chase doesn't need to finance its lending with outside investors, and it sees an opportunity now to move more aggressively
into federally backed student lending, a company spokesman, Thomas A. Kelly, said in announcing the rate cuts.

The Consumer Bankers Association's conference here focused on private student loans, which are given by banks without any federal guarantee of repayment and which carry interest rates based on market conditions instead of set by the government. Students often seek those loans when they need more money than they can borrow through the federal student-aid programs.

The conference featured Mr. Cronk and other banking experts explaining the anticipated growth in private lending as college costs rise and more students seek to enroll. At the same time, uncertainty over the financial health of the student-loan industry, and the possibility that Congress might impose more regulations on it, could force out more lenders, said Joe Belew, president of the Consumer Bankers Association.

"It's not good for the system to be in a state of volatility and duress," Mr. Belew told the group.

But Mr. Belew and other association members were less clear about how directly that might translate into problems for students. And some agreed that regulatory actions under consideration by Congress might be helpful.

One provision now being debated as part of legislation to renew and amend the Higher Education Act, the law that governs most federal student-aid programs, would require banks to disclose more information to borrowers about private loans. That measure could prove beneficial to the industry, said Mark J. Weadick, managing director at Citigroup Global Markets Inc.

"Maybe it's modestly helpful," Mr. Weadick said, because it could leave borrowers more willing to trust private student loans.

N.J. Plan Suggests That Colleges May Be Spared the Worst of Budget Cuts in Some States - Chronicle.com
02/28/2008 © Chronicle of Higher Education

With New Jersey facing a projected budget deficit upwards of $3.5-billion—one of the biggest shortfalls in the country in percentage terms—college leaders in the state have been bracing for the worst.
But when Gov. Jon S. Corzine released his spending plan for the 2008-9 budget year on Tuesday, the news wasn't as bad as some had feared. The bottom line for higher education over all: a $76-million, or 4-percent, cut.

The fact that the Democratic governor did not totally gut the higher-education budget even when confronted with a large budget gap may be evidence that college leaders have begun to succeed in making their case that higher education is key to turning around state economies.

"New Jersey may be indicative of what is to come in other states," said Daniel J. Hurley, director of state relations and policy analysis for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. "Compared to years past, there is much less inclination by state policy makers to disinvest in higher education knowing that the institutions play such a role in economic competitiveness."

For instance, in Arizona, which faces the largest budget deficit in the country in percentage terms according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Gov. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, has proposed freezing tuition for four years of a student's college education and has pledged to double the number of bachelor's degrees awarded by her state by 2020.

**Mixed Reaction in New Jersey**

In New Jersey, the governor's budget message was met with mixed reaction by college officials. Some were critical of the proposed cuts, which will come on top of similar cuts made during the last few years.

"We certainly don't see it as good news," said Darryl G. Greer, executive director and chief executive officer of the New Jersey Association of State Colleges and Universities, which represents four-year institutions. "I think people who are positive about it are simply sympathetic to the state's fiscal duress."

Indeed, other college officials said on Wednesday that the reality of the situation was that it could have been a lot worse.

"There is no question that other entities and agencies have steeper cuts," said R. Barbara Gitenstein, president of the College of New Jersey. Mr. Corzine, for instance, proposed eliminating three state departments: Agriculture, Commerce, and Personnel.

"He didn't have many good choices," Ms. Gitenstein added.
While the overall percentage cut is small, the state's two-year and four-year colleges will see a 10-percent reduction in their operating funds from the state. Ms. Gitenstein said that her institution had been planning for different scenarios and that "the scope of the governor's plan was within those scenarios. We were not stunned by this."

She said the reductions would be made up by a combination of budget cuts and tuition increases, but said it was "too early" to give specifics on either front. One possible victim of the tight budget, she said, might be the college's efforts to reduce its carbon footprint.

"That's going to cost us some money upfront, and we might have to forgo some of those things," she said.

The governor's proposal came a day after the chairman of the State Commission of Investigation told lawmakers that wasteful spending was widespread at New Jersey's public institutions.

Mr. Greer called the commission's report a "bogus analysis," but said he feared it might hurt the push by higher-education lobbyists to reduce state oversight, which college officials say could reduce costs. His association wants lawmakers to allow public-private partnerships on some building projects and let the colleges handle their own workers'-compensation claims.

As Economy Slumps, More States Make It Easier for Colleges to Spend Endowment Assets - Chronicle.com

A growing number of states are passing laws to make it easier for colleges and other nonprofit groups to spend their endowment assets during difficult economic times. A report recommending ways to account for such endowment spending, however, could create special problems for colleges.

The new laws allow institutions to pay for scholarships, facilities, and other needs even as their endowments are losing money. While many colleges may not choose to spend from their endowments when their investments go south, the new laws give them the flexibility to do so.

In the past, laws in many states prevented colleges from tapping into their endowments when their investments were performing poorly. For example, if a donor pledged $1-million to endow scholarships, no money could be used to pay
for those scholarships if investment losses pushed the fund's principal below $1-
million.

"It really drew a line in the sand on an endowed gift," says Bruce Arick, chief
financial officer at Butler University. The new law "lifts that restriction," he says.
"It gives more flexibility."

Such laws have been adopted in 14 states on the recommendation of the National
Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws, an association of lawyers
that drafts and promotes new state laws. The laws are expected to be ratified in
most other states over the next few years.

But as such laws become the standard for many nonprofit groups, the new rules
are causing some confusion about how colleges should be reporting their
endowment assets.

To help ease the confusion, the Financial Accounting Standards Board, a trade
group in Norwalk, Conn., released a proposed set of [reporting standards] last
week to help organizations comply with the new rules. The standards provide
guidance on classifying the assets of endowment funds.

Some legal experts worry that the accounting board's interpretation of the rules
could give federal lawmakers more ammunition as they scrutinize university
endowments. Some members of the Senate Finance Committee, including
Charles E. Grassley, a Republican of Iowa, believe that wealthy colleges should
spend more of their endowment assets to help needy students pay for college.

Jack Siegel, a Chicago tax adviser, said he was concerned that the proposed
accounting standards were written in a way that would understated the amount of
money that should be held in principal to sustain endowments in perpetuity.
That might make it appear as though institutions should be spending more
money annually from their endowments.

"Maybe nobody would care if this were just accountants and debits and credits,"
Mr. Siegel said in an e-mail message. "But this comes in the middle of Senator
Grassley and lots of others charging that tuition costs are skyrocketing and these
big universities have billions of dollars in endowments that they aren't using to
reduce those costs."

The accounting board's reporting guidelines are not final, however. The board is
accepting public comments on its proposal until April 18 and will probably
revise the document based on those comments.

Mr. Panepento is the online editor of The Chronicle of Philanthropy.
Palestinian students in Gaza are being denied the right to university study because of Israeli travel restrictions, according to a new report from a human-rights group in the territory.

The eight-page report, "Gaza Students Face Denial of International Education Opportunities," published by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, accuses Israel of preventing 722 students registered at universities abroad from leaving the Gaza Strip to continue their studies. In November, New York-based Human Rights Watch said Israel was preventing 670 students from pursuing higher education abroad.

The new report says the students are victims of draconian Israeli restrictions placed on the Gaza Strip since the Hamas takeover of the area in June 2007. "Border crossings to the Gaza Strip were sealed, isolating Gaza from the outside world," it says.

The report says that students in Gaza "have been systematically deprived of their right to enroll and/or continue their education abroad, whether in the West Bank, Arab world, or other countries," and that their "educational future is in jeopardy."

Among the case histories cited by the group, which is based in Gaza City, are those of Mohammad Gassan Radwan and Mahmoud Mohammad Ali Rabah, both 19-year-olds from Al-Maghazi refugee camp. Both have been offered scholarships from a university in Morocco, but neither has been able to go there.

"I have not been able to travel despite having a visa to Morocco and buying my airplane ticket," Mr. Radwan says in the report. Classes began at the Moroccan institution two months ago, he said, and university officials have told him he may not be accepted there this year. "I am seriously threatened with losing my scholarship," he said. Mr. Rabah also fears losing his scholarship.

Another student stranded in Gaza, Mahmoud Afif Abdallah Abu Atteya, from Jabalia refugee camp, has completed three of seven years' study at medical school at Mansoura University, in Egypt. He has not been able to return to his studies since he came home in May 2007.

His semester at Mansoura University started more than three months ago, he said, and he has missed two of the four exams. Also, his residence permit in
Egypt ended in December. "This complicates my problem even more, and threatens my educational future, and subsequently my professional future," he is quoted as saying.

Israeli government officials have said they did not intend to trap the students in Gaza and were seeking "a creative solution" to their problem, but so far without results.
If a man who carries a urinal in one hand and solicits high-fives with the other isn't enough to get college students thinking about germs, then officials at the University of Central Florida are out of luck.

A spirited campaign to promote "hand hygiene" is under way at the Orlando campus, and the urinal toter, known as UCF 5th Guy, is its front line.

Like their counterparts at many other institutions, health officials at Central Florida want students to think about the germs that lurk on their hands. And then clean them, preferably with one of 32 strategically placed hand sanitizers on the campus.

Waterless hand sanitizers like Purell, Germstar, and AeroFirst, once the province of medical examination rooms, are becoming fixtures on college campuses. Dispensers are appearing in dining halls, next to elevators, at entrances to computer labs and recreational centers, and anyplace else students are likely to share their germs.

"Pathogens are getting stronger," says Ruth Stoltzfus, director of the wellness and health center at Goshen College, in Indiana. "We spread pathogens in ways that we weren't aware of before."

Students, of course, will still sneeze, cough, kiss, and otherwise spread germs with abandon. Officials just want them to reach for a zap of hand gel in between.

At Central Florida, a Web site instructs students what to do if they encounter 5th Guy, whose moniker comes from a statistic that one in five men do not wash their hands after leaving a public restroom.

"Do your best not to touch him," say the instructions. "Or, better yet, if you happen to have some hand sanitizer, feel free to offer it to him."

Maybe too few students have listened: 5th Guy himself, a theater student named David Cohn, took a hiatus from his $10-an-hour duties earlier this month, laid up with a cold.

Gimmicks like 5th Guy, a spinoff of a statewide health campaign in Florida, are key to getting students to think about hygiene, says Michael Deichen, medical director of Central Florida's health services. Simply installing dispensers of
AeroFirst around campus would probably not compel students to use them, he says.

Mr. Cohn, 21, hands out bottles of hand sanitizer and tissues and otherwise goads his fellow students into practicing good hygiene. "I put the goodies in the urinal and I make people grab them," he says. "It's obviously not a real urinal," he adds quickly. "That would be disgusting."

Health officials emphasize that old-fashioned hand washing is the best way to stay clean. "We have a clean-hand station in every restroom," John Hughes, coordinator of student health services at Sul Ross State University in Texas, says in an e-mail message. "It's called a sink, hopefully with running water and soap." They acknowledge that generations of college students turned out just fine without the antimicrobial benefits of Purell. Some also cite evidence that widespread use of hand sanitizers could create "superbugs" that are resistant to antibacterial cleaners.

Still, hand sanitizers can be convenient. "Most people are not going to specifically go into a restroom just to wash their hands," says Joyce Walter, director of health services at Wesleyan University, in Connecticut, where health officials are in their second year of promoting Purell use.

A recent study by researchers at Boston College's William F. Connell School of Nursing took another age group noted for its germs — second- and third-graders — and put the two hand-cleaning methods to the test. They compared the absenteeism rates of children who used alcohol-based hand sanitizers and those who used soap and water, and concluded that there was no significant difference. Teachers and school nurses, however, said they preferred the hand sanitizers over soap and water.

Some college health officials said the Purell units offered a psychological edge more than anything.

"We put the dispensers up because we like thinking they help," Mary Rick, director of the health center at Spring Arbor University, in Michigan, says in an e-mail message. "We are in huge denial."

A couple of years ago, an outbreak of a stomach flu so nasty that students began calling it simply "The Gastro" ran its nauseous course on Wesleyan's Connecticut campus. Soon enough, health officials and students formed a hygiene campaign. They called it "Infection Control" and promptly got money to install Purell dispensers, at $55 apiece, in eight computer labs on the campus.
Use of the dispensers has not been quite what they had hoped, not even at the health center, where a parade of ill students traipses in each day, right past the Purell dispenser mounted next to the front desk.

"Hardly anybody uses it," says Ms. Walter, the health center director, with more than a touch of incredulity.

So this year, the Infection Control team plans to distribute 3,000 foil packets of Purell to students' mailboxes. It is also considering a screen saver for the labs' computers that would urge people to get a pump of the gel on their way out.

Are college students really dirty enough to justify all the excitement?

"They're pigs," says Ms. Rick, of Spring Arbor. "Just stand in the bathroom and you can't even count how many don't wash their hands after leaving a stall. That's just the girls. Just think what the guys are like."