



To: Members, Board of Governors
Members, Boards of Trustees
Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor
University Presidents

From: Dean Colson, Chair

Date: May 16, 2012

Re: Board of Governors' Commission on Florida Higher Education
Access and Degree Attainment

Over the past two years, the Board of Governors has worked hard to develop its new 2025 Strategic Plan, has completely rewritten its Annual Accountability Report, and has created the Work Plan template for our universities to use when making annual presentations to our Board each June. We have recently created a task force to address the funding challenges for new facilities and will soon launch a second task force to explore the possibility of an online university. Recently, the Governor announced a Blue Ribbon Task Force to address certain higher education issues, and our Board was invited to make appointments to that group.

Much work is being done, but I want to focus on how we are addressing the very specific statewide need for future baccalaureate degree attainment. In our 2025 Strategic Plan, the Board embraced a vision to increase baccalaureate degrees awarded statewide from 53,000 per year to 90,000 per year – an increase of 37,000 graduates per year. To generate these additional graduates, we would need many times that number of new students in our universities. That fact alone raises a host of questions:

- Is the pipeline of college-age students going to be able to produce a sufficient number of college-ready students?
- Should all these new students attend our state universities, or is there a major role to be played by the State's colleges?
- Is there going to be any need in the near future for additional universities or colleges to meet this demand?
- Will the increased demand be evenly distributed around the state or will there be some geographic areas disproportionately impacted?

With the emergence of other task forces, some may question whether we need another group studying higher education. I am of the opinion that now is the time to focus on the crucial issue of capacity. Accordingly, I am creating the **Board of Governors' Commission on Florida Higher Education Access and Degree Attainment**. Importantly, this Commission will operate on a timeline that will enable it to review the work of the Facilities Funding Task Force, the soon to be announced Online University Task Force, and the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force before making final recommendations.

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The Commission will consider the State's projected population growth; employers' needs for workers with advanced levels of knowledge and skills; citizens' demands for higher education; and existing postsecondary capacity issues. The Commission will identify any and all regional or state-wide factors that could maximize, leverage, partner, or re-engineer existing resources.

I would like the Commission to meet prior to the Board's regular June meeting for an organizational session to craft a task list for its work. The Commission's final report and recommendations will be submitted to the Chair of the Board of Governors' Academic and Student Affairs Committee no later than May 15, 2013. The Board of Governors' different committees impacted by the report's recommendations will then bring respective issues and recommendations forward to the full Board of Governors for discussion or approval at our regular June 2013 meeting.

Board of Governors charter member and former Board Chair Ava L. Parker will serve as chair of this Commission. In addition to Governor Parker and myself, the Commission membership also includes:

Kathleen Shanahan of Tampa - Chair, State Board of Education

Rep. William L. "Bill" Proctor of St. Augustine - Member, Florida House of Representatives

Thomas G. Kuntz of Orlando - Member, Board of Governors, and Geographic Banking Executive, SunTrust Banks

Marshall M. Criser, III of Miami - Co-Chair, Higher Education Coordinating Council; Vice Chair, University of Florida Board of Trustees; President, AT&T Florida

Susan Pareigis of Tampa - President, Florida Council of 100.

Additionally, the student and faculty representatives to the Board of Governors will serve as ex-officio advisors to the Commission.

I want to thank all these leaders for committing their time to this project. Maintaining and increasing quality while addressing statewide capacity is essential to the future of the State University System. I look forward to this Commission helping to turn the Board's vision into reality.

Sincerely,



Dean Colson
Chair

c: Commission Members