

ACADEMIC ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM WOULD HELP UF IMPROVE UNDERGRAD EDUCATION

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. The University of Florida has proposed a new Academic Enhancement Program for undergraduate students that if approved will enable the university to hire 200 new faculty members and 100 new academic advisers, resulting in smaller classes, a higher four-year graduation rate and a more rewarding college experience.

The program would apply to incoming freshmen and transfer students in fall 2007 and would be phased in over four years. The program would add \$500 per semester to the tuition approved by the Florida Legislature for the 2007-08 academic year and would generate approximately \$36 million annually for the university

“The University of Florida is the highest ranked university in the state, yet, with one exception, charges the lowest tuition and fees,” UF President Bernie Machen said. “Our tuition is also considerably less than every other major public university nationally. This greatly impedes our ongoing efforts to reduce our high student-to-faculty ratio and take other steps necessary to make UF a leading national public university.”

UF currently charges the lowest tuition and fees (\$3,206 per academic year) of all but one state university in Florida – New College of Florida in Sarasota. It also ranked last in USA Today’s 2006 survey of tuition at 75 public flagship universities nationwide.

When combined with other measures being pursued by UF such as boosting the endowment, the new program will help reduce these disparities with the nation’s best public universities, Machen said. “It’s one ingredient in our campaign to make sure that Florida, which will soon be the third largest state in the nation, has a top-ranked research university,” he said.

The Program will not be covered by the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program. It will also not be covered under the Florida Prepaid College Plan, which does not cover all fees currently. Nearly 96 percent of all in-state UF undergraduates receive Bright Futures scholarships that cover either 100 percent or 75 percent of tuition and fees. The aid packages of students on financial aid will be adjusted to cover the cost of the program. UF scholarships that pay for tuition and college costs, such as the Florida Opportunity Scholarship, will also cover the added cost.

“If the benefits of the Academic Enhancement Program didn’t far outweigh the costs, we would never pursue the Academic Enhancement Program,” Machen said. “We think the program will provide our students a much richer, much more memorable undergraduate experience, not to mention a more valuable degree.”