

February 25, 2004

*From USF Chairman Richard Beard...
University of South Florida
Board of Trustees*

Dear Mr. Jones:

I have reviewed the materials you circulated describing the initiatives proposed in the Governor's budget recommendations. I am pleased to be able to tell you that President Genshaft and her administration have been discussing tuition pricing and she has shared with me much of this discussion.

I do want to take the time to tell you that I support efforts to better relate tuition price to student behavior and performance. I also realize that the intent is to have local boards of trustees craft the details of how such initiatives would be implemented. I think that this is important since I believe that different campuses will face different demands that would require local discretion within the bounds of any adopted policy.

I, like many of the current members of university boards continue to be extremely concerned that the concept of devolution is going backward. The universities have been starved financially and must be given appropriate authorization to raise tuition to a level which will allow us to meet our strategic plans and improve the quality of our institutions.

Regarding specific proposals, USF has been discussing implementation of block tuition for full-time students as a mechanism to encourage students to take a full course load in fall and spring semesters. We believe that this would reduce enrollment to degree time. A change that could complement this would be the elimination of the legal requirement that students attend summer programs. A student taking 18 credits each semester will complete 120 credits at least a semester earlier than normal, but requiring that this be done without the opportunity for a break between semesters or time for any alternative scholarly activity is excessive and could undercut this initiative. I believe the block grants should be based on the courses completed in a semester; not courses taken with a rebate at the end of the semester.

The proposal that non-degree seeking students to pay out-of-state tuition rates needs to be tempered with local determination of what certificate and special programs should exempt. As we know, the student profiles for the universities are different, particularly the urban universities which generally have more non-traditional undergraduates.

Again, subject to local board clarification and interpretation, we do not object to a policy that encourages students to complete their degree studies without students taking more credits than necessary, but we also believe that we should set the boundaries based on

local conditions. We have students taking double majors that may legitimately exceed a 110% cap.

A policy that requires student's tuition bill to delineate true cost of student's education by fund source and entity bearing the cost should not be a problem.

I also wanted to comment on the targeted incentives program. I suggest that the based year (2003-04 is proposed), should not include unfunded enrollment, only enrollment already in the funded base. USF has already responded to the State's direction to increase enrollment in these programs with the expectation that funding would be appropriated. For example, USF has purposely increased students in our nursing programs, many of which are currently unfunded. It would be unfair that those unfunded students never become funded when we were trying to meet the state's needs.

I hope you will take these comments as they are meant. The university boards of trustees believe that devolution will happen even though the governance documents we are seeing moving the responsibilities from the Board of Education to the Board of Governors do not appear to accomplish that goal. If the Board of Governors does not delegate to the boards of trustees those duties and policies that should be dealt with at the board of trustees' level, the progress that has been made over the last several years will end, and our universities will continue to be mediocre at best. We hope we're looking at a second step.

Yours very truly,
Richard A. Beard, III
Chairman

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