

# FLORIDA/UNITED STATES OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS PARTNERSHIP REPORT AND COMMITMENTS 2003 FINAL REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1998, the state of Florida and the U.S. Office of Civil Rights (OCR), Department of Education entered into a five-year Partnership Agreement to increase access for minority students at all levels of education. The Honorable Lawton Chiles and the Honorable Richard Riley were the primary parties to the Agreement in 1998. The Agreement has continued under the Honorable Jeb Bush and the Honorable Rod Paige.

The Agreement contains Commitments which detail each educational delivery system's activities to achieve increased access for minority students. The overall purpose is to ensure continued effort on the part of the State of Florida and the Department of Education to address the need to facilitate, for racial minorities as well as for non-minorities, the full opportunity to participate in the benefits of higher education in Florida. Reporting sectors for the Florida Department of Education are the Division of Public Schools, Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education, Division of Colleges and Universities, and Private and Independent Colleges.

This 2003 Final Report has been prepared consistent with the 1998 Florida/Office of Civil Rights Partnership Report and Commitments. Florida continues to demonstrate progress in closing the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students, increasing equitable educational opportunities, focusing on the diversity of faculty and staff, and completing capital projects, according to the terms of the Agreement.

During the five-year period of the Partnership Agreement, 1998-2003, there has been consistent continuation of programs, policies, and practices that support minority and non-minority students and employees. Florida's educational system is witnessing tremendous growth and progress for all students under the leadership of Governor Jeb Bush. .

### **Highlights of the Report**

- The **Governor Bush's Assistance Plus Program** provides assistance and intervention for low performing schools and uses a data-driven Continuous Improvement Model that has demonstrated effectiveness in closing the achievement gap between all racial and socio-economic subgroups.
- Statewide staff development programs have been developed to build local capacity in the delivery of **scientifically based reading programs** for teachers at both elementary and secondary levels and delivered training programs targeting families of struggling readers. Professional development plans are being developed to align professional development activities with the needs of all students, including those with special needs, those at-risk, or members of minority populations.
- Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) reading scores, from 1998 to 2003, have improved significantly for students in Florida. Minority students have made the most dramatic improvements.
- A methodology for reporting annual **Individual Student Learning Gains** has been developed for reporting annual learning gains for each individual student. Through the FCAT developmental scale score, individual student progress can be tracked from

year to year, and individual minority and non-minority student populations can be given individualized attention to address areas of need.

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results for reading and math show that, for the first time ever, the reading performance of Florida's 4<sup>th</sup> graders exceeds the national average. Also, the national scores reveal faster gains among minority students in Florida than elsewhere in the country.
- Community Colleges have continued to accomplish positive results in programs, services and activities to increase enrollment, retention and graduation of minority students as well as those targeted to close the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students.
- Community Colleges continue to utilize a recruitment and consideration process that provides a candidate pool with appropriate racial and ethnic diversity appropriate for their districts.
- Transfer rates of racial/ethnic minority students who were A.A. degree recipients continue to show parity with the completion rates of racial/ethnic minority students who receive A.A. degrees

#### **University-Specific Highlights**

- Universities have continued and expanded their participation in outreach programs to educationally and economically disadvantaged students through Programs such as TRIO, Opportunity Alliance, and the College Reach Out Programs.
- Universities have continued scholarship programs for minority and non-minority students, according to the U.S. Department of Education guidelines, and provided financial support for mentoring and career advancement opportunities for minority and non-minority employees.
- Division of Colleges and Universities (DCU) has ensured that reports on the status and representation of minorities and women in the universities workforce have been made to governing bodies. In addition to reporting to the former Board of Regents, reports pertaining to representation within universities' workforces have been made to gubernatorial appointed Board for K-20 education, the Florida Department of Education.
- DCU has consistently pursued funding for initiatives related specifically to the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University during each year of the Agreement and provided support for construction of several buildings, specifically Ware Rhaney, the Business School, Pharmacy, Journalism and Architecture, as defined by the Partnership Agreement.

Increased funding, individualized attention, teacher professional development, assessments to monitor progress, focus on accountability, and stronger emphasis to close the achievement gap are a few of the strategies that are yielding tremendous results for education in Florida. As the five-year reporting period comes to a successful conclusion, activities such as those identified in the Agreement will continue to be enhanced at the national level under the No Child Left Behind Act, and at the state level, under the One Florida Initiative. The One Florida Initiative provides multiple avenues and opportunities to promote diversity.

Under Governor Jeb Bush's leadership and the continued implementation of the One Florida Initiative, Florida is committed to full opportunity, benefits and access for all.

