

December 20, 2022

Dear Chair Lamb and Chancellor Rodrigues:

We are proud to be working side-by-side with you, the Governor, Legislature, and the rest of the Board of Governors during these times of unprecedented accomplishment for the State University System of Florida. There are countless successes to celebrate.

- Florida's 12 state universities and 28 colleges remain #1 for higher education for the fifth consecutive year according to U.S. News & World Report; including:
  - #1 most affordable tuition and fees;
  - #2 for two-year graduation rate;
  - #6 for four-year graduation rate;
  - #7 for low debt at graduation;
- Five of our universities are ranked in the top 100 public universities nationwide, including #5 UF, #19 FSU, #42 USF, #64 UCF and #72 FIU.
- UF and FSU both are in the top 30 colleges for veterans, UCF is #20 for the most innovative schools, FAMU is #1 among the list of public Historically Black Colleges and Universities and #7 among the list of public and private Historically Black Colleges and Universities, New College is #5 public honors college in the nation and FAU is #55 nationally among private and public schools for its Campus Ethnic Diversity Index.
- Our students are graduating at record rates, with skills that the marketplace is demanding, supporting families and Florida's economy.
- Our researchers are making breakthroughs that are protecting Florida's environment and resilience, saving lives, and strengthening our nation's security.

There is no doubt that the State University System of Florida has become incredibly attractive for both keeping talent at home and even drawing in top talent from across the nation and world. The work of our faculty, students, and staff across Florida's 12 universities is being noticed, and universities in every corner of Florida have been climbing in national rankings and bringing greater recognition and stature to help lift the reputation of our state as the go-to place for talent and innovation. We are making great progress toward the vision you included in the Board of Governors' 2025 System Strategic Plan: "By 2025, the State University System of Florida will be internationally recognized as a premier public university system, noted for the distinctive and collective strengths of its member institutions."

- In fact, in Lightcast's recently released 2022 Talent Attraction Scorecard, Florida's focus on training students with skills and credentials is paying off as the Sunshine State is #1 in the U.S. for attracting and developing a skilled workforce.

This again confirms what you know to already be true – that our state's strong policies, open economy, and focus on education have solidified Florida as the nation's best state to learn, work and live.

Policy initiatives from the Board of Governors and Florida Legislature are playing a big role in these successes. Performance Based Funding has been measuring what matters and driving results that in many cases are leading the nation. Your focus on aligning academia and employers around opportunities and preparation for our students is yielding dividends, and MyFloridaFuture is helping students and their families make more informed decisions about educational choices. Work on promoting civil discourse is reminding our campuses about the vibrant ideals of university life to which we all aspire.

As our universities have climbed in stature, student success measures, and research impact, our universities do have a new challenge to confront – what some might coin “a good problem to have” – the nation’s students are demanding to enroll in the State University System of Florida. While we welcome learners from around the nation, and even the globe, our core mission is first and foremost providing a world class education to Florida’s achievers. We owe it to Florida’s university-bound students, who are more likely to stay in Florida after graduation, to prioritize our focus around their excellence.

As we look ahead to what’s next for Florida, we are excited to build on the momentum we all see. And we have been thinking about how to achieve the 2025 goals in the system strategic plan around excellence, productivity, and strategic priorities for a knowledge economy in each university’s teaching, research, and public service priorities.

The undersigned – all 12 SUS presidents and board chairs – respectfully suggest that this is the right time to evaluate aspects of the system’s out-of-state tuition and fee models and consider a more market-based approach.

The low cost tuition that out-of-state learners pay in the State University System of Florida makes attending a Florida university a better deal for many than attending universities in their own state. Consider these examples of annual tuition and fees:

- Non-resident law students in Florida average \$38,040; whereas:
  - Non-resident law students at the University of Virginia pay \$71,500 and even resident law students pay \$68,500;
  - Non-resident law students at the University of Michigan pay \$69,808 and even resident law students pay \$66,808;
  - Non-resident law students at the University of California Los Angeles pay \$64,417 and even resident law students pay \$53,910;
- Non-resident medical students in Florida average \$49,390; whereas:
  - Non-resident medical students at the University of Virginia pay \$63,464 and even resident medical students pay \$51,034;
  - Non-resident medical students at the University of Michigan pay \$62,539 and even resident medical students pay \$44,374;
  - Non-resident medical students at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill pay \$63,114 and even resident medical students \$35,154;

- Non-resident executive MBA students in Florida average \$62,807; whereas:
  - Non-resident executive MBA students at the University of Virginia pay \$167,800 and even resident executive MBA students pay \$167,800;
  - Non-resident executive MBA students at the University of Michigan pay \$178,500 and even resident executive MBA students pay \$173,500;
  - Non-resident executive MBA students at the University of California Berkeley pay \$199,900 and even resident executive MBA students pay \$199,900;

As leaders of Florida's 12 public universities, we see every day how access and affordability for in-state undergraduate students create opportunities that transform families and lift our communities. We proudly promote the recent College Board analyses that show Florida's universities to be the most affordable in the nation for in-state students.

While we should all be grateful for our collective effort to give Florida's students the #1 postsecondary education at the most affordable price in the nation, we do, however, respectfully suggest that you establish a process to consider whether Florida's universities could take into account market forces, the costs to deliver services, and other factors when setting tuition and fee levels for out-of-state students at all levels.

The last time tuition was increased for out-of-state students was 2012-2013, and at that time only two of our system's twelve institutions increased tuition, so it has been more than a decade since most of our system addressed out-of-state tuition. During this same time period, applications for out of state admissions has grown substantially. The rest of the country is looking at the quality of our education and recognizing that Florida is the best bargain.

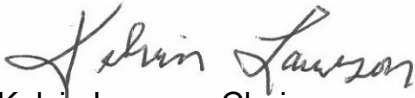
We encourage the Board of Governors to allow differences among our 12 very different universities and that you would also allow each Board of Trustees to establish these differences for their respective programs. That would enable each Board of Trustees to assess its own markets, competitive environment, and strategic plan and to periodically make adjustments in the best programmatic and financial interests of our entire university community.

A related issue is compensation for our high-performing faculty. Our university system is embarking on a more uniform system of post-tenure review for faculty, evaluating 20% of tenured faculty annually, beginning next year. As we conduct the first cohort of tenured faculty evaluations this year, we must have our eyes dually focused on improvement and recognition. An important component of that updated process is to reward those who are performing at the highest levels. Our institutions should be encouraged and empowered to both support professional growth where necessary and retain professional excellence where recognized.

We request that you consider seeking an appropriation for a special program to provide a special pay increase to tenured faculty, who each year pursuant to the new regulation under consideration by the Board of Governors, are found to exceed expectations and a similar special program for top-performing non-tenured faculty. Rewards for our top faculty will be an important element of a State University System that recognizes and rewards excellence for the benefit of our students and our campus communities and will help our universities recruit and keep the best faculty in Florida.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and for your leadership. We look forward to our continued shared efforts on behalf of our fellow Floridians and all of those we serve.

Respectfully,



Kelvin Lawson, Chair  
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University



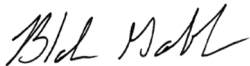
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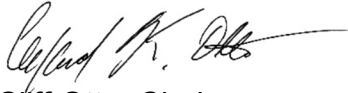
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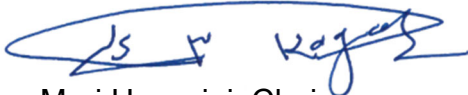
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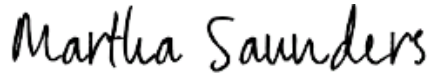
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