

Dear Friend of USF,

The House and Senate convened on March 8, 2011 to open the 113th Regular Session of the Legislature since Florida's Statehood in 1845. On the evening of the opening day, Governor Scott gave the annual State of the State Address to a joint session of the Legislature. During his speech, Governor Scott cited "our universities and colleges" as one of the main components of why "Florida will become the most exciting place to live, work and play." Senate President Mike Haridopolos and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rep. Dean Cannon, both gave opening day speeches to their respective chambers as well, outlining many of their priorities for the upcoming session. Links to each of these three opening day speeches are provided at the end of the newsletter if you are interested in reading them.

During the first week of the session, the members of each chamber spent a significant amount of time on the Floor debating and passing the top priorities of the chambers' leadership and the Governor. These high leadership priorities included the passage by the Senate of the "Student Success Act," an effort to reform the evaluation and pay structure for K-12 public school teachers, as well as a proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution prohibiting any law from requiring a Florida citizen to purchase health care coverage. The House debated and passed a reform of the state's unemployment compensation system and benefits during its first week in session.

The first week of session also included some very bad news in the form of updated revenue estimates for the Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) trust fund for the upcoming fiscal year. Unfortunately, the state's economists now believe that the cash totals that the state expects to receive in the PECO trust fund for next year will not be sufficient to appropriate any funds for state university building projects for FY 2011/12. Without legislative and gubernatorial intervention, this will be the first time in history that no money is appropriated for new building projects at state universities. Within the USF System, these PECO revenue estimates will have detrimental impacts on USF's ability to complete our top priority building projects; the Interdisciplinary Science Teaching & Research Facility in Tampa and the USF Polytechnic new campus on I-4 (featured in this issue), as well as the critical infrastructure funding provided each year to all USF institutions and campuses.

Please encourage your local legislators and the Governor to find a solution that allows the state university system and USF to move forward with these critical building projects that will assist Florida's economy in the short-term and transform it in the long-term. Your interest and advocacy for USF is appreciated.

Mark Walsh

Assistant VP & Director of Government Relations for the USF System



Advocacy Focus: USF Polytechnic New I-4 Campus

Located in Polk County, USF Polytechnic (USFP) is Florida's first and only public polytechnic and currently provides upper level undergraduate and graduate students with an extraordinary opportunity to experience applied learning and research in a personalized setting: small class sizes, convenient locations, innovative programs and flexible formats.

Since 1988, USFP has occupied a joint-use campus in Lakeland with Polk State College and is now engaged in the process of building a new campus on 530 acres of donated property at the eastern intersection of I-4 and the Polk Parkway, between Lakeland and Auburndale, at the heart of Florida's High Tech Corridor. In 2009, the campus engaged in an effort to secure a revised Master Plan, including the design of its first academic building reflective of its new Polytechnic direction. This new vision focuses on interdisciplinary, engaged problem-solving-based teaching and research. USF Poly will provide relevant degree programs that prepare students for employment and engage them with the region and beyond to solve the challenges of tomorrow.

For several years now, and again for FY 2011/12, the USF Board of Trustees' capital improvement request list has included a request for funding for the new USFP campus as among its highest priorities. To date, nearly \$30 million in construction funds and \$15 million in new operational funding has been provided by the state in support of this exciting new project and the Polytechnic vision. This is coupled with approximately \$200 million in private, local and federal infrastructure investment necessary to provide access to the new site. Currently, infrastructure dollars are being used to build roads, create interchanges on the Polk Parkway and begin clearing and readying the property for development. One final year of state construction funding is necessary for full scale development to begin phase one of the new campus. Phase one will continue to address infrastructure needs and will include construction of the first building, dedicated to Science, Technology and Innovation. The new USFP campus is scheduled to open as a four-year institution in the Fall of 2013.

A recent independent economic analysis projected that once fully built-out the USFP campus will have an estimated economic impact of over \$3 billion, will create over 35,000 new jobs, and return over \$80 million in tax revenue to the state and local governments annually. It is imperative that USF receive the final year of funding for phase one of the new USFP campus during the 2011 Session so that building construction can begin immediately and the campus can open on schedule. To learn more about the USFP new campus and the unique polytechnic education model, visit www.poly.usf.edu.

USF HIGHEST PRIORITIES FOR 2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

1. **Support the "New Florida" Initiative** proposed by the Board of Governors, which includes base budget increases for all USF System institutions/campuses. (www.flbog.edu/new_florida/)
2. **Support full PECO funding** for USF System construction projects, including the Interdisciplinary Science Teaching & Research Facility, the USF Polytechnic new campus, and infrastructure funding for all USF institutions/campuses.
3. **Support the Florida Institute of Oceanography (FIO) Base Budget Increase** recommended by the Board of Governors. (<http://fio.usf.edu/Home.aspx>)
4. **Support State Matching Funds** for private donations to the USF System.
5. **Provide a permanent new home in Florida for The Jackson Laboratory** to support the USF Jackson Lab "Personalized Medicine" partnership program. (<http://news.usf.edu/article/templates/?a=3180&z=127>)
6. **Pass Senate Bill 632** by Senator Oelrich, or similar legislation restoring funding for the University Concurrency Trust Fund.

CONGRATULATIONS TO REP. WILL WEATHERFORD

On March 7th, long time supporter of the USF System, Rep. Will Weatherford, (R-Wesley Chapel), was designated Florida House Speaker for 2012 to 2014, by his House colleagues. Rep. Weatherford will be the first House Speaker from Pasco County in more than 100 years, and the first from the Tampa Bay Region since Johnnie Byrd (2001-2004). Speaker-designate Weatherford will succeed current Speaker Dean Cannon in November 2012.

OPENING REMARKS OF 2011 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Governor Rick Scott's State of the State Address - <http://www.flgov.com/2011/03/08/florida-governor-rick-scott-delivers-state-of-the-state-address/>

Senate President Mike Haridopolos - <http://www.flsenate.gov/Media/Speeches/Show/Senators/2010-2012/District26/speeches/Speech20110308092724642>

Speaker of the House Dean Cannon - <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?DocumentType=Press%20Release&FileName=203>

BILLS IN BRIEF

(SB = Senate Bill; HB = House Bill)

SB 632 BY SENATOR OELRICH (R-GAINESVILLE) RE: UNIVERSITY CONCURRENCY TRUST FUND

Summary: This bill provides a recurring funding source for the state's University Concurrency Trust Fund. The trust fund provides funding to state universities to pay their host communities for the impact of any construction on campus which necessitates offsite improvements. The trust fund's balance has depleted over time and this bill would designate a recurring source of existing state revenue into the trust fund to replenish it. Without the ability to pay for these impacts, construction on state universities' campuses could be negatively affected. The passage of this bill is a high priority for USF and the full state university system.

Latest Action: Considered by Senate Higher Education Committee on March 14th. Action was temporarily postponed until a future committee meeting.

LINK TO SB 632: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/0632>

SB 234 BY SENATOR EVERS (R-BAKER) AND HB 517 BY REP. DORWORTH (R-LAKE MARY) RE: FIREARMS

Summary: These bills allow any person who is issued a concealed weapons or concealed firearms permit to carry the weapon or firearm in open sight. These bills would also delete the section of current law that provides that a concealed weapons or firearms permit-holder is not authorized to carry the weapon or firearm into a state university, Florida college or career center facility. These proposed statutory revisions would have the effect of allowing any permit-holder to carry a firearm or weapon openly on campuses of state universities, Florida colleges and career centers statewide.

Latest Action: Senate Bill--On March 14th, the Senate Criminal Justice Committee amended the bill to remove the proposed statutory changes that would have allowed guns to be carried on university campuses. The amendment retains the current legal prohibition in statute. House Bill--The House Criminal Justice Subcommittee will consider the bill on March 15th.

LINK TO SB 234: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/0234>

LINK TO HB 517: <http://myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=45327&SessionId=66>

SB 1732 BY SENATOR LYNN (R-DAYTONA BEACH) RE: POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

Summary: This bill proposes several changes to post secondary education statutes. Among the changes the bill proposes is that it requires the Board of Governors (BOG) to develop a plan, by January 31, 2010, that would examine the potential for establishing comprehensive undergraduate-only universities. It requires the BOG's plan to include the conditions that could result in the transfer of a Florida College System institution to the State University System, and suggests that two of those conditions may be: if a college enrolls more than 20% of its students in upper-division programs, or if the college builds a new dorm after July 1, 2011.

Latest Action: Referred to Senate committees for consideration. Awaiting a bill hearing.

LINK TO SB 1732: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/1732>

Locate contact information for your local Florida State Senator and Representative using your home address at:

flsenate.gov/Senators/Find

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usfalumni.org/advocate