

Dear Friend of USF,

It has been an eventful two weeks in Tallahassee since the Legislature convened their session. Governor Rick Scott delivered his annual State of the State address in which he referenced reviewing the Higher Education System "to understand how we can ensure that in the future, job creators from around the world will have to look to Florida to find the talented and educated workforce they will need to compete in the 21st Century."

Speaker Dean Cannon also made a point of singling out state universities in his opening remarks to the House. He spoke of a state university system that he feels lacks a common mission and even remarked about the potentially negative influence the Legislature has had over the years by "parochially advancing the interests of a local university or college at the expense of the system as a whole." Speaker Cannon called on his fellow House members to begin a dialogue towards ensuring that each university, and the system as a whole, be placed on a path to national prominence.

The House wasted no time in responding to their Speaker's call. Chairman of the House Education Committee, Rep. Bill Proctor, invited each of the 11 state university presidents to address his committee and provide their thoughts on their institutions' missions, degree programs, STEM productivity, tuition, research and commercialization, as well as a host of other issues. Chairman Proctor specifically asked the presidents for any ideas they have that the Legislature could enact that would help improve their institution and the university system as a whole.

On Wednesday January 18th, President Judy Genshaft appeared before the committee to discuss the USF System. Among many issues that the President covered in her hour-long testimony, she made a point of asking the committee to consider setting overarching goals for universities that best serve the state's citizens and economy, such as producing more STEM graduates or increasing graduation rates, and then allowing the universities to have the flexibility in spending and administration to accomplish those state goals.

In President Genshaft's words, "If you have certain goals, you tell me your goals, and then allow the flexibility for us to get there. Very often we have a lot of constraints (imposed by the state). We get there, but it isn't the fastest route. So that would help us a great deal."

You can help us by reinforcing President Genshaft's message. As you know, USF is an international leader in accountability and goal tracking. We are very pleased that the Legislature would entertain the notion of providing us with additional administrative and budgetary flexibility in exchange for greater accountability in meeting the state's highest goals and priorities. Working together with the Governor and our legislative partners, we can make the USF System even more successful, grow Florida's economy and improve our state's quality of life.

Thanks for your continued support for the USF System.

Mark Walsh

Assistant VP for Government Relations for the USF System



President Judy Genshaft and President John Hitt (UCF) give House testimony

Watch the video of President Judy Genshaft's and President John Hitt's (UCF) House testimony at: <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/VideoPlayer.aspx?value=%2bqnXZIUy8ljnNtx09v3qMQKgLQfW0LJ1xnHzuwj%2f1zYM3UnSWxtmj98l4a6W17krsSCmcGPNb%2fTponMqtFm5zPlYCOAaQZ4gaEbs68AVFY%3d>. President Genshaft begins testimony at the 57 minute mark of the video file.

REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES DEBATE ON CAMPUS

The eyes of the nation turned to USF this week as NBC came to campus and televised a live debate between the Republican presidential candidates just a week before Florida's presidential primary election. The anchor of NBC Nightly News, Brian Williams, was the moderator of the debate along with assistance from the Tampa Bay Times' Adam C. Smith and the National Journal's Beth Reinhard (a Miami native). NBC and its affiliates aired several live shows from campus, including NBC Nightly News. The debate was a tremendous success and a wonderful showcase for the USF System on the national and international stage. In addition to a distinguished audience of local, state and national elected leaders, the U.K.'s Ambassador to the United States and France's Ambassador to the United States were both in attendance. Brian Williams signed off his national telecast with a resounding, "Go Bulls!"

LINKS TO STATE OF THE STATE AND OPENING DAY ADDRESSES TO SENATE AND HOUSE

Read the text of Governor Rick Scott's State of the State here: <http://www.flgov.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/01-10-2012-State-of-the-State-Remarks-for-Delivery.pdf>

Read the text of President Mike Haridopolos' opening day address to the Senate: <http://www.flsenate.gov/Media/Speeches/Show/Senators/2010-2012/District26/Speeches/Speech20120111080851427>

View video of Speaker Dean Cannon's opening day address to the House: <http://myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Videos/VideoArchive.aspx?id=91>

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BILLS IN BRIEF

(SB = Senate Bill; HB = House Bill)

SB 94 BY SEN. FASANO AND HB 45 BY REP. SMITH

Summary: These bills require state universities and Florida Colleges that offer priority course registration for any segment of their student population to offer priority course registration for veterans or their dependents who are receiving education benefits under the GI Bill.

LATEST ACTION:

SENATE BILL--Passed by the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee on January 12th. Now in Senate Budget Committee for a final committee hearing.

HOUSE BILL--Passed by the House Military Affairs Subcommittee on January 11th. Now in House Education Committee for a final committee hearing.

SB 94 / HB 45 Link: <http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/issues/alert/?alertid=59651501>

SB 1156 BY SEN. FLORES

Summary: This bill allows the state universities' Capital Improvement Trust Fund (CITF) fee to be indexed to tuition instead of a dollar amount set in statute. The statutory cap for the fee has not been raised since the 1980s. It provides that an increase in the CITF fee must be approved by a committee consisting of at least 50% students appointed by the student body president. CITF fee revenue is used to construct non-instructional campus life facilities, such as student centers.

LATEST ACTION: Referred to three Senate Committees for review on January 10th.

SB 1156 Link:

<http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/issues/alert/?alertid=59653501>

CONTACT YOUR SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE

To locate contact information for your local Florida State Senator and Representative, using your home address, click here:

<http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/directory/statedir.tt?state=FL&lvl=state>

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

To send us your feedback or ideas, email: govrelations@usf.edu