

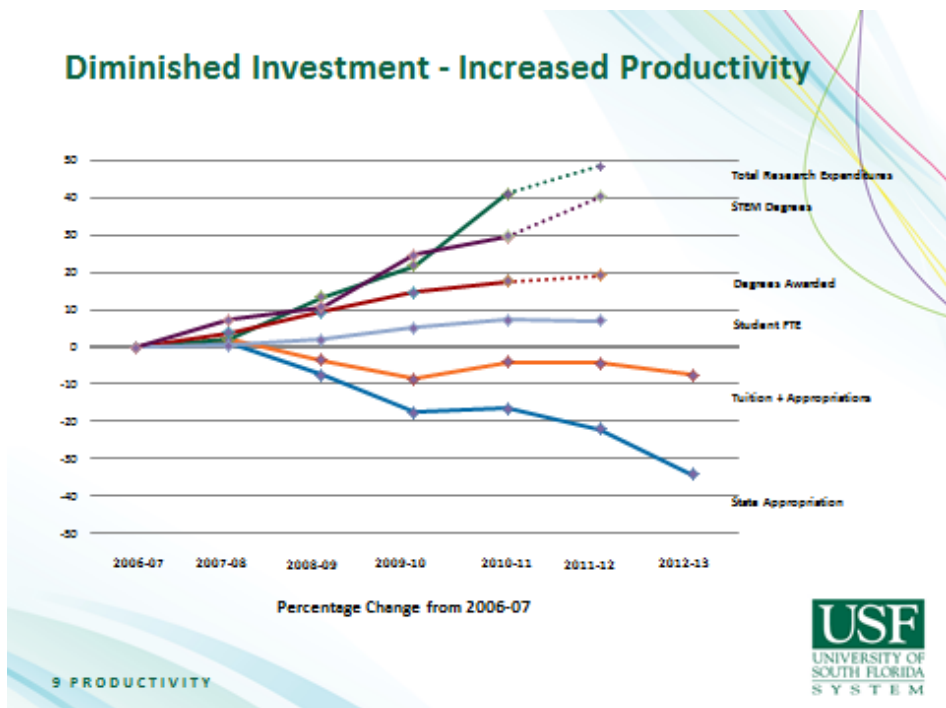
Dear Friend of USF,

Happy New Year! The start of 2013 also marks the kickoff of the Government Relations Newsletter, Volume 3. You may recall that the 2012 Legislative Session started much earlier than normal (in January 2012) due to the once-a-decade process of redrawing the state's electoral districts. The 2013 Legislative Session will return to the normal calendar with Session beginning on the first Tuesday after March 1st (March 5, 2013) and scheduled to conclude 60 days later (on Friday May 3, 2013) as prescribed by Article 3 of Florida's Constitution.

Although the official Legislative Session will not begin until March, the Legislature returns to Tallahassee this week—and for four of the following six weeks—to begin their pre-Session work in committees and subcommittees. So the higher education policy and spending debates of 2013 will begin to take shape over the next few weeks.

One of those important debates was initiated in December by the presidents and student body presidents of all of Florida's state universities with the launch of the Aim Higher campaign. Aim Higher is designed to place additional focus on the need for the state to reinvest in state universities and their students to increase access and quality. The Great Recession caused a reduction of nearly 40 percent in funds that the state allocates for annual university operations from sales tax receipts and other state sources. Some—but not all—of that reduction in state investment in universities has been made up by the students and their families through historically high tuition increases.

Despite these fiscal challenges, the USF System continues to admit and graduate record numbers of students, increase our research profile, and ramp up our numbers of graduates with degrees in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields that are so important for Florida's long-term economic vitality. The chart below gives you snapshot of what the USF System has been able to accomplish over this time period with dramatically less funding from the state and less funding overall.



However, the university presidents and student body presidents believe strongly that an improving economic picture now allows the state to reinvest more tax proceeds into state universities, thereby keeping tuition more affordable. The 2012-13 school year marked the first in our state's history that students and their families contributed more to their education through tuition and fees than the state provided to support their education. The presidents of the institutions have all agreed that in exchange for an additional investment of \$118 million in new state funds, the institutions will not seek a tuition increase for the 2013-14 school year. Please see the article below to learn much more about the Aim Higher campaign and how you can follow along and have your voice heard in asking the Governor and the Legislature to reinvest in the State University System in 2013.

And please remember to send us your feedback at govrelations@usf.edu as we take your comments seriously in preparing this newsletter for you.

Wishing you and your family a great 2013. Go Bulls!

Mark Walsh
Assistant VP for Government Relations for the USF System



President Judy Genshaft Joins Aim Higher Initiative

On December 5, 2012, all of the State University System (SUS) presidents and student body presidents traveled to Tallahassee to host a press conference in the Capitol Rotunda to introduce their Aim Higher initiative.

Aim Higher, initially conceived by student leaders, essentially asks the Florida Legislature and Governor Scott to make a \$118 million investment in state universities this year on top of the restoration of the \$300 million one-time, nonrecurring reduction to university budgets taken by the 2012 Legislature. The funding would assist universities in their ability to continue to provide a quality education to students without increasing the financial burden on those students or their families.

The university presidents have all committed to forgo a tuition increase this year if the state makes this \$118 million additional investment. The \$118 million figure is equivalent to the amount generated by a maximum allowable 15 percent tuition increase across the SUS. Further, the proposed \$118 million investment is tied directly to institution-specific and SUS-wide performance goals, such as increased graduation, retention, and job placement rates for students.

Speaking on behalf of all of the university presidents at the December press conference, University of West Florida President Judy Bense said, "What we're asking for this year is a significant investment from the state, tied to specific goals for universities. With an investment provided for our students, we promise not to seek one penny of a tuition increase this year.

We encourage all Floridians to stand with us and our 330,000 students. Let's invest in future doctors and scientists who someday could save our lives, future engineers who will build safe roads and bridges, and future teachers who will provide our children with first-class educations. Let's invest in the future of our great state."

Watch USF System President Judy Genshaft and UNF President John Delaney's Joint Interview with the Florida Channel in Tallahassee Regarding Aim Higher (<http://thefloridachannel.org/video/university-presidents-john-delaney-and-judy-genshaft/>).

The Aim Higher campaign also hopes to advocate for a greater prioritization of higher education funding in Florida going forward. Increasing the investment in higher education in Florida will see improvements in the state's workforce, job creation, overall economic climate, and quality of life for years to come.

Legislative leaders are taking note of the initiative. Senator Joe Negron of Stuart, the Chairman of the Florida Senate Appropriations Committee, told the *Tampa Bay Times*, "I have believed for a long time that the state spends too much money in health and human services and not enough in higher education. And I believe that we should budget additional resources for our universities, which I believe don't get the credit that they deserve for economic development and the well-being of our state" (<http://www.tampabay.com/news/education/college/florida-university-presidents-want-deal-more-state-funding-in-exchange-for/1264800>).

Locally, major newspaper editorial boards also have endorsed the Aim Higher campaign, with perhaps the strongest endorsement coming from the *Orlando Sentinel* which called the proposed Aim Higher plan "too good a deal to pass up" (http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2012-12-08/news/os-ed-university-tuition-funding-120812-20121207_1_public-universities-freeze-tuition-tuition-next-year).

Across the nation others are taking note, too. Since the campaign was formally announced in early December, other states, their universities, and political leaders have launched similar initiatives. The Governor of Nebraska has adopted a similar tuition freeze in exchange for additional state funds deal with the University of Nebraska System, and the presidents of public universities in Washington, Minnesota, Iowa, Montana, and other states have proposed similar deals to their legislatures.

To find out more about the Aim Higher initiative, please visit the official web site (<http://aimhigherfl.com/>). You can also read the Florida Board of Governors press release (<http://www.flbog.edu/pressroom/news.php?id=484>). And to voice your support for the plan, please use the Alumni Advocacy link (<http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/home/>) at top of this newsletter (even if you are not an alumnus of USF) to contact your elected officials and request their support for the \$118 million Aim Higher plan.

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BILLS IN BRIEF

(SB = Senate Bill; HB = House Bill)

SB 260 BY SENATOR LATVALA

Summary: Provides that a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services or its reserves is automatically classified as a resident for tuition purposes if they physically attend a Florida higher education institution or physically reside in the state and enroll in an online course offered by a Florida higher education institution.

LATEST ACTION: Filed on January 11, 2013.

<http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/issues/alert/?alertid=62331626>

HB 85 BY REPRESENTATIVE STEUBE, SB 84 BY SENATOR DIAZ DE LA PORTILLA, AND SB 238 BY SENATOR FLORES

Summary: These bills all create a lawful system for certain public entities to contract for the construction or improvement by private entities of facilities used predominantly for a public purpose. State universities are included under the proposed definition of a "responsible public entity" eligible to participate in these public-private partnerships for construction projects.

LATEST ACTION: Bills filed. Awaiting committee hearings.

<http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/issues/alert/?alertid=62331651>

CONTACT YOUR SENATOR OR REPRESENTATIVE

Click here (<http://capwiz.com/usfalumni/directory/statedir.tt?state=FL&lvl=state>) to locate contact information for your local Florida State Senator and Representative, using your home address.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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