



Chancellor Mark Rosenberg

Higher Education and Global Business in Florida: Meeting the Challenge

Higher Education and Global Business in Florida: Meeting the Challenge December 3-4, 2007

Thank you, Board members who are in attendance as well as community college and university leaders.

Thank you, Howard Lance, David Colburn, early planning efforts of Frank Ryll, Glenda Hood and other colleagues and friends.

I hope that you have had a chance to review the background paper and proposal that we sent to you.

Our key statement can be found on page 3. Let me share it with you:

Instead of an ad-hoc relationship between business and higher education that results in a periodic meeting or discussion about an isolated issue or two, the question before us is: **can we develop a more systematic approach that addresses global competitiveness in a knowledge-based economy and can we do so in a manner that will ensure that the values and roles of higher education and corporate business are not diminished by this partnership?**

I believe that I can speak for all of my colleagues when I say that we need sustained attention from the business community – because in good times or bad, our institutions will be key to keeping our state moving forward and providing the skills that will be critical to your competitiveness.

- We acknowledge that we at times leave a lot to be desired:
- We are often slow to respond;
- Our faculty at times may give the impression that they are disconnected from time and place;
- The skills of our students are often quite uneven – as we vouch that they are ready to graduate.

I am chancellor for just one year. One of the big surprises for me last year was a student demonstration on the steps of the capital – they were opposed to any tuition increases – even as our tuition is nearly \$2,000 less than the national average and even when most of those students demonstrating were either beneficiaries of either Bright Futures or Pre-Paid.

In my view, this demonstration, which indeed did prompt our political leadership to lower the tuition increase, was just another statement from a key stakeholder about their unwillingness to come to grips with the challenges that we confront if we are to have quality and competitiveness in our higher education system. It was another indicator that we are not really on the same page. Less was more; cheaper was better.

I am happy to tell you today that the same student organization that was in denial last year did something fundamentally important last month: they put out a position paper that stated the following:

That a quality education is a **shared responsibility**: taxpayers, the legislature and students. They also went two steps further: they signed off on a technology fee for each public university that could raise as much as \$70 million for technology enhancements and they demonstrated their willingness to pay for an academic enhancement fee at the University of Florida.

The hope that we bring as educators to this meeting revolves around this belief that we can improve our systems and we can improve our competitiveness and company well being if we accept the notion that we have a **shared responsibility** to work more closely and intensely than we have ever worked before.

I know that there are many instances of partnerships that are working and of engagement at the highest level of the cooperation spectrum.

Our institutions daily contribute thousands of hours in community service, consulting; cutting edge research that leads to discovery and ultimately commercial activity and job creation.

But if we were that good and that successful, I submit to you that we would be more highly ranked nationally than we are and that we would not be at the bottom of the proverbial barrel in almost every indicator of national comparison in terms of funding.

So let me cut to the chase:

I want our business community to raise its expectations for what we in higher education can and should be doing to improve our working relationships with you to deepen our engagement in the challenges that we face;

I want our universities and community colleges to raise their expectations about how to deepen partnerships with the private sector and improve the prospects that our new cooperation will be good for our students, the state and ultimately our well being.

There is no time to lose:

- Workforce dynamics will make it even more difficult to find the skills that we need to keep our companies and our institutions competitive at a global standard;
- The major drivers of well-being increasingly depend on knowledge based resources at the cutting edge;
- Communities outside Florida are doing a better job at attracting the creative class –those who aspire to higher levels of performance and creativity – students at both graduate and undergraduate levels, and those already trained who seek quality of life first before they seek out employment;

Innovation won't wait on us to get our act together.

Now I do not want to reinvent the wheel or go backwards and point fingers.

This is a timely moment for us to deepen collaboration; no doubt our political leadership – new to their positions, expects and will welcome a more united front that offers solutions, not problems...

We are ready to move forward but we seek collaboration and a recognition that improvement is a shared responsibility....