February 2015

The January Board of Governors’ meeting was highly successful, marked by an announcement from Florida Governor Rick Scott, a State of the System address from Chair Mori Hosseini and several exciting new initiatives that help align our State University System with the needs of the state workforce. Now we are preparing for the February and March Board of Governors’ meetings and getting ready for the 2015 Legislative Session.

Marshall M. Criser III
Chancellor, State University System of Florida

**Governor makes higher education announcements**

We were honored to have Governor Rick Scott stop in during our Board meeting in January, following an announcement that his proposed budget will eliminate sales taxes on textbooks and expand Bright Futures Scholarships to benefit students during the summer. During his formal budget announcement last week, the Governor also proposed designating $400 million for university performance funding.

**Presentations to the House and Senate**

During the first committee week in January, Board of Governors Vice Chair Tom Kuntz and university presidents Judy Genshaft, Wilson Bradshaw, and John Kelly joined me in a presentation of the Board of Governors’ performance funding model to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. We discussed the model’s success and answered questions from the committee. Senator Gaetz praised the presentations by Governor Kuntz and by presidents Genshaft, Bradshaw and Kelly, and he recognized the role of performance funding in improving student outcomes in metrics such as graduation and retention rates and post-graduation success. Perhaps the best tagline of the day came from USF President Judy Genshaft, who repeatedly stated that, “Performance funding works for USF because USF works for its performance funding.”

On the same day, Chief Academic Officer Dr. Jan Ignash did an excellent job of presenting an overview of the State University System of Florida to the House Higher Education and Workforce Committee.

I hope to follow up on those successes when I give a history and overview of performance funding to the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee on Wednesday, February 11.

**System purchase of a spend analytics tool**

As part of the Board’s shared initiatives drive, FSU has procured a vendor to provide a spend analytics software tool for all of the universities. The tool will allow the universities to identify potential partnerships and allow insight by the Board staff into each university’s spending data. This data will allow our universities to leverage the size of the System to negotiate better contacts for goods and services, thus allowing savings to be strategically invested in our student’s academic success. The $244,493 tool has already saved the State University System $600,000.
Affordability study
During our recent Board meeting, I presented the second phase of a study that is being conducted by the Board office on university affordability. The study was designed to spur a thoughtful discussion on whether our universities are affordable for Florida students. It takes into consideration the three main components of affordability: tuition, state appropriations and financial aid. As we continue, we will evaluate the cost of attending our universities in the context of the ability for students and families to pay for their education and compare ourselves to other sectors in Florida and other states.

Universities demonstrate strong improvement
Florida Atlantic University, New College of Florida and University of West Florida have made strides in their efforts to ensure that they retain students, help them graduate in a timely manner, and connect them with the state workforce. All three universities met or exceeded the goals they set in June, as a part of the Improvement Plans required through the Board of Governors’ performance-funding model. Congratulations!

Upcoming Board Meetings
February 19 – Tallahassee Community College
March 18-19 – Florida A&M University

Trustee Topics
TRUSTEE NOMINATION – The deadline has been moved to February 13. See here for details.

HOLD THE DATE
2015 Trustee Summit
November 4-5 at Florida International University
Miami, Florida