

State of the University – Thursday, August 27, 2009

Good afternoon! It is an honor and pleasure to join all of you again for this traditional event which begins the academic year.

Many of you have been away for the summer. You may not have followed university news all that closely.

But, if you had, you would know that a month ago, a group of University of Florida astronomers joined the ceremonial inauguration of the world's largest optical telescope – a silver-domed giant atop a mountain on La Palma, a tropical island nestled among the Canary Islands 3,480 miles from here.

Nearly a decade ago, UF committed \$5 million to the wonderfully named [Gran Telescopio Canarias](#). It was challenging to build, and like many ambitious scientific projects, it was completed over budget and later than anticipated.

But today, the telescope's 36 perfectly smooth hexagonal mirrors are aligned in a resplendent silver bowl. Its superstructure rotates and bevels with the precision of a Swiss watch. Astronomers have begun scientific-quality observations.

I could not attend the inauguration. But UF is the only U.S. institution with a hand in the project, so Provost Joe Glover represented UF and the U.S. He and four UF astronomers joined the King and Queen of Spain, leading government officials from Spain and Mexico, and the world's top astronomers at the ceremony held in July.

In astronomy, you can't do serious work unless you can put your eyes on the clearest images of the heavens. But, time on these large telescopes is hotly contested, and many researchers are left on the sidelines. To remain competitive, UF astronomers *had* to be part of this telescope. In a sense, it was unthinkable *not* to be there.

At the same time, being a part of this telescope required UF to think and work globally – to send our astronomers to Spain, to host Spanish and Mexican astronomers in Gainesville, and to support graduate students on three continents.

It seems to me, this project is an apt metaphor for the University of Florida today. We strive to be the best in our fields and to achieve world-class research. WE REACH UP – literally, in this case, to the stars. We also seek opportunities, pursue relationships and exert an influence outside our walls – sometimes, across entire oceans. WE REACH OUT.

This university's financial challenges have dominated the atmosphere on campus. Over the course of three years, we have had to cut as much as a fifth of our state budget. We have made tough, sometimes unpopular decisions to end some programs, reorganize others, and layoff some faculty and staff. We have experienced a faculty brain drain -- and we still have some \$16 million left to cut this year.

But, through it all, we – and in this context I mean specifically you, the faculty -- continued to REACH UP and REACH OUT. Your efforts serve as economic, cultural and educational assets to this community and to Florida.

Speculation in these times is dangerous, but it appears that the state may avoid another major budget cut this year. After coming through these tough years, we have strong momentum. It seems to me, the moment has come for you, and for this institution, to really stretch.

UF was hot this summer – and not just because of the Florida sun.

- \$26 million award to transform medical research discoveries into cures. Only 48 institutions nationwide have received a [CTSA](#) award. This keeps us competitive within the [NIH](#), our top research sponsor, while supporting work that makes a difference in people's lives.
- New initiative to build area's second technology incubator with \$8.2 million federal grant. The [Innovation Hub](#) bolsters UF's track record in technology commercialization, a process that has brought in \$300 million and created over 1,000 jobs.
- Broke ground on office building for 300 staff members in growing Eastside Campus. This building brings together disparate offices while encouraging growth in a part of town long in need of revitalizing.

All of this summer's achievements challenge us to improve, while benefiting those around us. They REACH UP AND REACH OUT.

This summer was exceptional, but it is no anomaly. Over the past year, our faculty members have won high distinctions, and our programs have gained key endorsements:

- Martin Cohn is one of only 50 [Howard Hughes Medical Institute Early Career Scientists](#).
- David Smith and Andy Tatem received a \$1.5 million grant from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), the first in UF's history.
- There were no less than ten [NSF](#) Career awards in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, including four in the biology department.
- Two engineering faculty won Presidential awards.

Internally, a total of 197 faculty members were awarded promotion and/or tenure – the strongest, deepest promotion/tenure cycle in the six years I have been here.

Measured by outside or internal recognition, our faculty ranks are stronger than ever!

UF as an institution has also made important strides.

- The [MacArthur Foundation](#) awarded nearly \$1 million for a new master's program administered by Centers for Latin American and African Studies.
- *U.S. News and World Report* moved UF up from 17 to 15 among publics. Warrington College of Business up three spots to 15th best among publics. Engineering College moved from 16th to 15th among publics.
- All of this a surprise, considering financial hardships and over \$100 million in budget cuts.

But the rankings are part of a pattern: Both *Kiplinger* and *Money* magazines placed UF among top ten best values in public education in their most recent rankings. *U.S. News* ranked Shands at UF among “America’s Best Hospitals;”

Hispanic groups have named the Levin College of Law and College of Engineering among top ten institutions. And, so on, whether we like it or not, rankings remain important outside measures of UF.

UF faculty members lead several major national or international research initiatives. Jacobo Konigsberg is a UF physics professor and the co-spokesperson for Fermilab’s collider detector. [Fermilab](#), as some of you may know, is a major player -in the hunt for the elusive Higgs Boson “God particle.”

Meanwhile, just last week, the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory Scientific Collaboration announced major new findings related to gravitational waves in the journal, *Nature*. UF physics Professor Dave Reitze is head of this collaboration. Some 17 UF physicists contributed to the *Nature* article.

Research awards are up 2 percent this year!

- Major grants: \$4 million for Center for Food Distribution and Retailing and \$2.26 million for horse racing drug laboratory. We tested the winner of the Kentucky Derby! Julie Johnson, a professor of pharmaceutical sciences and director of the UF Center for Pharmacogenomics, was one of our major grant awardees, receiving a \$2 million award for research on genes and hypertension.
- Faculty projects are extremely diverse, but collectively focus on the most important issues of the day. Energy is a good example. With a \$20 million state grant, IFAS will begin construction on a major ethanol pilot plant.
- Medicine is another. Earlier this month, our scientists reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that gene therapy can help the brain rewire itself to restore vision in adults born with extremely impaired sight.
- In research spending, the National Science Foundation has ranked UF with U.C. Berkeley, MIT, and other stellar institutions.

UF is a land grant institution, and we take our service mission seriously. Our research has clear, long- and short-term benefits for people in this community, statewide and nationally. When we pioneer new sources of energy, when we develop new medical cures, when we break new ground in all forms of basic and applied science, we REACH UP and we REACH OUT.

Growth from \$339 million in 1999-2000 to \$574 million in 2008-2009.

- Though growth declined last year compared to the year before, our overall trajectory continued up.

This is due solely to our faculty and it is not influenced by the stimulus money that is coming.

Research is one of our core missions. Education is another. Our students remain first-rate.

- Applications fell from 28,121 to 27,223. Probably a result of the economy. Majority of students are on Bright Futures, but still must pay room, board, books, etc. -- and tuition differential. This year, because of the differential, Bright Futures recipients will pay about \$500 more out-of-pocket than they did last year.
- Total students down to about 49,600 students, part of planned reduction of 4,000 students total. You may have seen this week's headlines about UCF surpassing UF as state's largest school. We are not concerned. Our priority is quality, not quantity.
- Average GPAs up to 4.24 from last year's 4.18. Average SAT score 1963 under new system. ACT up to 29.6 from 28.3.
- Black and Hispanic enrollments are up this year to 11 percent and 16.5 percent, respectively.

We have about 1,375 [Florida Opportunity Scholars](#)

- Average family income \$21,000, less *than a fifth* of \$100,000 average family income among traditional students.
- Two-thirds are female. 78 percent are minorities compared to 37 percent for the general student population.
- Performance is excellent. Twelve opportunity scholars graduated one year early, two graduated two years early, enrollment retention so far is above 90 percent. Sixty-four percent have GPAs better than 3.30.

Florida Opportunity Scholars has helped a great deal in diversifying our campus, but we clearly still have work to do, and it remains a priority.

Meanwhile, we continue to enhance our scientific and educational infrastructure.

- Pathogens Research Facility, Biomedical Sciences Building, Shands Cancer Hospital, all open this fall.
- Not far in the future...Harn Asian Art Wing, Hough Hall, Eastside Campus Office, Southwest Recreational Center Expansion and Student Health Care Facility.
- If you include the VA Medical Center expansion, we have over \$1 billion in construction projects underway.

This construction comes at a good time for everyone: The economic slowdown ensures a bargain, we acquire new state-of-the-art facilities, and our activities are a boon for local industry and jobs. Still another example of how UF REACHES UP and REACHES OUT.

Fundraising is on track despite the difficult times.

- [Florida Tomorrow](#) received \$237 million in new commitments, totals \$931 million, toward \$1.5 billion goal with over three years remaining in the campaign.
- Our endowment is back up, topping \$1 billion. Our endowment experienced a significantly smaller downturn than most educational institutions' endowments.
- UF Financial Corporation (UFICO) received Nonprofit Investor of the Year award at the 7th Annual Hedge Fund Industry Awards.
- UF Alumni Association and University Relations launched [Gators for Higher Education](#), an effort to enlist our many loyal alumni in advocating our cause to their lawmakers.

Everyone in the philanthropy business is struggling, but I have faith we will reach our \$1.5 billion goal.

So let me recap... faculty members are winning national attention. Research funding is up. We have better and better students, an expanding campus and we are moving forward in building our financial reserves.

Here is the best part: All of this is occurring amid what *seems* to be improving economic conditions.

Latest revenue estimates in Tallahassee suggest no major cuts this year.

We chose not to rely on stimulus as bridge, unlike some other universities in Florida and elsewhere. As a result, we do not face the prospect of falling off a cliff in two years, as they do.

We will need to spend some stimulus money to maintain or support current programs. Remember, we must soon come to grips with \$16 million not yet cut from our operations – but removed on July 1 from our budget.

That said, we think we can invest as much as 40 percent of this year's stimulus, 60 percent of next year's, in permanent improvements to this university.

We want to put our biggest investment toward this university's core mission of academics and research. That means one thing: Investing in faculty.

We have lost 81 faculty members since last August, a net decline of 2.1 percent. This follows a net 2.9 percent decline over the same period the previous year. We face attrition every year due to retirement and normal turnover, but there is no question that we have had some departures because of our financial challenges. This has been portrayed as a "brain drain" and can have serious impacts if left unchecked.

- We are nearly alone among universities these days in having a *new* revenue stream – tuition differential.
- With other institutions struggling, we have a unique opportunity to hire excellent people – from both the California system and other systems.

- We will bridge differential funding with stimulus funds to make these hires this year, maintain next year, then support with tuition differential money after that.
- We hope to hire 100 junior faculty, but there will probably be a mix of junior and more senior faculty.

Again, this is a choice on our part for using our stimulus money, but we feel a truly critical step for this university.

Unlike California, we have not, and do not anticipate, pay cuts or furloughs.

- We have awarded \$1.27 million in faculty enhancement program so far. This program makes possible creative options for development for faculty who can't necessarily take sabbaticals for a semester or year. Another \$2 million on deck for this year; call for proposals in September.
- Faculty was awarded 9 percent promotion or S.P.P. raises effective July 1.
- Going into next year's budget negotiations, our highest priority is raises for faculty and staff.

I am hoping we can achieve our additional budget reduction with modification of personnel and business practices and not have to make additional program and personnel cuts. We will be advancing proposals next month.

We need great leaders to continue this institution's momentum. We have made real progress in that direction.

- David Guzick is our first administrator in charge of entire UF health system. This new position will allow for more seamless operation and enhanced integration of research and clinical care operations.
- Cammy Abernathy, an academic star, and formerly a highly regarded associate dean, is engineering's first female dean.
- The new deans of the International Center, Honors Program and Graham Center are, respectively, David Sammons, Kevin Knudson and Ann Henderson.
- Anna Prizzia is our [Office of Sustainability](#) director.

We will launch searches for the VP of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences; the dean of the College of Medicine; the director of the UF Foundation and the Dean of Students.

We will always have turnover in an institution as large as UF, but I think our leadership team is really coming together.

We want to go beyond great programs and great leadership. We also must make UF a wonderful place to work and attend college. Along those lines:

- We realize that offering excellent childcare is a hiring benefit, and we want to do more in this direction. The new [Baby Gator](#) is a good start.
- We also continue to try to find new ways to boost faculty and staff diversity, and this new council will help us reach that goal.
- Hazing is a chronic problem we are trying to address with a new anti-hazing program.
- Our Common Reading Program continues with Luis Alberto Urrea's "The Devil's Highway." This is our third common reading book in as many years, and I think this effort has helped bring together this very large and very diverse community. The author gave a heartfelt speech at our convocation a week or ago. His book about a group of Mexican men and their harrowing journey across the U.S. border is moving and instructive. I encourage everyone here to pick up a copy.

This is just a sample. The point is, we are thinking about the UF experience in a comprehensive way.

We are moving forward in the transition to Responsibility Center Management, or RCM.

- We recognize some anxiety, which is why we are testing RCM in parallel with the regular budgeting process this year
- Under RCM, most of state appropriations, tuition revenue, are allocated to units where revenue is generated. We also create an incentive fund that rewards non-traditional instructional revenue.
- This system gives us greater accountability for overhead costs and boosts transparency of revenue and cost allocations.
- We will spend this year talking about the system, listening to feedback and making appropriate changes. We will implement the system in full in July of next year.

We continue to advance our sustainability agenda.

- Electricity consumption down 8.4 million kilowatt hours, water use down 1 percent, land filled waste down 7 percent – that is a difference of more than 700 tons.
- Student parking decal sales down 9 percent – but down 33 percent for undergraduates who live off campus. We also have a new record in bus ridership, 9 million passengers. More students are taking the bus!
- Recently completed [Southwest Recreation Center](#) (Heavener Complex) is first [LEED Platinum](#) building in Florida. We have upgraded our building standard from LEED Silver to LEED Gold. The expanded SWRC will be LEED Platinum.
- And, not to disappoint football fans, this year's entire Gator football season is slated to be carbon neutral.

- Board of Trustees approved student-championed renewable energy fee, but proposal is stuck at the Board of Governors level as part of lawsuit between BOG and Legislature.

With an emphasis from the Obama administration, sustainability is only becoming a more important element of our society. We started early on this, we remain a leader among large institutions in sustainability.

I began this presentation with a photo of the world's largest telescope. I want to conclude with a slide of a healthcare worker treating an ailing child.

Astronomy is among our purest sciences – we do astronomy to gain knowledge and understanding of our universe and our place in it. Health research is among our most grounded efforts: We pursue medical science in search of new cures or treatments to make people healthier, to fight disease, and to improve the quality of our lives.

Just as UF astronomy research leaped forward when the GTC became operational, so is UF medical research poised to leap forward this year. We have just been awarded one of the NIH's largest and most prestigious grants. We will open no less than three new Health Science Center buildings this fall – the Pathogens Research Facility, the Biomedical Sciences Building and the Shands Cancer Hospital.

A new incubator will help shepherd our scientists' discoveries from bench to bedside. For the first time, our research and clinical teams are assembled under a single overarching management structure.

And, here is a final step: Our College of Public Health and Health Professions recently received full accreditation, a step that will open new vistas for research funding in this important field.

Put it all together and what you have – at the most basic and applied levels – is a university that continues to strengthen and expand. A university with growing influence and impact. A university that, whether in bad times or good, REACHES UP and REACHES OUT.

Go Gators! Thank you!