**University of Florida Flagship Councils**

**Talking Points for SWF Delegation Meeting**

**December 15, 2010**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the upcoming legislative session. I am chairman of the SW Florida Flagship Council for the University of Florida. We are a group of alumni who have volunteered to help advocate for higher education and the University of Florida regarding state legislative issues.

On behalf of the 6,300 members of the University of Florida Alumni Association from this region of Florida, I want to thank you for your support of higher education and to share with you UF’s legislative priorities, focusing this morning on 4 areas.

**(1)State Employee Benefits -** The legislature is expected to reduce state employee benefits to help cut state spending. An analysis of compensation (salary and benefits) for UF faculty as compared to 9 other leading national public universities\* shows UF to be the lowest in most categories. For professors, UF is ranked 9 of 10. For both associate and assistant professors, UF is ranked 10 of 10.

\*Univ’s of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas, Wisconsin, Ohio State, Penn State and Texas A&M

UF’s ability to offer competitive salaries and benefits is key to attracting the world-class faculty members who are necessary to create an innovation economy in Florida.

**(2)Base Budget -** UF’s base budget has been reduced by $140 million, or 21 percent, over the past three years due to declining economic conditions. A top priority of the university is to avoid additional cuts.

**(3)PECO (Public Education Capitol Outlay) -** PECO revenues from communications taxes are used to construct university buildings, repair and replace infrastructure and pay for utilities. In recent years, this funding source has paid for the construction of important research buildings at UF.

This year, the university is requesting $30 million for a new Chemistry building on campus and $14 million for infrastructure improvements and utilities.

**(4)IFAS** (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences) **-** IFAS research projects and its extension service support the state’s agriculture industry and help improve the everyday lives of Floridians. Since tuition funds are not used to support these services, UF is requesting $3.4 million to help meet increasing needs throughout the state. IFAS outreaches to each of the 67 counties of Florida and provides critical support to our agricultural and natural resources industries.

**Thank you for your attention and for your support.**