

Dear Carol,

After passing 295 new bills and resolutions (the fewest in more than a decade), the Florida Legislature "Adjourned Sine Die" at 3:35 a.m. on Saturday morning officially ending the 2011 Legislative Session. The 2011 Legislature faced one of the state's toughest budget challenges in our history: the continuing slow recovery of the Florida economy from the Great Recession, the expiration of federal stimulus funding assistance, and the increase in citizens' demand for services (particularly Medicaid and other social services) driven by the economic downturn created perhaps the largest needs-to-available-resources deficit that Florida has ever faced.

In spite of these difficult circumstances, the Legislature chose to prioritize the revenues available to them towards supporting the public education delivery systems in our state, including the State University System. While nearly every entity funded in the state budget will receive a reduction of some kind next fiscal year (in some cases total elimination of funding), cuts to the USF System and the other state universities' base operating budgets were lower than most other state-funded programs. Nonetheless, another year of reductions to USF's institutions and campuses will necessitate making some difficult budgetary decisions in the days ahead.

The USF System had another highly successful year in capital construction funding. The Legislature provided approximately \$51 million to support USF System building and maintenance projects next year, including the \$35 million necessary to complete Phase I of the new campus for USF Polytechnic (which was profiled in a prior newsletter issue). This sum for capital projects for the USF System is more than double the amount of the next highest state university appropriation.

In this newsletter is a brief summary of some of the major issues that passed this session that will affect the USF System and higher education in general. Under the Bills in Brief Section at right, we have provided a brief summary of the two major higher education omnibus bills that passed.

Thanks for your support for USF's institutions and campuses throughout the 2011 Legislative Session. As we move out of the legislative season, the frequency of distribution of these Government Relations newsletters will slow but we will remain in regular contact with you to keep you apprised of developments as they occur.

Thank you for your support. GO BULLS!

**Mark Walsh**

**Assistant VP & Director of Government Relations for the USF System**

<sup>1</sup> A motion to "Adjourn Sine Die" is adopted by a legislative body that wishes to permanently adjourn their