

The imagination and creativity of our students makes for the vitality of the institution. It is a personal priority of mine during my tenure as Chancellor to reverse that trend — to “humanize” the college experience on our campuses and provide an atmosphere that will encourage, not hamper, the creative spirit.

A “humanized” environment means:

- enhanced academic advising,
- adequate housing,
- well-staffed financial aid offices,
- smooth-running registrations, and
- safe and clean campuses.

Advising is a special concern. We are now developing a computer-assisted advising program that will help each student waste as little time as possible finding his or her academic niche. In addition, we are setting up advisement centers on our campuses for transfer students, undecided students, students with academic deficiencies, and students in need of special attention. Academic advising must be an assist, not a strait jacket, to learning.

If we measure student excellence in terms of ability to respond to the challenges to be faced in the future, we must also measure excellence in a university or university system by its ability to respond — to the needs of its community, the economy, and the future.

In the state of Florida, this poses a special challenge. Our state is experiencing tremendous growth, paced by increasing tourism, expansion in international trade and finance, adaptive expansion of agricultural productivity, and particularly, high technology industrial growth. Florida has been identified as having the number one business climate in the country and as a top choice for corporate headquarters.

The future of business and industry in Florida and the future of the university system are inexorably tied together. Business and industry need the expertise of our universities to develop and use new technologies, to sharpen management skills, and to develop financial strategies. Universities, in turn, are finding that technology is changing so swiftly that they must keep up with new developments in business and industry to stay informed.

Florida’s university system has taken major steps to develop an effective and mutually beneficial relationship with businesses and industries in this state. We are teaming up on projects that share personnel, equipment, and facilities toward shared objectives. Universities are establishing consortia to bring together the best faculty and equipment from all over the state to do research in critical areas.

- In order to give greater access to the services available at the universities, we established a toll-free number for use by businesses that need

assistance. In response to the desire for a single point of contact that can provide information on available expertise, we are developing a computerized clearinghouse that will list all of the people in the state — faculty and private industrial experts — and their areas of technical and scientific competence.

- A State Technology Applications Center helps businesses transfer technology through identification of research discoveries that have commercial potential. The Center aids business and industry in problem-solving by accessing over 400 different computer data bases at an inexpensive rate.
- Small Business Development Centers are located throughout the state to aid fledgling enterprises springing up all over Florida.
- Florida’s university system has the largest engineering outreach program in the United States. The Florida Engineering Education Delivery System, or FEEDS, takes programs from four universities to 33 separate sites and over 2500 students.

University-industry collaboration is a relatively new frontier in Florida, but one that is off to a racing start. Planned future initiatives include building incubator facilities in each of our four research parks and a support system to help commercialize technology produced in Florida that will identify research with commercial potential, find private venture capital, and provide managerial and consulting support during the early stages of the company.

The spotlight is shifting to the Sunbelt, and so is the innovation, creativity, and excitement that goes with it. The opportunity is here, and I am confident that, over the balance of this decade, Floridians will see their university system evolve into one of the finest in the nation.

