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United We Stand

As state policymakers examine how to reorganize Florida's public higher education system, USF President Judy Genshaft reaffirmed her commitment to USF as a multi-campus research university.

"It is important that our regional campuses remain affiliated with USF for three reasons: students, taxpayers and the development of the Tampa Bay region," Genshaft says. "Students benefit by having the convenience of a nearby campus with the resources of a major research institution. Taxpayers benefit from the efficient use of state resources, not unnecessary duplication. And the region benefits from a highly educated work force that will enhance Tampa Bay's ability to compete with other urban regions."

A bill introduced in the 2000 session of the Florida Legislature would have converted USF St. Petersburg, USF Sarasota/Manatee and New College into separate universities. The measure failed, but as the 2001 legislative session begins, the issue remains unresolved.

Since becoming president in July, Genshaft has argued that the higher education needs of the Tampa Bay area are most effectively and efficiently served by



On the Waterfront: Judy Genshaft's growth plan calls for increased enrollment, programs and infrastructure on all campuses. The number of full degree programs at USF St. Petersburg would increase from 32 to 42.

a multi-campus public research university working in partnership with the region's community colleges.

USF has been comprised of several campuses almost since its inception. The university opened its doors in 1960 in Tampa, adding campuses in St. Petersburg in 1965, New College in 1975 and Lakeland in 1986.

Now, Genshaft says, USF is at a crucial stage in its development. Florida's population has continued to grow, and the economy has grown with it, driven largely by technological advances.

"Florida needs to train and educate increasing numbers of its young people," Genshaft says. "Yet our state ranks 48th when it comes to the likelihood of a given 19-year-old being enrolled in college. USF is prepared to respond to this crisis, but the response requires both political will and a substantial budget."

Genshaft suggests a program of evolving autonomy for the regional campuses. That would allow them to meet the needs of communities while distributing the resources of a major research institution across several counties.

Genshaft recommends greater budget-

ary authority for the campuses and campus-based processes for crucial issues as tenure and promotion, curriculum and accreditation. Centralized services could include legal counsel, computer support and some student services.

"The campuses at St. Petersburg, Lakeland and Sarasota/Manatee are at different stages in their development," Genshaft says. "This dynamic model of autonomy would permit maximum flexibility as each one progresses."

Genshaft's five-year growth plan calls for increased enrollment, program offerings and infrastructure on all campuses. For example, she wants to increase the number of full degree programs offered on the St. Petersburg campus from 32 to 42.

USF Sarasota/Manatee's university program, which provides upper-division and graduate programs to accommodate both working adults and full-time students, would increase its full degree programs from 22 to 34. New College, a selective liberal arts program on the Sarasota campus, plans to seek separate institutional accreditation, which will better establish it as a liberal arts honors college rather than a program on a regional campus.



Hotwired: USF Lakeland is described as USF's "e-campus" because of its extensive use of distance-education technology.