Dear Colleagues:

Welcome back and Happy New Year! Let’s hope that Year 2006 starts with strong promise and ends with a deep sense of accomplishments for all of us in all areas of our lives!

Just some quick issues to bring to your attention:

**New Chancellor for SUS**: You may have already read that the State University System has a new Chancellor, Dr. Mark Rosenberg. Dr. Rosenberg was provost at FIU and prior to that vice provost and dean at the same institution. Coming from an academic background and from a similar metropolitan setting, we hope that he will prove to be a strong and visionary leader for us.

**Collective Bargaining**: The negotiating teams for UBOT and UFF continue to negotiate at the table. We hope to have an agreement soon.

**Domestic Partner Benefits**: Approximately 20 of you have written to the President or me noting that you are writing on the urging of the UFF to voice your opinion on the issue of domestic partner benefits at USF. I am writing to respectfully acknowledge your voices. Since we are in the information gathering stage at the moment, I am sharing the information that our Human Resources Department has been able to collect on this topic. We will continue to gather more information.
Domestic Partner Benefits Information

We’ve been receiving a lot of inquiries about the possibility of implementing health care benefits for domestic partners here at USF. Here are some of the questions that have come to our attention along with preliminary answers:

Q: Why can’t we include domestic partners into our current State health insurance programs?
A: Under the current health plans, only eligible dependents may be added to the employee’s coverage. The current definition of “eligible dependent” includes spouses and children (who meet specific legal definitions, i.e., age). Florida law does not include domestic partners in the definition of “spouse” and, therefore, state sponsored insurance programs do not extend coverage to members outside of the eligible dependent definitions.

Q: How would we go about finding a carrier who might provide coverage to domestic partners?
A: Since the current state plans cannot be used, a new contract would have to be reached with a carrier. Our normal process would be to issue a “Request for Proposal” (RFP) and accept proposals from interested carriers. Once the bidding process is closed, all proposals received would be reviewed for financial soundness, plan design, associated costs, and scope of benefits provided. A successful bid would have to be cost effective and advantageous to our employees.

Q: Is there any way to project how much a program like this would cost?
A: When considering a plan such as this, organizations typically rely on national statistics to project usage (approximated at 1% of your total workforce) to estimate costs.

Q: We have heard that other Universities within the State of Florida have a domestic partner benefit plan. Is this true?
A: Yes, this is true. It is our understanding that FIU implemented a plan in 2005 and that UF is implementing a plan effective February 1, 2006. We don’t know the specific details of the plans, but do understand that they are not constructed the same and do not provide the same level or type of coverage.

Q: How are programs like this funded at other institutions?
A: State money cannot be used to fund a program for domestic partner benefits in the State of Florida. The other institutions within the State University System (SUS) that currently have a program in place pay for it using non-state resources. Therefore, any program would have to be fully supported by external funding only (not state dollars).

Q: Who would be eligible to participate in a program if one were established?
A: Criteria would have to be established that would define who might be eligible and covered under the plan. Any insurance carrier would likely have criteria as that would have to be incorporated as well.