



PRESS RELEASE
ENLACE FLORIDA
4202 E. Fowler Avenue, SOC 107
Tampa, FL 33620

Media Contact: Braulio Colón, Asst. Director (813)974-3897-direct
(813)313-8903-cell

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, February 05, 2008

60,000 STUDENTS MAY BE DENIED ACCESS TO FLORIDA SUS SYSTEM BY 2012
~REPORT CALLS FOR SPECIAL SUMMITT ON HIGHER EDUCATION~

Tampa, FL- According to a report released today by ENLACE Florida, 40,000 to 60,000 students may be unable to pursue their undergraduate or graduate education at a public institution in Florida by 2012. Faced with \$147 million in cuts from the 2007-08 budgets and another \$171 million in 2008-09, the Board of Governors' (BOG) plan for "enrollment realignments" for each university is expected to result in a decline in enrollment beginning in the 2008-09 academic year. "Access to a higher education is at risk for *all* students," said Dr. Paul Dosal, Executive Director for ENLACE Florida. "A decade of state underfunding combined with unfunded enrollment increases, has put public universities and community colleges in Florida on the brink of a deep and serious crisis," said Dosal. Over the past decade, the State University System (SUS) increased overall enrollment an average of 3.2% annually. This growth came to a halt last summer, when the BOG imposed a three-year freeze on growth in freshman enrollment. "The state university system is shrinking. We do not have the ability to continue to keep our doors open," Chancellor Mark Rosenberg explained. Florida's public universities may now be shrinking, but Florida's population is expanding and will continue to grow, though at a slightly slower rate than predicted a few years ago. "High school graduates, many of them eligible for a Bright Futures Scholarship, will find that they can not get into one of our state universities," said Dosal. Gabby Rodriguez, a senior at Tampa's Jefferson High School with a 4.3 grade point average, began investigating the radiology program at Hillsborough Community College last September when she realized that she had little hope of getting into one of Florida's three Research I Universities. As more and more students are wait-listed and rejected, they will have to decide whether to enroll in a community college, postpone college, go out of state, or just give up on their college dreams. "What we will most likely see are students who normally would be highly qualified and able to enter the SUS

will look to community colleges to begin their higher education,” said Braulio Colón, Assistant Director, ENLACE Florida. “So the question now becomes are our community colleges designed or prepared to accommodate the increased demand for courses and degrees that will likely result from the shrinking of our state universities?” Without bold leadership from those at the helm of our educational system, thousands of eligible and deserving students will find that the doors of higher education have been closed. To resolve this serious matter in higher education, ENLACE Florida urges Governor Charlie Crist, Speaker of the House Marco Rubio, and Senate President Ken Pruitt to convene a higher education summit of state representatives, senators, the Board of Governors, the State Board of Education, and representatives of our eleven universities and our 28 community colleges. The higher education summit should be organized to give policy makers time to engage in serious and deliberate reflection on the state of our higher education system and its strategic direction. All issues, challenges, and opportunities should be put on the table for discussion and resolution, including the Bright Futures Scholarship program, tuition rates, and cost containment. Only bold, innovative, “out of the box” thinking will pull Florida’s colleges and universities from the brink and put them on the road to greater success.

***ENLACE FLORIDA** is a statewide network funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and managed by NCCEP to promote college readiness, access, and success for Latinos, African-Americans, and other underrepresented students through non-partisan research, communication, advocacy, and support.*

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