



PRESIDENTIAL *News*

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Celebrating our Graduates

The Fall 2012 semester is coming to a close. I personally want to thank our dedicated faculty and staff for all of your hard work and contributions this semester. Together we've accomplished much.

We welcomed 53 new faculty, 47 new staff, and 1800 new freshman to the UWF family this semester. Together, we finalized a new strategic plan, a new campus master plan, created a new President's Policy Council on Diversity and



Inclusion and hired a new Provost and VP for Academic Affairs. Our faculty reached new heights in participating in early warning notifications and placed new emphasis on student success and retention. We opened two new state-of-the-art facilities, our premiere College of Business and our completely full 252 bed student residence, Presidents Hall. Additionally, we furthered academic visioning and are now gearing up to begin program prioritization. Also, this past weekend our women's soccer team won the Division II NCAA National Championship in Evans, Georgia. We are the only state university in Florida with a national championship this fall. Go Argos!!

But most of all, we've educated more than 12,800 students this semester. We will celebrate the culmination of our success next Saturday at our Fall Commencement exercises, where 998 students will be eligible for undergraduate and graduate degrees. The graduating class ranges in age from 19 to 64 years of age; 25.74 percent are non-white minorities; and 36 percent are male. They will receive diplomas in 22 disciplines and they hail from 27 nations, 35 states, and from 47 Florida counties.

The graduating class also includes our very first Master of Science in Nursing graduate, Jill Van Der Like. We will also celebrate the first graduates of our Executive Ed.D. cohort, as 11 of these scholars will conclude their studies and begin their post doctorate endeavors.

Commencement is a beginning for our students. For us, it is time to celebrate a job well done. Thank you for making it possible.

Welcome to Dr. Martha Saunders, UWF's New Provost

The University of West Florida scored a real coup in hiring Dr. Martha Saunders as provost and vice president of Academic Affairs.



Dr. Saunders, who begins her service on January 2, will serve in a dual role at UWF. She will lead the division of Academic Affairs in her role as vice president and will be a strong advocate and leader for the heart of our institution. Additionally, in her role as provost, she will serve as the second-in-command at UWF. She will work closely with me in ensuring the success of UWF. I believe she is uniquely qualified to fulfill these functions, and her professional experience makes her a good fit to meet the challenges we face now and in the future.

Dr. Saunders, who began her career at UWF, has extensive and highly-successful experience in academic leadership, including serving as president of the University of Southern Mississippi from 2007-2012.

Campus Master Plan Work Begins

Plans are taking shape to implement the University of West Florida's Campus Master Plan, designed to accommodate our university's growth and corresponding infrastructure and building needs for the next 20 to 30 years.



MEMO I am happy to report that we will receive approximately \$6.34 million in Capital Improvement Trust Funds (CITF) this year, more than the \$4 million originally expected from the annual Board of Governor's allocation. Our student/staff CITF committee met recently and voted to use those funds to move the tennis courts and practice fields to make way to build University Park.

University Park will include a student commons facility; multi-use facilities including academic space, housing, and retail; common green space; and a football facility. We will send out the "Request for Qualifications" on December 20, 2012 to begin to identify private investors who are qualified to complete such a project.

Prior to her tenure at Southern Mississippi, she served as chancellor for the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater from 2005-2007, after serving as provost and vice president for Academic Affairs at Columbus State University from 2002-2005.

Martha began her career at UWF in 1984 as an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Arts, and eventually became coordinator of the Public Relations Program. She also served as director of the University Honors Program and associate dean of the College of Arts & Social Sciences from 1996-1999. In 2000, she was named dean of our College of Arts & Sciences.

She replaces Dr. David Marker, who has served as interim provost since January. We are so grateful to David for his help this past year in the areas of Academic Visioning and development of the university's Strategic Plan. He is a true professional and has played a key role in our success.

We are also moving forward with the hotel/conference center and restaurants on the East Campus at the northwest corner of Campus Drive and U.S. 90. We are currently negotiating for what is envisioned to be a 100-room hotel and conference center and multiple restaurants at the site.

These are examples of the type of public-private partnerships that Business Enterprises Inc. was designed to accomplish and we are continuing to move forward on the projects that make the most sense for UWF. These partnerships will allow us to implement our Campus Master Plan without complete reliance on state funds.

I will discuss the leadership of BEI with that board today. I plan to recommend the splitting of the vice president's duties from those of BEI, and the hiring of an executive director by the BEI board.

For continued developments, involving BEI's activities, please visit <http://uwf.edu/bei>.

Legislative Season Approaches

We are nearing the spring legislative season. The Florida Legislature will convene for its annual regular session beginning March 5. Preparations are already well underway for the next regular session, with committee weeks commencing now.

This year's session focus, as it was last year, will be on the budget.

This past year, UWF lost \$11.9 million out of a \$300 million reduction to state universities. This took our total E&G loss up to 47 percent over five years. Higher tuition has made up for part of the 47 percent shortfall, but students cannot be expected to keep pace with this trend. Alternative sources of income are necessary.

While the state is not experiencing the massive loss in state revenue seen in past years, there is still very limited funding available. However, the Legislature has indicated that budget negotiations next year will begin with the \$300 million restored to state universities. Additionally, I joined all of the state university presidents in Tallahassee this week to hold a press conference supporting the student-led initiative Aim Higher. This initiative is a joint effort to pursue an investment in higher education to replace tuition increases next year. The university presidents agreed not to seek tuition increases next year if the funding is received from the state.

But, state lawmakers and those of us in higher education still face some very tough challenges.

This past summer, I chaired the Higher Education Facilities Task Force, created by the Board of



Governors, to come up with ways that Florida universities can continue to grow, even as state funds are cut to balance the budget.

At the conclusion of our work, Task Force recommendations include:

- Enhancing public-private partnerships. The task force would like to see more opportunity for universities to pool multiple sources of funds for classroom and research type projects, just as we are doing at UWF through BEI.
- Deregulating university construction to provide greater flexibility in capital funding, enhancing opportunities for multi-use facilities.
- Supporting deferred maintenance for renovation and repair of critical facilities and education infrastructure through changes in inconsistent statutes.

Other important issues we are likely to see in the next session:

- Higher Education Accountability – Expect the Legislature to continue to work toward more rigorous accountability for universities. Some of this may include performance-based budgets in which universities are rewarded or find their budgets reduced for not meeting specified goals.
- State Employee Health Insurance – Two years ago, the Legislature proposed implementation of a tiered system in which employees would choose from a menu of health plans. Details will be more clearly developed in early 2013.
- State Employee Retirement – The retirement fund is out of balance by \$25 billion and the Legislature will be looking for ways to make the fund more solvent. Options could include increased contributions by existing employees and requiring new employees to join a 401(k) plan provided by the state.

Stay tuned to the legislative updates on the Government Affairs website at <http://uwf.edu/govrelations>.

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