

Dear Friends of USF,

Thanks to everyone who has already written in notes encouraging your legislators' support for the USF System's Top 5 Legislative Priorities for 2014 (at right). We are pleased to inform you that one of our top priorities—in-state tuition for our student veterans—has already passed the Legislature (see below story for more details).

Each Chamber of the Legislature rolled out its initial budget recommendations for 2014 last week and early indications are very positive for the USF System. The House, under the leadership of Speaker Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) and Appropriations Chairman Seth McKeel (R-Lakeland) have proposed to support USF's cybersecurity proposal with \$6 million in new state funds – a fantastic start for this new and important program. The House is also proposing to spend an additional \$1.4 million to support USF Sarasota-Manatee's STEM programs (see story below for more details). The Senate's budget proposals look equally promising for the USF System. In addition to several other items for the USF System, Chairman Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton) and his fellow Senate Education Appropriations Committee members are proposing to spend nearly \$2 million in new funds to support USFSM's STEM programs.

In addition to these special recommendations, both Chambers are proposing spending nearly \$100 million in new funds to support performance funding for state universities. USF supports performance funding, and because of our continued improvements in metrics that matter to Florida, such as graduation and retention rates, post-graduation job placement and starting salaries for graduates, we stand to gain millions in new funding from the proposed spending plans. In fact, in the first year of performance funding—this year—the USF System finished as the #1 institution in the state!

Over the weekend, we were able to get a first look at the House's and Senate's initial proposed spending plans for university construction. Our next issue will contain a detailed report on the USF System's top construction priorities, the USF St. Petersburg College of Business facility and the USF Health Heart Institute as well as our progress on getting those priority projects funded this year.

This is a critical time of year for funding for the USF System. Please take a minute to write in to your legislators and ask them to support the USF System priorities and to thank the legislators listed above for the support they continue to provide to all of USF.

Go Bulls!

Mark Walsh  
Executive Director of University Partnerships and  
Assistant Vice President for Government Relations

USFSM laboratory at the Mote Marine Laboratory in Sarasota.

## The USF System's Legislative Priorities: USF Sarasota-Manatee STEM Programs

In each issue of the newsletter throughout the Legislative Session, we plan to highlight the USF System's top legislative priorities for 2014. In this issue, we will detail the priority to fund STEM programs at USF Sarasota-Manatee.

As Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education becomes more important to economic success in the 21st Century, the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) is working on an initiative to provide access for their communities' students to fully prepare them to pursue careers in medicine, health care, environmental science and a host of other fields that require a solid foundation in science education. Currently, USFSM does not offer any science degrees, any mathematics degrees, or any degrees in secondary education, even though these are strategic needs for the Sarasota-Bradenton area community. Building degree programs such as these will serve as the foundation for USFSM's entry into the STEM arena and will be vital in helping the campus' three-county service area compete economically with the rest of the state and nation.

Last year, USFSM was allocated \$2 million to partner with Mote Marine Laboratory to create new science laboratories for students to utilize in the course of their academic careers at USFSM. This year we have asked the Legislature to support an additional investment to continue to build up USFSM's STEM educational offerings beginning with the creation of a new biology degree program. This funding will help USFSM to hire more faculty members and expand the availability of STEM course offerings for all USF students. This funding request is the #1 priority for USFSM this year and the USF System would appreciate your advocacy for this important initiative.

## Florida House and Senate Pass Florida GI Bill, in-state tuition waivers for veterans

USF Student Veterans in the Veterans Achievement Center on USF's Tampa Campus.

We already have some great news to share with you about the 2014 Legislative Session. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, the Florida Senate took up HB 7015, which was unanimously passed in the House, and passed the measure unanimously. HB 7015, better known as the Florida GI Bill, is a comprehensive bill aimed to show the state's gratitude for the service of our military.

The Florida GI Bill includes a \$22 million allocation and does a number of things to assist and recognize our military active duty members and veterans including:

- Establishes the Florida Veterans' Walk of Honor & the Florida Veterans' Memorial Garden
- Expands Florida's veterans preference for public employment
- Creates Florida Is For Veterans, Inc., a nonprofit corporation within the Department of Veterans' Affairs to promote Florida as a veteran-friendly state
- Creates a Veterans Employment and Training Services Program to be housed within the Department of Veterans' Affairs
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