FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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August 31, 2006

Senator Tom Coburn, MD
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal
Financial Management, Government
Information, and International Security
439 Senate Hart Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

ATTN: Anna Shopen

Dear Senator Coburn:

This is in response to your letter to the University of South Florida (USF), the University of Florida (UF), Florida International University (FIU) and Florida State University (FSU) requesting information related to Congressional plus-up appropriations for Fiscal Years 2000 through 2006, and related information pertaining to the nature of such projects, outcomes and representation of university interests at the Federal level.

Because the State University System of Florida (SUS) practices a consolidated approach to its work in Washington with our Congressional delegation, requisite House and Senate committees, and Executive Branch agencies, our work in Washington is largely conducted as representative of the SUS Board of Governors, the Chancellor, and the State University Presidents. The Florida delegation is well acquainted with and supportive of this approach which portends a unified agenda to inform our Members of positions on important higher education issues before Congress and Executive Branch agencies. For this reason, the response to your letter will be made by me in my capacity as Chancellor of the SUS and on behalf of the Board of Governors and our eleven State University Presidents.

While we understand fully the requests in your letter for information on Congressional adds and other related matters, the issue of whether or not Congressional plus-up appropriations are integral to the Congressional budget processes is one that must necessarily be addressed by Members of both the House and Senate.

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For many years the Congress has established a process that invites consideration of special project requests as part of Congressional budgetary policies. The Florida SUS has worked closely with the Florida delegation as well as other Members to showcase what we consider to be exemplary projects underway on our eleven university campuses. For the past several years, the SUS has shared such projects, approved by the Chancellor, Board of Governors and our Presidents, in a consolidated portfolio.

When we in the SUS meet with our delegation, we are able to discuss these projects in a concise and orderly fashion given the organization we put into our materials. I am sure you can appreciate the value this holds for our delegation who are interested in their universities and the many cutting-edge, nationally significant areas of research that we believe can help with the unmet needs of our country. The large majority of the projects we showcase for our Members relates to medical, public health, national security, defense, marine sciences, transportation and agriculture research. We have imposed, largely in consort with the wishes of our delegation, a rather strict litmus test on our project submissions that may or may not spark interest and/or enthusiasm among our Members to consider in the Congressional budget process.

The portfolio we utilize to showcase these projects is not just for the express purpose of seeking Congressional adds. Indeed, when we meet with our Members and staff they fully understand that we use this vehicle as a constructive means of just letting them know what we are doing, where we are going, and what we believe we can accomplish in selected areas of research. We make it clear at the outset of our initial meetings and subsequent meetings throughout any given year that we do not expect funding for each and every project, but rather hope that the project materials will serve as an educational tool so they are aware of our research capabilities. This portfolio, in fact, is utilized among the faculty in the SUS and often in Washington, to help as much in the competitive grants arena as the Congressional budget process. We often receive communications from Member offices on competitive grants opportunities that come across their desks that relate to projects we have included in our portfolio materials.

The Florida Congressional delegation has made it clear to the Florida SUS and other entities in the state that plus-up requests are entertained as a means to give a "jump start" to worthwhile projects that, if successful, will acquaint and assist

agencies with project research that might lead to agency support in competitive grants. Our Members do not consider Congressional adds to be self-sustaining; rather, they view them as a part of the Congressional budget process that can assist a federal department or agency in considering further work (as part of the department or agency budget) in future years. The Florida SUS appreciates and supports this position, and our project submissions reflect that fact.

Because the policies and procedures established by Congress clearly allow only Members to utilize the budget and appropriations process to assist in funding worthwhile research projects, we respectfully defer to the Members of our delegation or other Members of budgetary and appropriations committees and subcommittees to make declarations regarding funded projects. Obviously, all project adds are clearly defined in Conference Committee Reports; thus, they are a matter of public record.

At the same time, we want you, Senator Coburn, and the subcommittee to know that we are proud of the accomplishments our research has provided this country in many important areas, particularly in advances in medical, national security, defense, marine sciences, agriculture and transportation research. As such, we would like to highlight a few initiatives in this letter as representative of the types of projects our Members have supported over the past several years.

Since FY 2001, the Florida SUS has vetted what we refer to as multi-university or system-wide projects that are designed to highlight what Florida does best, and that bring the best researchers from among our eleven public universities together to participate in that research. These projects are often supported by many Members of our delegation because they reflect combined research throughout the SUS and are seen as research areas common to the expertise in Florida's public university system. Four of these projects are illustrated below as examples to acquaint you with the caliber of Congressionally- sponsored research our Members have supported. All of these projects, as well as others, would not have been possible unless we had received support from our superb delegation, support in agencies, and support in the various House and Senate committees and subcommittees.

We also chose these projects as examples to answer, in part, the inquiry in your letter about whether we seek partnerships with institutions of differing policies. Our partnerships are based on where expertise can be found, not the politics of

individual institutions. All of the projects below are partnership initiatives that include both the Florida SUS and, in some instances, partners outside of the State of Florida.

1. The **Countermeasures to Chemical and Biological Threats-Rapid Response** project is funded as a SUS partnership in affiliation with Texas Tech and the University of Texas systems. It is designed to help educate and train first responders in the event of a terrorist attack, and it also combines highly sensitive medical and technological research in the early detection and treatment of chemical and biological agents. Outcomes of this important research include a streamlined test for agents such as anthrax (adopted in early 2002 and supported by the Centers for Disease Control in subsequent grants), implementing a medical event surveillance system for Super Bowl 2005, certified training of over 10,000 first responders in threat assessment, sample collection, and psychosocial aspects of bioterrorism, and several issued patents resulting from CBD research (non-woven textiles, photocatalytic air disinfection, identification of pathogens in whole blood) and, along with other congressionally and agency supported research in robotics, the use of robots post 9/11 in New York to help locate the remains of victims who, through conventional means, would not otherwise be identified. The research conducted by the Florida SUS has resulted in a successful partnership with Johns Hopkins University and other higher education institutions as part of a new national Center on Preparedness and Catastrophic Event Response (PACER).

   This project, often referred to as one of our "signature" initiatives, is a model not only in what it has accomplished but in the manner in which it is funded. Administered by RDCOM in association with DTRA, all projects are peer reviewed in two stages. The first is at the SUS level where a panel of researchers outside of the state of Florida reviews and recommends projects for consideration. The second is a rigorous peer review at RDCOM and DTRA so only those SUS projects vetted can receive funding. The benefit of this model is to ensure integrity in the research. The downside is that there are long delays in funding due to the peer review process at the Defense Department. We often are not able to secure the funds until well after the projects are submitted thus causing time delays that impact the immediate need for security research.

2. The **SUS Hurricane Mitigation Alliance** project has received funding through NOAA and is the only funded project in Florida or the nation that is designed to research and provide programs that foster reduction of hurricane damage to people and property. This research has led to important advances in innovations and techniques to reduce hurricane hazards to life and property. This research will continue to lead to reducing the costs of hurricanes for federal, state and local governments and businesses and households. In the wake of increased hurricane activity affecting our country, and the enormous costs to people and their governments, the Alliance project and others like it are critical to what needs to be done both in pre-planning and the aftermath of hurricane destruction.

3. The **Electric Power Grid** project is more than relevant in today's world due to the increasing problems associated with antiquated technology and recent large-scale failures in electrical grid systems both in North America and Europe. The primary focus of this research, just underway, is to work with the Department of Energy's National Laboratories to modernize the Grid and ensure rapid technology transfer from research to practice. This project has received strong support from the Department of Energy based on the expertise in the Florida SUS that specializes in critical issues and technology development integral to the Grid.

4. The **NASA Hydrogen R and D project**, now concluded, is a stellar example of the commitment of an agency to work hand-in-hand with the Florida SUS to effect desired research. This project brought together not only the Florida SUS but the Florida Solar Energy Center and the Kennedy Space Center. The outcomes included advances in gadolinium-based intermetallics for super-efficient production of hydrogen and oxygen; development of sensors for detection of hydrogen for use in the Shuttle; new technologies for water-splitting hydrogen production and development of hydrogen from reformed methanol derived from biomass resources. NASA Glenn which administered the project also added additional funds to complete certain tasks that are still ongoing today in this research. This important research also has obvious ramifications for advances in alternative energy sources in the wake of the oil and natural gas crisis which affects all countries throughout the world.

Senator Coburn, we would also like to comment on other items in your letter. First, and foremost, we believe your letter was sincere and we certainly appreciated the message you conveyed in your second paragraph about the role universities have in "fostering the ideas, supporting the individuals and conducting the research that often translates into life-changing innovations and discoveries." As a physician, and now a Member of the Senate, you are in a unique position to understand and help foster important research in these areas.

In regard to the issue of lobbying raised in your letter, please know that when the Florida SUS reorganized its Washington office in FY 2000, we changed our focus to a more consolidated approach to our business here, and we showcase our agenda under the SUS mantle whenever possible.

The SUS maintains a coordinating office in Washington to organize a myriad of activities including work on Congressional adds, organizing meetings for SUS personnel in Congress and in agencies, bimonthly reports on important authorizing legislation, legislative hearing summaries, and comprehensive listings and partnering opportunities for competitive agency grants. The SUS serves as a liaison office for all constituency work needed between Members, the SUS and Member districts.

We believe it is advantageous to have an office to coordinate our activities in Washington. We need a federal operation that has people who are knowledgeable about the budget process (and the changes that appear to occur yearly), who know our delegation Members and staff, and who can assist in helping both in Congressional and Agency work that is essential for us to be well served at the federal level. Most important, we need an office that our Members, Congressional Committees, executive agencies and others can utilize to serve as a one-stop liaison shop for the SUS and our State University Presidents.

Senator Coburn, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to your letter, and we hope our views and comments will be helpful to you and the subcommittee.

Sincerely yours,

Mark B. Rosenberg
Chancellor