

WHAT FLORIDA STUDENTS THINK

Florida Leader's Annual Statewide Opinion Survey

They came through e-mail and snail mail and soon *Florida Leader* had piles of them—your responses to the fifth annual “What Florida Students Think” survey filled our mailboxes and inboxes. Campus leaders offer their opinions about on-line campaigning and affirmative action. They spill the beans about credit card vendors and student fees.

Get the dirt on Florida's public officials and advice on how to nurture up-and-coming leaders. You're guaranteed to gain insight that might help you solve some tough problems at your school.

To sneak a peek at additional comments not featured here, visit *Florida Leader's* web site at floridaleader.com, or contact any of the leaders who provided an e-mail address for more information about their ideas.

Improving Quality of Campus Life

Campus leaders have many responsibilities including making college life an enjoyable experience. Student leaders know that keeping your nose in the books and studying late nights can leave you in dire need of a break. Leaders at the **University of Central Florida** organize diversions to help students channel tension.

“We give them an outlet for stress, anxiety, and boredom,” says Jennifer Hall, student director of the Campus Activities Board. “Every other Tuesday, we have a comedian perform in our Loco's Restaurant, and on Thursday, we have a poetry reading we call ‘Thursday Knight Jive.’”

In addition to keeping the UCF Knights entertained, these events allow collegians to mingle at no cost. “Because we're a

commuter school, our goal is to keep students on campus. The activities keep them excited and helps them build better relationships,” Hall says. “Also, students wouldn't normally see these events in the area, or if they could, it would be too expensive.”

On the **University of South Florida** campus, Wednesday night flicks enhance campus life. “We program a weekly series called ‘Movies on the Lawn’ where students can come out and enjoy a current blockbuster for free and with free food,” says Patrick Dean, executive director of the Campus Activities Board. “USF is a commuter school, and the movies bring people back at night,” Dean says.

After the film or other late night events, USF leaders keep students safe with the “Safe Team.” The team operates from 7 to 11 every night and shuttles people in golf carts to their dorms. “A lot of people are concerned with safety, so they give them a call.”

The “Pet Extravaganza” attracts student pet owners who live off campus and want to enter their cats and dogs in the 15 categories, or “dogegories,” in the pet competition. Attractions such as the Central Florida Dog and Disc Club, Greyhound Rescue, and the Hillsborough Dog County Sheriff's Department K-9 Unit appeal to animal owners. “It's a fund-raiser and community-service project for the Mortar Board Senior Honor Society. It could be called a ‘Pet Show,’ where students could basically show off their pets,” says Shellii Martin, Mortar Board vice president at USF. “Many students like the concept and were able to relax, socialize, and get away from school-work. In the near future, we hope to donate a portion or percentage of the funds raised to a needy pet organization such as the Humane Society.”

At **Rollins College**, students boogie while eating free chips and salsa and drinking mocktails and other alcohol-free beverages. The party keeps students from drinking and driving and shows them they can have a good time on campus. “We held a dance called ‘Salsa Explosions’ as part of Alcohol Awareness Week,” says Jill Maetzold, a student activities leadership intern. “It showed students that they don't

have to have alcohol to have fun. It gave students another option for that night.”

Mission Cooperation

Working with other clubs can boost your resources, influence, and turnout. Leaders at **Palm Beach Atlantic College** understand the advantages of co-sponsoring events. “Our college is very focused on building community, and one of the best ways to do that is if different departments work together,” says Rebecca McAndrews, a residential life intern. “We're always making an effort to include other organizations in our programming plans. Two heads are better than one because you get many opinions. It works when lots of people get together and can give ideas.”

A Brighter Future

What will most improve life in Florida in the future?

■ “The quality of life will improve with new families. New families will produce leaders, and then those leaders will have their families, and their kids will go to school and grow up to be leaders and so on.”

—Philip Berman, committee member
Student Activities Board
University of South Florida
Phlmn8r@aol.com



USF's Berman

■ “The preservation of Florida's wildlife and natural environment, and in relation to that, better planning of construction of roads and new housing developments will improve life in Florida for the future. By not preserving and protecting Florida's natural beauty, uninformed and careless development will undermine and undervalue Florida as a whole.”

—Lydia Johnson, resident assistant
Palm Beach Atlantic College

■ “More transportation would improve life because a lot of people don't go places because of the roads. There's very bad mass transportation in Florida. It's a turn-off when you come to Tampa. It's hard to get around if you don't have your own vehicle. For some people, it's not doable having your own vehicle.”

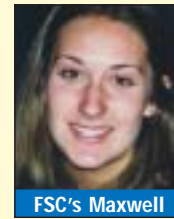
—Shannon Calega
executive vice president
Pan Hellenic Council
University of Tampa
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Improving Your Surroundings

In what way has your group made campus life better?

■ “We did a lighting survey with the captain of the police department at 3 a.m. to show him the lighting on the campus was unsafe for the students. They soon fixed it.”

—Rosemary Howard, member, Leadership House
University of South Florida



FSC's Maxwell

■ “Upper Room Ministries creates a warm and welcoming environment that helps students find and express who they really are. By creating an atmosphere that allows students to be free of pressure and expectations, students are able to find those who are like them and establish friendships that last a lifetime.”

—Brittany Maxwell, leader, Woman's Bible study
Florida Southern College

“Working with others creates unity and enthusiasm,” says Cary Fitzsimmons, a resident assistant at Palm Beach Atlantic. “It pumps you up and gives you more school spirit. If you're enthusiastic, it will rub off.”

The biggest benefit of collaborating: more money to produce your event. “It immediately raises the amount of money you can spend—a big deal in a small, private college where program funds are limited,” McAndrews says.

A lack of funding at Rollins makes co-sponsoring events a necessity, says Andrew Boudreau, a resident assistant. “We work with other groups in order to get more man power, better event turnout, better marketing, and we're able to put on a great event and not have our bank crash.”

At **Saint Leo University**, Rosanne Diccio, resident assistant, says, “On our campus, the RA's and Student Government Union co-sponsor events like the Haunted House for area children and the Super Bowl party.”

—Carla Rojas

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BARRY RICHARDS/GRAHAM PHOTOGRAPHY

FJCCSGA e-board officers (clockwise from left) Oliver Davis, Jon Maguire, Joe Garcia, William Womack III, Tony Chandler, Amanda Carden, Romona Spencer, and Jennifer Severe.

Making Contact

Getting students to participate in extra-curricular activities and listening to their concerns is hard enough when they live on campus, so what do you do when most of your constituents commute?

Campus leaders at **Valencia Community College-West Campus** hold regular meetings to get feedback from students. "We stay active with our campus organizations so we know what students campuswide are looking for," says Phi Theta Kappa President Diane Bennett. Hearing what the students have to say is important when developing programs on campus. "I have made it a goal to listen to students' ideas and base our planning around what they like or don't think will work," says Randee Wooten, Student Activities Board president at **Central Florida Community College**. SAB handed out a survey for student input. "We received some great ideas and used the student input in planning our calendar for this year."

At **Manatee Community College**, SGA conducts student surveys in addition to holding open meetings with the college

president. " 'Conversations and Coffee' is held with the president, the four vice presidents, and student services. After the forum, Dr. Sarah Pappas, MCC president, personally follows up with each individual to make sure that each student's question or concern has been properly addressed," says Angela Sasser, SGA president.

What if the students can't come to SG meetings and give their suggestions? **Brevard Community College-Titus Campus** sends its leaders to the students. "We attend all organization's meetings to stay informed about all events, news, etc.," says Alfonso Lewis, an ambassador.

Community college leaders also encourage involvement in on-campus activities and organizations. "Student ambassadors have provided tours for incoming students, we try our best to make them feel welcome and become involved," says Lia Brewster, a student ambassador at **Brevard C.C.-Cocoa Campus**. "We also set up a rally in the campus Quad so students can meet group presidents and learn about the clubs."

One problem with club meetings at community college is the times they're held. "We've found that once most students leave campus after their classes that it's hard to get them back because they have engagements outside of school," CFCC's Wooten says. "On Mondays and Wednesdays from 12 to 1 p.m., there are no classes, and this is the time that most clubs choose to have their meetings."

Student leaders also offer creative programs in order to maximize attendance and promote school involvement. "The Student Activities Board provides free games, entertainment, and food to help students get away from it all," Wooten says.

Just Sign Here!

Are students responsible for managing their money, or should SG step in and refuse to allow charge card vendors on campus to sign up new customers? The argument for restrictions stems from the fact that a growing number of students are graduating in debt. According to the 2001 Public Interest Research Group (www.truthaboutcredit.org), only 19 percent of students are sure their schools have resources on the responsible use of credit, and 76 percent of these students have never used these resources.

At **Hillsborough Community College-Brandon Campus**, there are no restrictions placed on credit card soliciting. Phi Theta Kappa Vice President Heather Lewis says these companies should be allowed to make money. "As long as [the vendors] aren't rude and pushy, they're legitimately seeking customers among a very profitable group," Lewis says. At **Lake City Community College** Kimberly Cannon, a student ambassador, says she doesn't want to restrict the credit companies. "I don't carry any cash on me, and the vendors have been very helpful," she says.

Santa Fe Community College blocks vendors from signing up new customers on campus. "I support our policy which doesn't allow vendors to solicit on campus in the effort to prevent uninformed students from finding themselves in early debt," says Matthew Vecchio, SG president.

Still, most campuses don't prohibit credit card companies from being on site. The vendors in turn, sit at tables and offer free T-shirts and candy to entice students into signing up. "Credit card vendors tend to catch students in a vulnerable state, giving students a false sense of financial freedom," says Broderick Harris, a student ambassador at Brevard C.C.

Other leaders say business and campus don't mix. "Most of the people here are in enough debt with student loans and don't need the temptation of easily offered credit cards," says Nancy McGrotty, SG president at **Pasco-Hernando Community College**. "I believe they exploit the young and naive," says Charles Maier, Phi Theta Kappa president at **Palm Beach Community College-Central Campus**. "Business should stay out of school."

—Eric Hastie

How Do You Reach Students?

■ "Our SGA members are in close contact with students. Through talking with them, we can ensure their needs, if it's within our means, are met. Also, we have many activities in which the students are involved (dances, sub socials, etc.), and we're currently trying to make a student lounge".

—Amanda Carden
FJCCSGA District IV coordinator
OWCC's SGA vice president
Okaloosa-Walton Community College
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■ "We have shown that life at a two-year college can be as rewarding and enjoyable as anywhere else. We always have fellow students in anticipation of the next activity held by the Student Government Association."

—Oliver Davis
FJCCSGA executive board secretary
OWCC's SGA secretary
Okaloosa-Walton Community College
owccsecretary@yahoo.com

Credit Card Vendors on Campus—Yes or No?

■ "I think it's a great way for students to have an opportunity to apply for credit cards and if eligible, receive them. My major concern would be that the representatives don't try and infringe on the rights of the students who desire not to be contacted or approached."

—Farrell A. Chandler, FJCCSGA vice president
OWCC's SGA president, Okaloosa-Walton Community College
sga@owcc.net

■ "Yes, they should be banned, because most students don't have money, and credit cards are a way to spend money people don't have. By doing this, students will be in debt by the time they get out of college. It's bad enough they have to pay student loans."

—Joe Garcia, FJCCSGA District II coordinator
Valencia Community College-East Campus
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Gov. Bush's "One Florida" initiative eliminates racial preference in college admissions and guarantees the top 20 percent of seniors in every Florida high school access to state universities. This rule instructs college admissions offices to ignore race, ethnicity, and gender in their decisions. A year later, "One Florida" remains a hot topic on campuses throughout the state, as Florida campus leaders and educators wrestle with ways to eliminate discrimination and provide equal opportunities to all students.

Regulating Equality

Some collegians see racially based admission policies as a necessary evil to maintain equality for higher learning.

"Until the systems that are in place now are equalized, affirmative action has a place in schools," says Teresa Merkle, Catholic Student Union president at the **University of South Florida**. Merkle says the discrimination question isn't always spelled out in black and white: students from an affluent community may have an academic advantage over those who attend inferior schools. "You can't really base everything on merit when your poor and minority students haven't had the same opportunities as the other students. Affirmative action gives a lot of students a chance that they wouldn't have otherwise because of their circumstances or environment."

"It plays the role of regulator. Without the help of affirmative action who knows where we would be today," says Stewart Parker, SGA president at **Rollins College**. As Heather Newberry, Honor Council president at the **University of West Florida**, says, "We still have a long way to go to make educational opportunities equal among all races. It can only be fair when everyone has access to a quality education at a school that isn't failing its students."

Some argue that affirmative action

allows everyone to prove themselves. "It only gives students a 'foot in the door.' Then, it's up to the student to work hard and be successful in college," says Juleen Jennings, P.E.A.C.E. Volunteer Center co-head coordinator at the **University of Tampa**. The process serves as a watchful eye to protect the rights of minorities. "I was probably admitted into the University of West Florida under affirmative action, but it didn't keep me here," says Kriston Hardley, Alpha Kappa Alpha president. "I could've dropped out or failed out. I chose to stay with it."

Academics, Not Race

Does the practice eliminate prejudice or encourage it? Affirmative action may provide opportunities for minorities, but some feel that it's stealing chances from others

who may score better on tests or have better grades. "Affirmative action was supposed to bring about equality, right? But all it is is discrimination in reverse," says Anna Hart, a resident assistant at **Palm Beach Atlantic College**. "It's still judging people not on qualifications but on race. We all want to play on a level playing field, but all we've done is replace the ditch with a hill." Hart says that instead of uniting the races, they're actually further separated.

At Rollins, Erika Shoemaker, house manager of Kappa Delta Sorority, says, "If we continue to treat people differently based on ethnic backgrounds, we'll increase the problems that are in place now. There may be some use in treating people differently according to their specific needs, but I don't believe that affirmative action is the answer to increasing the success of minority students in college academic settings."

Some say affirmative action is a crutch that academically inferior students use to get admitted into college—without it they wouldn't score high enough to get in. "By enrolling certain students who may be of a minority, based solely on that fact, doesn't help the student succeed through his college years," says Douglas Mimm, a group leader of the Interscholarship Christian Fellowship at USF. "If I knew that I was admitted to college simply because I was white, and not on academic status, that would make me feel less of my abilities as an intelligent person."

"The person with the best credentials gets into the best college," says Sean Wieland, a resident assistant at Palm Beach Atlantic. "There's no policy more fair than that." As Donald Durrance, vice president of Great Commission Missionary Fellowship at **Trinity College**,

says, "Affirmative action is a type of discrimination. Admission to college should be based on eligibility, not race."

Mixed Feelings

At the **University of North Florida**, Lisa Beck, student director of the honors program, says, "I think anyone that has the desire to go to college should be allowed to go. I also think students should be rewarded for their hard work." Some students say it's time to replace the affirmative action system with a less rigid plan. "It's seen by many as a policy 'cut in stone,'" says Steven Keith Keever, director of the Broward Student Government Volunteer Center at **Florida Atlantic University**. "It seems that today people are seriously divided on the issue. The question becomes how do we clear the air without throwing out the baby with the water."

Affirmative action may not have a place in the admissions office, but a rerouting to the financial aid office could solve the problem. "Affirmative action should play a role in financial aid, but college admissions should be based on a student's determination, potential, and achievements," says Sylvia F. Rodriguez, a resident assistant at **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**.

At **Florida State University**, Mark Zabrowski, National Residence Hall Honorary president, says efforts should focus on financial standing. "I don't agree with the way it's done. It should not be based on race but on socioeconomic status," he says. "That way people from poor areas are given an opportunity to get out."

—Laura Gryb

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Florida's Heroes

What Florida public official do you most admire and why?

■ "I admire Alex Penelas [Miami-Dade Mayor] because his administration has dedicated a great number of projects to helping the community by focusing on restoring ethics to county government and elevating the overall quality of life in Miami-Dade county."

—Israel Herrera, vice president
Delta Epsilon Chi
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■ "I admire Sen. Victor Crist because he goes out of his way to help his fellow citizens, and he opens his door to students that want to get involved and give back to their community. Plus, he's a USF alumni!"

—Alisa Lorello, senator
Student Government
University of South Florida
verdi1010@aol.com

■ "I've always admired Sen. Graham. He's always been an advocate of student rights in Florida, quality education, and a protector of the environment. Right now in my life, those are perhaps the three most important things to me, and he goes above and beyond to try and preserve those issues."



USF's Kalmowicz

—Sammy Kalmowicz, senate president
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■ "I've come to admire Jeb Bush. Although controversial, his stand on affirmative action is revolutionary. Also, I admire his environmental policy. While water restrictions may be annoying, they are there for a valid reason and good cause."

—Dennis Wouters, vice president
Student Government
Barry University
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Ending Affirmative Action on College Campuses

Take a look at minority freshmen numbers at colleges in Texas, California, and Florida a year after the elimination of affirmative action policies in admission offices.

- **University of Texas at Austin.** Admission of African-Americans decreased 26 percent, and Hispanics decreased 23 percent (*Washington Post*, 5/19/97).
- **University of California at Los Angeles.** Admission of African-Americans decreased 43 percent, and Hispanics decreased 33 percent (*Online NewsHour*).
- **Florida State University.** Admission of African-Americans increased 21 percent, and Hispanics increased 24 percent (Executive Office of the Governor).
- **University of Florida.** Admission of African-Americans increased 33 percent, and Hispanics increased 19 percent (Executive Office of the Governor).

(Florida Sen. Kendrick Meek says "the increase of minorities on Florida campuses has more to do with population growth than state policy" in *The Tallahassee Democrat* on July 20, 2001.)



COURTESY PAULETTE REED

SGA and the Forestry Club at Pensacola Junior College-Milton Campus joined forces to better the community in the annual "River Cleanup" of the Cold Water River in June 2001.

Activity Fees

Even though the money is spent for their benefit, students don't always have a say in where it goes. Do Florida leaders think they should have more input in how their dollars are spent? "Students should have a great deal of influence as to how those monies are allocated," says R. Carlyle Kent, a SG senator at the **University of Florida**. SGA Senator Cheryl Schnapp of the **University of North Florida** says that too many students are unaware of "the dues" they pay and how they're spent. "Activity fees and the whole system of spending that money should be made aware to all students," she says.

Obviously, every student doesn't have either the time or inclination to monitor proposed fees and tuition hikes, so that's where SG comes in. "It's the students' money that supplies the activities to prosper, therefore, a council or representative should be aware of fees and relay the message to students," says Jennifer Canals, SGA marketing and public relations coordinator at **Florida International University**. "Student organizations should have a say, but the general uninvolved student body shouldn't," says Nicholas DuRocher, Phi Theta Kappa president at **Broward Community College-Central Campus**.

"Those who aren't involved in school life generally would just want the money given back to them, having a very detrimental effect on student activities, the very things that make you feel like you're part of a community."

However, students elect SG representatives to look out for their best interests. "As senators, we carry the responsibility of making sure our constituents' wishes are heard," says Betsy Goode, an SG senator representing the College of Fine Arts at the **University of South Florida**. At **Pensacola Junior College**, SG Secretary Gretchen Wheatley says, "If the students want to voice their opinions, they should get involved."

Of course, there's also the opinion that the administration should be left out all together. "It's their [students] money. They should be able to vote on how it should be spent," says Michael J. Shores, Student Ambassadors president at **Chipola Junior College**. "Faculty and staff shouldn't even be a part of such decisions."

Does the average student possess the knowledge to make wise choices regarding funding? "They [students] don't have enough information to make an educated decision," says SG President Jose F. Diaz of the **University of Miami**. Others think students should have input but not direct control. "You may have students who feel their money shouldn't go to a certain cause, but in the long run it will benefit the university as a whole," says Angie Bowler, SG president at the **University of West Florida**.

Web Campaigns

Running for office using campaign web sites and sending mass e-mails can make it easier to reach a more diverse audience,

provide more information, and answer more questions. But some students say it's impersonal and lazy.

"Isolating the people who are running for positions makes the students you represent less like actual people and more like a number," says John Domeier, a member of the Student Government Executive Cabinet at UF.

On the flip side, the web can provide more information on candidates and their platforms. At the **University of Central Florida**, Student Body President Marco Pena says he found the on-line voting process to be more informative and more personal. "It actually allowed for additional interaction between my campaign and student voters," he says. "I e-mailed more students about their concerns than I ever could have spoken to on an individual basis."

While the internet is a useful tool, it shouldn't replace the traditional approach—meeting with groups and talking with students the candidates hope to represent. "A person who has the chance to listen to their [candidates] speech in person, shake hands with them, or be greeted at the door by them will have a large impact on that voter's vote," says Dustin West, an ambassador at **Brevard Community College-Melbourne Campus**.

At **Florida Hospital College of Health Sciences** in Orlando, Sarah Stearns, Student Association vice president, says, "It's a new age. You can't hold progress back, this still allows for questions and answers, expressing plans and ideas, and shows innovation—another means to meet the students." 🐾

—Laura Gryb

Advice From the Pros

What advice would you give up-and-coming leaders?

■ "Concentrate on your personal relations with those you work with. If your fellow students respect you on a personal level, they will follow your leadership. Most importantly, take your job seriously, not yourself."

—Jason D. Crawford
vice president
Student Government
Association
Univ. of West Florida
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UWF's Crawford

■ "To have patience but persistence. To never take your eyes off the goal of the team. Be open-minded, and keep your members motivated."

—Candice S. Carreño, president
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Nova Southeastern University
flygur1104@aol.com

■ "Take the time to listen and truly hear the voice of the people. Always show compassion, believe in others, believe in yourself, and above all, never, never lose or put aside your 'learner's permit.'"

—Paulette Reed
president
Student Government
Association
Pensacola Jr. College
paulette@juno.com



PJC's Reed

■ "Don't limit what you think that you can do because someone else says that it can't be done, and always treat people with respect and a smile."

—Daniel Ginn
director of health and human services
Student Government
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On-Line Campaigning Pro's and Con's

Pro's

- ✓ Allows for easy distribution to a more diverse group of students
- ✓ Provides more information on candidates and their platforms
- ✓ E-mail provides direct response to questions and concerns

Con's

- ✓ Not as intimate as traditional campaigning
- ✓ A larger organization with more resources may overpower a campaign
- ✓ Need to keep information up-to-date