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University of Florida Student Wins 2004 Florida College Student of the Year Award

Gainesville, Fla (04-04) – Anup Patel, a senior with a 4.0 GPA in biochemistry and molecular genetics, economics, and political science at the University of Florida, is the winner of the 2004 Florida College Student of the Year Award.

Patel and 19 other students from colleges and universities from across Florida shared \$65,000 in scholarships and prizes at the award ceremony and press conference on Friday, April 16. The ceremony was at the Capitol Building in Tallahassee. He appears on the cover of *Florida Leader* magazine and is profiled at www.floridaleader.com/soty.

Patel was selected from 78 applicants in the annual scholarship program sponsored by *Florida Leader*, SunTrust Education Loans, and Office Depot. The Florida College Student of the Year Award celebrates 17 years of recognizing outstanding Florida college students for their campus leadership, academic excellence, financial self-reliance, and campus and community service.

As an aspiring physician, Patel has made a difference in peoples' lives through his work at the Gainesville Ronald McDonald House. Since his freshman year, he has been working in the molecular biology and genetics department lab to help reduce diabetic retinopathy and age-related macular degeneration. Outside the lab, Patel brought the Locks of Love program to campus. This program's "hair drive" provides wigs for cancer patients. He was so successful in this program that Locks of Love coordinators have asked him to stage another drive. He did all this while serving as a cabinet director for Student Government and on the Student Health Advisory Board.

Through an internship with Senator Bob Graham, Patel has been involved with the political and economic side of his medical research. Patel's research was incorporated in the senator's floor speech presenting the Graham-Miller-Zell prescription drug plan. "Anup brought his research skills to the table, capable and willing to work long hours and do the type of detailed analysis that was needed at that point," says Dr. Howard Forman, associate professor of diagnostic radiology at Yale University and then legislative fellow in Senator Graham's office.

Patel went to India to work with AIDS patients and found children who were infected as a byproduct of the sex trafficking there. "Teaching children how to treat a minor cut or a sprained ankle confirmed my desire to become a physician who would practice medicine in a developing country," says Patel. This experience prompted him to start a foundation to help the children in India financially. He started the first Cents of Relief chapter, a non-profit organization, which now provides money for a part-time doctor back in India. Patel has become his own organization's best philanthropist by donating the money he received from scholarships, including his winnings from the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship and the USA Today All-USA Academic First Team, to Cents of Relief. Through all this Patel hasn't built up a huge ego. "He's a humble, modest guy with a huge desire to better the world," says Forman.

This summer, check www.floridaleader.com/soty for scheduling and stations for the broadcast of the Florida College Student of the Year program.