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# **Finalists Named for 2005 Florida College Student of the Year Award**

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (3/05) — After a yearlong search for Florida's best students, *Florida Leader* magazine has chosen 20 outstanding campus leaders to represent the state in the 18th annual **Florida College Student of the Year Award**. Seven finalists now will vie for the title, with one overall winner to be announced on April 8, 2005 at a press conference in Tallahassee. The prestigious awards program recognizes students who support themselves financially through college, excel academically, and are involved in community service and political activism.

Top students from universities, private colleges, and community colleges throughout Florida compete in the statewide scholarship program sponsored by *Florida Leader*, SunTrust, Office Depot, and other companies that support the recognition of excellence in Florida higher education. More than 5,000 students inquired about how to apply for the 2005 Award, and nearly 140 submitted applications.

The 2005 finalists are: Minal Ahson of the **University of Miami**, Craig Altemose of **Eckerd College**, George Austin of **Florida International University**, Matthew Collier of **Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**, Darius Graham of **Florida A&M University**, Megan Hoot of the **University of Florida**, and Marianne Howe of the **University of Central Florida**.

Thirteen other students also will receive recognition as honorable mention winners: John Allen, Jr. of the **University of North Florida**, William Bludgus of the **University of Miami**, Wilquins Charleston of **Valencia Community College**, Bijal Chhadva of the **University of South Florida**, Joel Hughes of **Lake-Sumter Community College**, Janet Levic of **Saint Leo University**, John Melvin, II of the **University of West**

**Florida**, Dennis Ngin of the **University of Florida**, Francisco Perez of the **University of Tampa**, Thomas Piccolo of the **University of South Florida/St. Petersburg**, Kelly Renfroe of **North Florida Community College**, Eva Rosales of the **University of Florida**, and Nathan Wadlinger of **Indian River Community College**.

The 2005 winners will share nearly \$55,000 in scholarships and prizes from **SunTrust, Office Depot, Gulfstream International Airlines, Collegiate Risk Management, Jiffy Lube, Checker's Drive-In Restaurants, The Anthony Grandio Company**, and other sponsors. All 20 students also will be featured in the "Student of the Year" issue of *Florida Leader* magazine.

"The diverse group of students recognized this year is a testament to the wonderful variety of students we have at colleges across Florida," says **W.H. "Butch" Oxendine, Jr.**, publisher of *Florida Leader* magazine. "The outstanding quality of this year's applicants signals a resurgence of student activism, as students across the country are taking greater responsibility for improving the world around them. This year's winners are self-reliant student leaders who understand the importance of community and political activism."

The 2005 applicants were reviewed by a panel of distinguished judges, including respected educators, business leaders, and journalists statewide.

*Florida Leader*, the founding sponsor, is a newsmagazine read by students at 86 colleges and 550 public and private high schools throughout the state of Florida. Now in its 22nd year of publishing, *Florida Leader* has won first prize nationally for editorial excellence among college magazines. Oxendine Publishing, Inc. also produces the national leadership magazine *Student Leader*.

*For more details on the Friday, April 8 press conference when the overall 2005 winner will be announced, contact W.H. "Butch" Oxendine, Jr. at (352) 373-6907. The seven finalists and 13 honorable mention winners and their families, judges, sponsors, will be in attendance at the 1:30 p.m. press conference and awards reception on the 22nd floor of The Capitol Building in Tallahassee. Copies of the "Student of the Year" issue of Florida Leader will be available featuring the winners and their achievements.*