



*JMI will begin featuring articles from each of the State University System schools over the coming issues. Kicking this off, hear from Florida's two flagship universities*

# Florida State University Continues to Succeed

Clay Ingram

Florida State University is proud to be part of the nation's No. 1 university system—a state system that is committed to across-the-board academic excellence and that prioritizes access and affordability.

The state's 12 public universities serve more than 300,000 students, giving Floridians access to a myriad of top-notch institutions that power the economy and produce groundbreaking research that touches lives

throughout our state and beyond.

As a Top 20 public university, Florida State University has worked tirelessly to ensure that our students succeed in and outside of the classroom, while also facilitating a world-class research environment.

President Richard McCullough has a bold vision of leading FSU to even greater heights. Inspired by FSU's rapid rise in the national academic rankings, commitment to student success, and role as an engine

of economic opportunity and social mobility, he's laid out ambitious goals for the university.

McCullough has reaffirmed the university's commitment to student success, which also has fueled our rapid rise in the *U.S. News & World Report* "Best Colleges" rankings. We have one of the highest four-year graduation rates in the nation at 74 percent and recently set a school record for six-year graduation rate at 85 percent. More importantly, we have eliminated graduation rate disparities across our diverse student body.

In recognition of our efforts, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities recently presented FSU with the Degree Completion Award—widely recognized as the nation's most prominent award for student success.

We're also passionate about supporting first-generation and transfer students. About 26 percent of our undergraduate students are the first in their families to go to college and nearly 20 percent of our students began their higher education at a community college. We've adopted new approaches to advising and have invested in our outstanding Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement — or CARE program — which intensively supports first-generation college students.

The strategic investments we have made in student success are paying off, not only for our students and their families, but for Florida taxpayers who support our state universities.

The quality of FSU's academic programs, supportive student environment, excellent student outcomes and affordability

are attracting applicants in record numbers. This year, we had nearly 80,000 first-year applications for about 6,000 spots, and we admitted our most academically talented class in school history.

In addition, graduate school applications were up 23 percent, and we welcomed a record number of graduate students this fall — a recognition of our excellent programs. *U.S. News & World Report* also ranked 20 of our graduate programs and specialties in the Top 25 among public universities. Our programs in education, business, law, and engineering all climbed in the rankings, and we also saw big jumps in statistics, chemistry, biology, and earth sciences.

While not losing sight of the university's commitment to student success, President McCullough is also focused on growing our research portfolio, which increased to record numbers this year. We're working to expand the university's external financial support, especially from the National Institutes of Health. We're doing that by increasing faculty resources and building the infrastructure and support needed to attract more research dollars.

We're hiring more full-time faculty who will educate the workforce of tomorrow while making outstanding contributions in research, including 155 additional faculty this fall.

The university has taken giant steps to create new research initiatives in the life sciences, medical research, health data sciences, aerospace and quantum science, and engineering.

One example of this is the new FSU Health initiative, a partnership with

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare, which has the potential to transform health care delivery, education, and biomedical research in the region.

To support the FSU Health initiative, the Florida Legislature appropriated \$125 million to FSU for a new academic health center in Tallahassee that will offer advanced medical training and translational research opportunities. The university is also developing partnerships throughout North Florida that will allow the university to extend its reach through both research and clinical care. The goal is to make Tallahassee a regional health care destination.

The FSU Health Tallahassee center will provide about 130,000 square feet of medical and research-related space distributed over five floors. It will accommodate approximately 30 principal investigators and produce an estimated \$40 million in additional grant funding.

The preliminary conservative economic impact of the new health center alone is expected to add more than \$217 million annually and support more than 1,500 jobs directly and indirectly. During the construction phase, roughly 1,200 jobs will be created. Post construction and activation, the center will sustain more than 350 permanent positions.

The appropriation from the state for FSU Health was part of FSU's most successful legislative session in university history. FSU also received \$45 million in recurring operational funds, \$6.6 million in recurring funds for the FAMU-FSU College of Engineering, \$16.8 million for the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory and approximately \$90 million in capital funding for deferred maintenance at the Tallahassee campus, Panama City campus and FAMU-FSU College of Engineering and for critical infrastructure upgrades at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory.

We are incredibly grateful to the Florida Legislature and Governor Ron DeSantis for their support and leadership during the last session. They understand that Florida State University is an excellent steward of taxpayer dollars and a wise investment.

While our main campus is in Tallahassee, our reach extends throughout the state, across the nation, and around the globe. We are excited to move forward in excellence.

*Clay Ingram is the chief legislative affairs officer at Florida State University.*