USF concentrates on worker issues to retain its employees

New Mexico's Peck chosen as interim president

Chancellor Adam Herbert and the Florida Board of Regents chose Richard E. Peck, former president of the University of New Mexico and Arizona State University, to serve as interim president of USF, starting Dec. 15. Herbert nominated Peck, a 63-year-old former Marine helicopter pilot, author and educator, during a conference call meeting of the Board of Regents on Sept. 30. The regents unanimously affirmed the nomination.

Herbert chose Peck after an extensive nationwide search guided by the Search Advisory Committee and Regents Selection Committee.

"I have impeccable credentials at major research institutions similar to USF," said Herbert. "His most recent presidential-level experience and his impressive academic background within a Research institution, which has a major medical school complex, would ensure that USF will have the quality leadership it deserves until a permanent president arrives."

Peck said the similarity between the University of New Mexico and USF was one of the reasons he was drawn to the interim position.

"I'm not likely to be lost at USF," Peck said two days before the vote. "I believe I can keep in motion the stronger relationship (USF) has already forged in the community."

Peck was president of UNM from 1997 to 1998, when he had already taken a faculty position at the university. Peck was provost (1988-90) and interim president (1989-90) at ASU and served at several other institutions before that, including the University of Alabama and Temple.

"Dr. Peck's willingness to assume the interim presidency is a real tribute to the status of the University of South Florida," said Board of Regents Chairman Thomas F. Petway III.

President Betty Castor's last official day was Oct. 1, a resignation date she announced in July. She became head of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, based in Washington, D.C.

Peck has spent his career helping to build great research universities, working inside and with the community, Castor said, "We are fortunate to have every confidence that USF will continue to go beyond the call of duty to get a job done." by Geoffrey Benedtzwicz

The Florida Cabinet approved a Board of Regents rule change that will allow USF to expand course offerings on the St. Petersburg campus and has unexpectedly waived a 30-day waiting period, allowing the change to go into effect immediately.

Because the BOR had already OK'd the rule change and USF's expansion plan contingent upon Cabinet approval, the action means that USF St. Petersburg can begin offering first and second-year courses as soon as spring 2000.

Prior to the Sept. 28 rule change, no school in the State University System could offer such courses on branch campuses. The only exceptions allowed were New College — the honors program at USF Sarasota — and the North Miami campus of Florida International University. Now, SUS member institutions can do so with the approval of the BOR, Cabinet approval will no longer be required.

By going the rule change was an arduous and, at times, exasperating process for USF leaders. Castor declared it her top priority to complete before her Oct. 1 resignation took effect.

She rounded up major community support for the project, including endorsements from St. Petersburg Mayor David Fischer, other elected officials and government and economic development officials.

But community college officials, concerned that lower-level courses at branch campuses might eat into their enrollments, fought the change, lobbying both the Cabinet and Florida Postsecondary Education Planning Commission against it.

The proposed change was formally reviewed by the BOR, Cabinet and the Planning Commission in seven different meetings before winning final approval. A beaming Castor learned of the Cabinet's decision before leaving her office for the last time.

While enrollment is capped for each of the first three years, St. Petersburg may enroll up to 300 first- and second-year students in 2000. Over the past five years, the number of students attending USF from Pinellas County has grown from less than 200 to about 400. by Todd Martinez-Padilla Simmons
Two suspects arrested in USF, FAMU bomb scares

A 35-year-old man was arrested Sept. 28 after allegedly making a bomb threat to USF in September. Mark Damon Thomas was charged with two counts of false bomb threats to a state facility, a second-degree felony. University Police charged Thomas with reporting a bomb placed in the Tampa campus library on Sept. 8 and 22, both times resulting in the evacuation of the campus and Health Sciences Center libraries. Thomas allegedly confessed after he was identified through a 911 record. He now faces up to 15 years in prison.

The arrest came shortly before Lawrence Michael Lombardi Jr., 41, of Tallahassee was charged with two recent bombings at Florida A&M University. Lombardi is charged with placing two bombs in restrooms at the FAMU campus, causing heightened security at the campus. Lombardi once delivered vending machine snacks to the campus.

WUSF-FM 89.7 raises $242,000 in pledge drive

WUSF-FM 89.7 ended its membership campaign Sept. 18, with $242,000 in pledges. The station fell short of its goal by $58,000. "I can assure our listeners that programs will not be cut due to the outcome of this membership campaign," said Station Manager JoAnn Urosky. "While the shortfall in the campaign goal is not a catastrophic failure for the station, we will reassess our expenses for the second quarter of the fiscal year."

The campaign was the first done by the station based on results of research done by five public radio stations. The research project's goals are to reduce listener fatigue caused by on-air campaigns and to increase pledges from new members. Membership Director Evelyn Massaro hopes "We've learned from the research, and through our experience in this campaign, the kind of changes to make to ensure a successful December campaign. We'll never go back to doing things exactly as we have in the past."

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