

get out the vote

Election2012

THE FATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION HANGS IN THE BALANCE

A letter from Tom Auxter
President, United Faculty of Florida
11 September 2012

When we vote, nothing less than the future of higher education and American democracy are at stake. In terms of policy, we have radically different choices.

At the national level, should we have a policy of increasing federal Pell Grants and opening doors for low income students? Should we keep a lid on interest rates for federal loans? Or, should we phase out federal grants and loans to students?

Should we protect collective bargaining as a choice for all public employees? Or, should we abolish it—leaving faculty with no contractual protections against cuts in full time positions and subjecting faculty to at-will decisions by supervisors?

We know that education does not exist in a vacuum. Now more than ever the fate of public education is tied to other policy decisions. For example, a strong democracy requires a strong middle class. Are budget cuts in programs to enter and finish college a way to grow the middle class? Or, is a trickle down theory of wealth creation the best way to expand the middle class, even if it requires limiting access to higher education in order to pay for new tax breaks? If unions are abolished, will there still be a vigorous public defense of policy choices that strengthen the middle class?

At the state level, we now face dramatic losses of funding for universities and colleges, larger class sizes, fewer courses open, and programs threatened on every campus. Cuts in pensions and optional retirement programs, as well as in health insurance benefits, have already been proposed for the next legislative session. How will this affect the faculty brain drain we are already experiencing as a result of low salaries? The loss of tenure and continuing contracts are also proposals under serious consideration --along with annual bonuses (instead of pay raises added to the base salary) as a “reward” for merit. Do we vote for a continuation of this trend? Or, do we vote for a different kind of policy?

This election is not a referendum on personalities or on whether voters like everything a candidate has done. If that is how voters decide, we will watch while large amounts of money dominate the airwaves, and higher education issues fade from view.

If voters have defeatist attitudes, or feel indifferent or frustrated, Florida will have low turnout like there was in 2010. Higher education and unionized employees have been under attack since that time.

The importance of voting has never been greater.

The political stakes are too high to tune out.

Ask your colleagues, ask your friends, and ask your family to vote.

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Learn more about this election on these websites

The Florida Voter.
League of Women Voters
of Florida
thefloridavoter.org



2012 Voter Guide (also
in Spanish) & League
Position on the 2012
Amendments

Be Ready to Vote.
Florida Education Fund,
League of Women Voters
bereadytovote.org



Register to vote, Check
on and update your status
& Contact your Supervisor
of Elections

The Vote's in Your Court.
Florida Bar Association
Judicial Merit Retention
floridabar.org



Learn why judicial merit
retention is on the ballot
and more in the FL Bar's
Public Education Program

Democracy at Stake.
Protecting Fair and
Impartial Courts in Florida
democracyatstake.org



Learn about merit
retention for Supreme
Court and other state
judges on the ballot

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Last day to register: **October 9th**

Last day to request an absentee
ballot: **October 31st**

Rights & Representation
all the time. Protection
when you need it.



unitedfacultyofflorida.org

UFF

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