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FLORIDA'S TOP STEM SCHOLARS HONORED

~ Two-day awards and recruitment event spotlights the state's top students ~

ORLANDO – Florida's efforts to expand and enrich its focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers got an added boost during the last two days through the Sunshine State Scholars program being championed by the Florida Education Foundation and the Florida Department of Education. This year's Scholars program invited the top-performing STEM-focused students from each school district to attend an event honoring their achievements. The program also provided each student with direct access to Florida's university and college recruiters to discuss postsecondary opportunities and reasons why their talents and knowledge would bring them the greatest success if kept here in the Sunshine State.

"The Sunshine State Scholars Program is exactly what Florida needs to keep our STEM talent here at home to build up the type of thriving industries that will revitalize our economy," said Florida Commissioner of Education Gerard Robinson. "These STEM scholars truly have a chance to make a difference here in Florida and I can't thank our program sponsors enough for making this awards and recruitment event possible."

The program began yesterday evening with a welcome reception keynoted by Commissioner Robinson, Chancellor Frank Brogan of the State University System of Florida, and Stacy Carlson of the Helios Education Foundation, one of the event's main sponsors. This morning's activities featured a breakfast event headlined by Dr. Jimmie Davis of *STEMflorida* followed by a recruitment fair where the scholars met with higher education officials to talk about their futures and explore the opportunities and careers that could await them in Florida. The event was capped off with an awards luncheon where scholars were treated to an inspirational speech by Rosemary Woods, Vice President-Transportation, Atkins, sponsor of the luncheon.

Chancellor Brogan pointed to the diversity of these students' current accomplishments and the breadth of opportunities for them at Florida's 11 public institutions with total enrollment today at more than 325,000 students.

"We want today's Sunshine State Scholars to be tomorrow's state university students, strengthening our national and global competitiveness. Pursuing STEM degrees here in Florida helps us to raise our current ranking – which is compelling – as the third-highest producer for four-year STEM degrees of any public university system in the United States."

Brogan urged future students and their families to take time to look at the Board of Governors' just-released 2010-11 Annual Accountability Report, which provides comparative data for key metrics on all 11 institutions: "We are fast becoming the State University System with the most robust framework of accountability in the nation – one that is user-friendly, with at-a-glance data tables, and an interactive web site feature that prospective students should review closely."

“The Sunshine State Scholars is a great program that encourages our young talent to stay in Florida to attend college,” said Florida College System Chancellor Randy Hanna. “These students are vital to Florida’s economic future. The program opens their eyes to the fascinating array of STEM career opportunities available to them right here at home.”

“I’m proud to have the Foundation involved in this wonderful event and to see our partners in the business community contribute so generously to make it possible,” said Florida Education Foundation Chairman Dominic M. Calabro. “Keeping our top scholars in their native state presents the type of win-win scenario we have been looking for – better opportunities for them and a spark of home-grown talent to drive our workforce into the future.”

The Sunshine State Scholars program is a collaboration between the Florida Education Foundation, the State University System of Florida, the Division of Florida Colleges, and the Florida Department of Education. Event sponsors of this year’s program include the Helios Education Foundation, Universal Orlando Resort, Gulf Power, Atkins, Florida Trend Magazine, and the Florida Lottery.

More information about the Education Foundation and the Sunshine State Scholars program can be found at www.floridaeducationfoundation.org. The Board of Governors’ 2010-11 Annual Accountability Report is posted at www.flbog.edu, along with the Board’s Strategic Plan, 2012-2025.

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