

University of Florida Board of Trustees
Committee on External Relations
December 6, 2012

The Committee on External Relations convened at 2:11 p.m. Committee members present were chair Carolyn Roberts and trustees Cheri Brodeur, Marshall Criser, Charles Edwards, and Michael Heekin.

The committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the June meeting.

The committee began the meeting by welcoming Rep. Seth McKeel, chair of the Florida House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations. Rep. McKeel, a graduate of UF and former chair of the Florida Legislature's Gator Caucus, focused his comments on state revenues and higher education funding and policy.

Rep. McKeel explained that revenues are growing as a result of the improving economy and that there should be sufficient funds to allow marginal budget increases for higher education as well as maintenance of education facilities. However, that will not occur, he said, if the state does not prevail in a pending lawsuit regarding retirement contributions for state employees. If the Florida Supreme Court rules against the state, it will cost the state \$1.7 to \$1.8 billion, requiring additional budget reductions.

He also said if Congressional negotiators are not able to reach agreement and avoid the fiscal cliff, there will be impacts on the state budget.

Following the budget discussion, Rep. McKeel expressed his commitment to support legislation that recognizes the excellence of preeminent universities, similar to the legislation that passed last year. He urged that we not lose focus on the concept of preeminence during the course of discussions regarding tuition.

During the question and answer session, committee members returned to the discussion of deferred maintenance projects at UF, and Rep. McKeel said he supports directing general revenue funds for O&M in the short term, until tax collections on utilities are able to support these projects again.

Following Rep. McKeel, the committee saw a presentation from Ed Poppell, of the University of Florida Development Corporation. Mr. Poppell updated committee members on Innovation Square, the 40-acre development located between the university campus and downtown Gainesville that is home to the UF incubator, Innovation Hub.

He is working with local business and government officials as well as the State to attract new businesses to the area and to spin off high tech companies from UF research. The first company recruited to Innovation Square is Mindtree, a computer software company that is headquartered in India and New Jersey. It is currently housed in Ayers Plaza.

A second building for existing and emerging companies is the Infusion Tech Center, a 150,000 sq. ft. facility to begin construction soon on a site near Innovation Hub.

Mr. Poppell concluded his presentation by observing that companies are beginning to seek out space at Innovation Square, due in part to competitive rental rates and cost of talent. Developers have shown interest in building luxury apartments, hotels and a grocery store in Innovation Square.

Chair Roberts asked how we compared to other universities. Mr. Poppell responded that all major research universities are doing something similar, but Innovation Square has more acreage and is unusual due to the live/work/play nature of the development.

The meeting adjourned at 2:56 p.m.