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News Release

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HISTORIC \$10 MILLION HELIOS GIFT TO HELP FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

Private Foundation's Endowment Gift Will Be Matched by State Funds

TALLAHASSEE – The Helios Education Foundation today presented \$10 million dollars in two endowment gifts to the Board of Governors Foundation of the State University System and the Foundation for Florida's Community Colleges.

The private gifts, when combined with state matching funds, will create the largest public-private source of scholarship funding for first-generation students in state history. First-generation students are the first in their family to attain a college degree.

Each state educational foundation is receiving a \$5 million gift endowment from Helios. The \$5 million gift to the Board of Governors Foundation will generate income that will be matched by the First-Generation student grant program. The \$5 million dollar gift to the community college foundation will be matched by a combination of First-Generation Matching Program and Phillip Benjamin Matching Grant Program funds.

"We appreciate the Helios Foundation's generosity," said Gov. Jeb Bush. "A college education can make all the difference in the life of an individual and this donation will touch the lives of many students from families across Florida."

The endowments are intended to generate income into perpetuity and thus act as a continuing resource for future generations. The funds will be dispersed through the Board of Governors Foundation and the Foundation for Florida's Community Colleges to the state's 11 universities and 28 community colleges.

The not-for-profit Helios Education Foundation is dedicated to supporting initiatives that lead to the successful completion of post-secondary education among college students through the encouragement of greater participation, increased access and enriched learning experiences.

“By investing millions of dollars in Florida’s system of higher education, we are investing in the state’s future,” said Helios President Paul Luna. “Through these scholarships, first-generation students will have the chance to further their education, make college a reality and blaze a trail for others in their families.”

Luna was joined by Helios CEO Vince Roig in presenting the twin \$5 million gifts to Mark B. Rosenberg, chancellor of the State University System of Florida, and to David Armstrong, chancellor of the Division of Community Colleges and Workforce Education.

“The Foundation for Florida’s Community Colleges is thrilled by the Helios donation,” said Armstrong, “and we’re also deeply appreciative of the work of the Florida Legislature, which acted with characteristic good foresight in creating a matching fund to stimulate such private contributions.”

Rosenberg agreed. “The source of funding created through the Helios endowment will continue to grow each year and will provide monetary support for first-generation students now and in the future,” the university system chancellor said.

“The Helios gift will help provide untold numbers of students with the means to achieve their educational goals,” he added. “And the income from these endowments will continue year after year to provide scholarships for generations of first-generation students.”

Research shows that seeking a higher education is strongly influenced by whether or not a student’s parents attended college. First-generation students entering college face unique challenges including less academic preparation, limited access to information about the college experience and lack of support. In addition, many first-generation students juggle a job with schoolwork or delay entering college after completing high school due to financial problems.

“To be the first in a generation to attain a higher education is a great feat and Helios is proud to be a part of making these dreams come true,” said Helios CEO Vince Roig. “Our hope is that these first-generation students will inspire their siblings and other family members to further their education, benefiting generations to come.”

Helios Education Foundation currently has an office in Arizona and will open a Tampa office in early 2007. Helios oversees an endowment fund in excess of \$600 million and is an outgrowth of the February 2004 conversion and reorganization of Southwest Student Services Corporation and its not-for-profit affiliates, Arizona Educational Loan Marketing Corporation and Florida Educational Loan Marketing Corporation.

Additional information may be found at www.helios.org

Note to statewide media, especially higher education writers and television reporters:

A media telephone conference call-in interview opportunity will follow the news conference at 11:30 a.m. To participate, call 1-866-200-9760 and enter the PIN number 2221996#.

We can also help you locate first-generation students to interview in your regions.

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