



**SOUTH FLORIDA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

February 22, 2006

Chancellor J. David Armstrong, Jr.
Division of Community Colleges & Workforce Education
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Dear Chancellor Armstrong:

Under the provisions of Section 1013.40, F.S. and State Board of Education Administrative Rule 6A-14.0061, South Florida Community College requests approval of the designation of a "Special Purpose Center" in southern Highlands County in Lake Placid, Florida.

The College established an instructional site in Lake Placid in 1990 as the result of a generous transfer of educational facilities from the Highlands County School Board to the South Florida Community College Foundation, Inc. The College has maintained an annual rental arrangement with the SFCC Foundation, Inc. through the years. However, it has been challenging financially to provide the resources required to meet the needs for continued growth without specific state funding for operating costs or building maintenance and renovation expenses.

We are not seeking funds to acquire this property. The SFCC Foundation, Inc. supports the transfer of the land and facilities to the College at no cost. Our District Board of Trustees has taken action to support our request to seek designation of this thriving instructional site as a special purpose center (the South Florida Community College Lake Placid Special Purpose Center).

Currently, residents of southern Highlands County must travel a minimum of 30 minutes to attend classes at our Highlands Campus or our DeSoto County Special Purpose Center in Arcadia, Florida (travel time for many exceeds one hour). South Florida Community College is the designated public provider of workforce education programs (adult education and occupational/technical education) for Highlands County and the only post-secondary institution located within our district. The time and expense associated with traveling to our other locations impacts the ability of many to attend classes and training programs. Minorities, single working parents, and those who are economically disadvantaged make up a significant portion of our student population attending classes at this site. The entire college district (DeSoto, Hardee,

and Highlands counties) occupy a large geographic portion of a region designated by Governor Bush as a "Rural Area of Critical Economic Concern" in January, 2001, emphasizing the need for economic stimulation and increased opportunities for residents.

The population of Highlands County is projected to double within the next decade, making travel even more challenging for area residents. Population growth will also create the need for a more highly skilled workforce and post-secondary education offerings, and we anticipate significant growth at this site as a result. The 2004-05 FTE attributed to the Lake Placid instructional site totaled 289, and 2005-06 year-to-date FTE is projected to exceed 300. With funding to assist with operating costs, maintenance, and renovation activities, the potential to meet the demands of southern Highlands County will be greatly enhanced in this 64,155 gsf site located within southern Highlands County just off U.S. Highway 27 (highly accessible location near downtown Lake Placid). As growth continues, the need for construction of a larger center or campus will likely present itself, but at this time, we feel that this is the most prudent and cost-effective means for meeting projected needs for many years and a solid investment by the State.

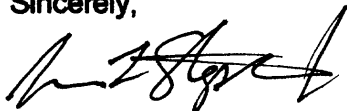
Approval of this request will allow for the expansion of program offerings and extended use of these facilities. They are in good condition and meet Florida Building Code/SREF requirements for occupancy. Each building has been inspected each year to ensure compliance. We have received requests for expanded and new programs and have adequate space available, but lack the resources needed to renovate /remodel areas to meet specific training needs, particularly for workforce training programs.

The need for additional classroom and laboratory facilities is clearly demonstrated within the Educational Plant Survey Campus Master Plans, and the multi-year Capital Improvement Program. Meeting the needs of all residents, including the economically disadvantaged, is an integral part of our mission.

The educational services currently provided at our Lake Placid instructional site has enhanced education within a significant portion of SFCC's District while providing vital community services. We have closely partnered with the Town of Lake Placid and the Highlands County Board of Commissioners to make improvements at this site through the years. Expansion of current programs and delivery of new offerings will undoubtedly improve lives and communities in rural southern Highlands County. Designation of this existing physical plant as a Special Purpose Center will provide South Florida Community College the opportunity to meet the challenges of an expanding population and economic base.

Your support of this recommendation would be greatly appreciated. If additional information is needed, please don't hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,



Norman L. Stephens, Jr., Ed.D.
President