

## **Devolution, University Governance, and Faculty Union Representation**

### Brief History

Up to June 2001, all state universities in Florida were governed by a statewide Board of Regents. The Board of Regents was abolished in 2001 by an act of the state legislature, and was replaced by individual Boards of Trustees at each institution.

In November of 2002, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment creating a statewide Board of Governors to oversee the State University System.

In January of 2003, the Board of Governors met and immediately delegated virtually all of its authority to the individual Boards of Trustees.

At present: A lawsuit has been filed which contends that the abdication of authority by the Board of Governors constitutes a violation of the intent of the voters who approved the constitutional amendment reinstating a statewide Board to oversee the State University System.

### Does UFF have a Position on the Structure of University Governance?

The statewide UFF supported the 2002 Constitutional Amendment, hoping it would bring rationality and insulation from politics to the statewide university system. Our UFF-FSU Chapter has no official position on the legal questions involved in the present court case.

### What are Some of the Practical Implications of University Governance Structures?

One important function of the state Board of Regents was to review proposed new programs in order to insure their academic integrity and to see that there was no unnecessary duplication of programs throughout the state. The present confusion about the review process for the proposed Chiropractic School at FSU indicates that the lines of authority on academic issues are far less clear than they were in the past. Curricular issues fall within the purview of the Faculty Senate, and UFF-FSU supports the position of the Faculty Senate Graduate Policy Committee that the proposal for a Chiropractic School at FSU should be reviewed by the GPC before any further action is taken.

The new devolved system of university governance has a significant effect on the process of negotiating a union contract for faculty. UFF was reinstated by an overwhelming vote (736 Yes—33 No) in October of 2003 as the bargaining agent for FSU faculty. Before devolution, the state UFF negotiated a single contract with the State Board of Regents for all faculty in the State University System. At present, separate contracts are negotiated at each campus. The bargaining team of UFF-FSU is currently negotiating the faculty contract for 2004 and beyond with FSU administrators representing the FSU Board of Trustees.

Since devolution means that virtually all important university matters, ranging from the academic to the financial, are decided at individual campuses, faculty membership and participation in local union chapters are more important than ever in insuring that faculty interests are protected.