Near the end of the year, I was honored to receive the H. Clifford Lee Award for Professional Advancement. The award was presented on National Philanthropy Day. It was a humbling experience to be included among those who have been recognized with an award named for the individual often referred to as Florida’s “dean of philanthropy.”

It was also unexpected because when I consider my role at the university I love and serve, I do not think in terms of raising funds but rather raising friends and building relationships that benefit the university and community. When I joined the university not long after Dr. Hitt’s arrival, one of the five goals he established was to be the leading partnership university. Most of what Community Relations does on a daily basis involves partnerships throughout the community, across the region and even around the world.

We cultivate partnerships because, working together, we know that UCF can accomplish more for our university and our region. Partnerships are mutually beneficial. We rely on partners to help accomplish university goals, such as advocating for and supporting a new medical school. That, in turn, benefits our community as it becomes the hub of a medical city and catalyst for economic growth.

The extraordinary effort that went into planning and producing the event celebrating the opening of UCF’s College of Medicine is being recognized at the upcoming District III Awards Program along with the College of Medicine worked on the project. Individuals named included Vice President and UCF College of Medicine Dean Deborah German, Community Relations Vice President Helen Donegan, Development Director Charles Roberts, Assistant Vice President Office of Constituent Relations Glenna Oro, Constituent Relations Director Ana Petkov, Assistant Development Director Lorraine Scholler, Events Coordinator Shannon O’Donoghue and Dr. Mary Jo Ross.
Metro Center Emphasizes Economic Development

It’s no secret that the University of Central Florida is both engine and fuel source for the central Florida economy. While industries that have traditionally provided a base for economic reliability, such as tourism and construction, have been hard hit during the recession, sectors associated with research and technology have fared better. Indeed, companies in the Central Florida Research Park and high tech firms that partner with the university in technologies associated with the innovation economy have remained stable and even added jobs.

Frank Brogan, chancellor of Florida’s state university system, cites a study showing that biotech jobs, the kinds of jobs being created in connection with UCF’s College of Medicine, grew 2.1 percent in Florida in the first year of the recession, while private sector jobs as a whole dropped 4.1 percent during the same period. Brogan uses that example and others like it to make the case for investment in state universities, a campaign titled New Florida.

Recognizing the important economic development role a metropolitan research university plays in the community, the Metropolitan Center for Regional Studies under its director, Associate Vice President for Community Relations, Diane Trees, EdD, focuses programmatic efforts on issues and topics of economic relevance across Central Florida. The region itself has expanded from seven counties in central and east Florida to 13 counties that stretch from Daytona and the Space Coast to the Central Gulf Coast.

Programs that illustrate the focus include one that addressed the space shuttle retirement, its implications for Central Florida and new applications for space-related technologies and another that looked at SunRail and high-speed rail and dealt with connectivity, funding and station issues.

For more information or an invitation to future Metro Center programs, call 407-823-0108 or e-mail metro@mail.ucf.edu.

“The offices of Constituent and Community Relations along with the College of Medicine collaborated on the celebration that raised more than $300,000 for the college.”

Florida Lieutenant Governor Jennifer Carroll and UCF Vice President of Community Relations at a community luncheon.

Dr. Diane Trees speaks to group at forum.
Focus Breakfast Showcases UCF and the Arts

As guests arrived for the Focus Breakfast, they passed well-known UCF jazz professor Jeff Rupert and some of his students performing outside the ballroom.

As exciting as it is to see new additions to UCF’s east campus firsthand, it can be a bit of a drive to get there from downtown. The President’s Focus on Excellence breakfasts produced by the Office of Community Relations bring the campus to the community.

In December, Assistant Vice President of Community Relations Maritza Martinez coordinated the latest in a series of breakfasts, this one focusing on the UCF Performing Arts Center. The first phase, which includes classroom and rehearsal space, opened in time for the fall semester. The new facility has teaching studios and voice rooms, an electroacoustic music lab, percussion ensemble rooms and a recording studio.

The second phase will be funded by private donations and include a 600-seat concert hall and two theaters with 520 and 225 seats along with costume, scene and prop shops.

UCF is one of only a few universities in the country to have a theatre lighting lab where students can learn the skills necessary to light a wide range of productions — theatrical and musical. The new space will help with recruiting future artists and contribute to Central Florida’s economy as well. Recent estimates report that Florida’s non-profit arts and cultural organizations generated about $2.8 billion in direct spending in 2007 and another $3.4 billion from indirect spending, which translated into about 73,000 jobs statewide. A copy of the video that was shown at the breakfast is available on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/ucf#p/u/7/ddKJH1Qcx3Y.

Above, guests converse as they wait for the program to begin.

Right, UCF Vice President Helen Donegan and President John C. Hitt.
We work closely with chambers of commerce understanding that a strong business environment is a win-win for the university and the community.

And, we believe we have a responsibility to give back to the community as we can. Often that involves rolling up our sleeves and working alongside leaders and volunteers in organizations such as the American Heart Association and Heart of Florida United Way as they look to the community for support, especially in difficult economic times.

As we reflect on the past year and consider what lies ahead, one thing we can be certain of is that fostering community partnerships will continue to be integral to our mission as a division and as a university.

Regards,

Helen

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UCF Takes Heart Walk to Heart

When people from across Central Florida gathered in Orlando’s Loch Haven Park on the first Saturday in October for The Start! Heart Walk, almost 400 of the 11,000 walkers were wearing buttercup yellow UCF team t-shirts.

Students, faculty and staff have taken part in the American Heart Association’s annual fundraiser for some time, but UCF participation has reached new levels the past few years.

In addition to the growing incidence of heart disease in the US, the importance of helping fight the disease struck home five years ago when university president Dr. John Hitt experienced a cardiac incident. Since then a new College of Medicine at UCF has contributed to increased awareness of the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Add to that the enthusiastic leadership of UCF walk coordinator Maritza Martinez, assistant vice president of community relations, and company leader, Deborah German, MD, vice president and dean of the College of Medicine, and you have the ingredients for success.

The amount raised — $1 million — broke the record for a single-day fundraising effort for a local non-profit. UCF’s 30 teams and more than $25,000 were important factors in that accomplishment. The Heart Walk is the American Heart Association’s largest Orlando fundraiser each year.