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Subject: FW: 12/9/11 Education Round-Up

FYI – have a great weekend!

P.S. I will be out of the office and unable to check email until next Wednesday. I will send the rest of the clips then.

Sincerely,

Kevin Smith,
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From: Higgins, Deborah
Sent: Friday, December 09, 2011 11:23 AM
Subject: 12/9/11 Education Round-Up

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



[The Teaching Evaluation Gap](#) (Education Week © 12/09/2011)

Why students' cultural identities hold the key By Willis D. Hawley & Jacqueline Jordan Irvine Teacher evaluation has, until recently, been a symbolic act largely without meaning or consequence. No longer. Race to the Top requirements call for performance-based pay. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's multi-million-dollar investment to define effective teaching will produce highly spe...

[NEA Stakes a Claim in Teacher Effectiveness Debate](#) (Education Week/Teaching Now Blog © 12/09/2011)

By Liana Heitin on December 8, 2011 10:00 AM A National Education Association commission issued a report today with specific recommendations for upping pre-service requirements, establishing career paths for teachers, and developing new evaluation systems. The commission, assembled last summer by NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, was charged with examining options and making recommendations abo...

[FAMU should become anti-hazing model](#)

(FL Times-Union © 12/09/2011)

Aggressive steps are being taken in the wake of the death of a drum major of the famed Marching 100 Band at Florida A&M University. Hazing is being investigated by law enforcement agencies. The governor has asked all 11 state universities to take action against hazing. The band has been shut down. The FAMU board of trustees has reprimanded President James Ammons. This is all appropri...

[FAMU board reprimands president over hazing issue](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 12/09/2011)

ORLANDO — Florida A&M University's board of trustees voted Thursday to publicly reprimand the school's president rather than place him on leave following the death of a band member in what detectives say was an incident related to hazing. The 8-4 reprimand vote at a meeting in Orlando came in place of a motion to put FAMU President James Ammons on administrative leave until th...

[Joe Biden visits Fletcher, touts steps taken to reduce college costs](#)

(Florida Times-Union © 12/09/2011)

NEPTUNE BEACH - Vice President Joe Biden struck a responsive chord among many Fletcher High School students, their parents, teachers and Duval County school system leaders Thursday morning as he emphasized that a college degree is priceless and shouldn't be a luxury only a few can afford. Biden and Education Secretary Arne Duncan discussed college affordability during a standing-room-only ass...

[Four left to prove they're best for BCC](#)

(Florida Today © 12/09/2011)

A search committee tasked with sifting through 31 applicants seeking to become Brevard Community College's next president have named four finalists. They are: Carl Heilman, the president of Barton Community College in Great Bend, Kansas; William Pelham, the college director at Higher Colleges of Technology in the United Arab Emirates; Jim Richey, the interim president of Brevard Community College...

[Edison State faculty, trustees remain at impasse](#)

(Ft. Myers News Press © 12/09/2011)

A new board of trustees couldn't fix an old problem at Edison State College, and salary negotiations with faculty continue to be at a standstill. Although the faculty union declared impasse in October, administration and professors met for one hour Thursday to see if positions had changed. Four new trustees have been seated since the last bargaining session. Revised proposals closed the gap, b...

[Take a close look at Scott state budget](#)

(Ft. Myers News Press © 12/09/2011)

Gov. Rick Scott is taking a kinder, gentler view of education and the environment in his new proposed budget. It's a dramatic turnaround for Scott, and we like it. The governor's proposed increase of \$1 billion in K-12 school spending is a move in the right direction, though Florida is still near the bottom nationally in per-student spending. Scott says that investment in education is crucial...

[State weighs raising bar for FCAT](#)

(Ft. Myers News-Press © 12/09/2011)

Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson is recommending the state raise the score needed to pass the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, a move that is expected to result in fewer local students performing at grade level in math and reading next year. Robinson said Thursday the higher scores will ensure students leave high school college- and career-ready. Under the proposal, students would sti...

[Taking Rick Scott at his word](#)

(Miami Herald © 12/09/2011)

As Gov. Rick Scott gets around the state, one message from Floridians comes through loud and clear. "They care about education," Scott says. This governor, who sought a 10-percent cut in school spending a year ago, appears to have learned an important lesson: No matter how bad the economy gets, cutting money for schools never seems popular. Scott ran for governor on a promise of property...

[Editorial: Early budget signs show promise](#)

(Naples Daily News © 12/09/2011)

It is early in the Florida state government budget process. Anything can happen after the Legislature gets its hands on Gov. Rick Scott's spending blueprint. Still, at least the budget is off on the right foot in regard to public education and Everglades restoration. Instead of proposing cuts as he did last year as a freshman, Scott wants to increase funding for both. That is the fir...

[Supreme Court rejects worship at public school appeal](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 12/09/2011)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Supreme Court let stand on Monday a ruling that religious groups cannot use public schools facilities for worship services outside of normal school hours in a case about church-state separation. The justices refused to review the ruling by a U.S. appeals court that upheld a New York City Board of Education policy against religious worship at its schoo...

[Seminole school closing delayed](#)

(Orlando Sentinel © 12/09/2011)

SANFORD – A decision on whether to close Seminole County's Hopper Center for emotionally disabled students has been delayed until next month, Superintendent Bill Vogel said Thursday. Parents and teachers have objected, and Vogel is gathering more information to convince the School Board, which was to have voted Dec. 13. Vogel says closing the school will save about \$600,000 a year. ...

[Advocates: Enhanced sex ed may cut teen pregnancy](#)

(Orlando-WFTV (ABC) © 12/09/2011)

JACKSON, Miss. — Health advocates are urging Mississippi school districts to adopt enhanced sex education classes, saying they would cut teen pregnancy rates and the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. In a conference Thursday, they said a new state law allowing "abstinence-plus" education gives schools a chance to present more information and use programs that have been proven to wo...

[No 'need' yet: Parents want charter schools, but taxpayers and voters wanted ag land preserved](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 12/09/2011)

Parents trying to establish charter schools near the Canyon developments west of Boynton Beach insist that they "need" a new middle school and high school. In fact, theirs is not a case of "need"; it's a case of "want." Given Tallahassee's preferred treatment of charter schools, "want" is sufficient reason for the Palm Beach County School District to approve the ch...

[Dwyer High students get head start in new International Baccalaureate program](#)

(Palm Beach Post © 12/09/2011)

William T. Dwyer High School will graduate its first class of International Baccalaureate students in 2013, culminating a years-long effort by Principal Joseph Lee to bring the highly regarded program to the school. Lee, who founded Duncan Middle School's Finance Academy when he was its principal, crossed several hurdles to bring the program to Dwyer, then have the International Baccalaureate Org...

[Editorial: 1.3 steps back, 1 step forward](#)

(Pensacola News Journal © 12/09/2011)

It's difficult to say now whether Gov. Rick Scott is learning to be a governor — or learning to be a politician. Scott's sudden policy reversal on education spending — after chopping \$1.3 billion last year he wants to add \$1 billion this year — could stem from the fact he finally gets the importance of education and understands he and the Legislature went too far in cutting it last year. Yet...

[Don't gamble away Florida's future](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/09/2011)

Too often the Florida Legislature advances a bad idea and keeps adjusting it until enough lawmakers hold their noses and vote for it. But sometimes bad policy is just bad policy that cannot be fixed. That is the case with a bid to allow destination casinos, which would be a bad bet for this state. The Senate Regulated Industries Committee made it clear Wednesday that it wants changes in the leg...

[Earliest years critical for good educational results](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/09/2011)

By David Lawrence Jr In Print: Tuesday, December 6, 2011 ----- xPrintEmailPostRepublishStory Tools Comments (5)
Contact the editor Email Newsletters Social Bookmarking ShareThis ADVERTISEMENT ADVERTISEMENT News New Treaty to Save Euro but Move Causes EU Split
ShowBiz Minute: Foster, Jay...

[Despite objections, passing the FCAT likely to get tougher](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/09/2011)

Passing the FCAT is about to get harder. The Florida Board of Education is poised to adopt higher scores on the annual high-stakes test for third- through 10th-graders, marking the first time in a decade new benchmarks have been set. If the new standards are approved, many more third-graders likely would face retention, while many more high school students are projected to fail to meet the s...

[School self esteem program takes center stage](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/09/2011)

TAMPA — She spoke about incest and promiscuity, about teens raising themselves for lack of a suitable parent. She spoke of a cousin who lived down to the T-shirt slogan, "I know what boys like." One thing Talitha Anyabwele did not speak about during a high school appearance Wednesday was controversy about her contracts with the Hillsborough County School District. An investigation, reque...

[Hernando teacher charged with DUI manslaughter](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/09/2011)

SPRING HILL — A Spring Hill Elementary School teacher who was once taken for evaluation under the Baker Act was arrested last week and charged with DUI manslaughter in connection with a fatal January crash. Oxycodone was coursing through Robert M. McCraw's system when, authorities say, his 1992 Cadillac ran a red light and smashed into a Spring Hill couple's Toyota on the afternoon of Jan. ...

[Pinellas teacher sanctioned for hosing down student with dirty diaper](#)

(St. Petersburg Times © 12/09/2011)

DUNEDIN — The Pinellas County School Board punished a teacher this week who reportedly used a water hose to clean a prekindergarten student who soiled himself at school. Stephanie Wilson, 52, a 30-year veteran and a teacher at Dunedin Elementary, was suspended for 10 days without pay. According to district records, Wilson asked a plant operator for a pair of gloves and use of a hose after ...

[Rebellious teacher says he will challenge Hillsborough schools union chief](#)

(St. Petersburg Times/The Grade Book Blog © 12/09/2011)

TAMPA — Longtime teachers union president Jean Clements could have competition. Joseph Thomas, a high school teacher who clashed with the Hillsborough County school district last month over his evaluation, said Thursday he will challenge Clements in the February election. Thomas requested, but has not yet completed, the qualifying forms, said Stephanie Baxter-Jenkins, executive director of t...

[Many flunking the FCAT, but Education Commissioner Gerard Robinson proposes harder test](#)

(St. Petersburg: WTSP (Ch. 10) © 12/09/2011)

(First Coast News) - The FCAT is getting national attention after a school board member in Orange County failed the standardized test. "That should tell you a lot. Something's wrong with the test, or something's wrong with him. Which one is it?" asked Raines PTA President Vivian Jenkins. The school board member in Orange County failing the test only validated how Jenkins said she's long felt about...

[Florida senator wants school holiday renamed 'Christmas Break'](#)

(Sun-Sentinel © 12/09/2011)

10:48 AM EST, December 8, 2011 Advertisement WPLG-Ch. 10 is reporting that a state senator wants the winter school break renamed to "Christmas break," even though some oppose the idea. Sen. Stephen Wise, R-Jacksonville, part of the K-12 Committee in the Florida Senate, this week said that the term "winter break," often used by teachers to describe the school vacation period, bothers him...

[New Charter School Applications Soar](#)

(West Orlando News © 12/09/2011)

Florida school districts are flooded with applications for new charter schools, motivated by several new laws that make it easier to start traditional and virtual charters. Nearly 100 more new charter school applications have been filed for the 2012-13 school year than were filed at the same time last year, a 38 percent increase, according to statistics from the Department of Educatio...

[5 things you need to know happening in Florida on Friday, December 9](#)

(WFTS ABC Channel 28 Tampa © 12/09/2011)

TAMPA BAY, Fla. - Here are five things you need to know happening in Florida on Friday, December 9. (1) USF Tampa graduation The University of South Florida will hold commencement ceremonies at the St. Pete Times Forum on Friday. More than 2,400 graduates from USF's Tampa campus will gather for three ceremonies. At 9:00 a.m. undergraduates of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Colle...

[District wants to crack down on cell phones at school](#)

(WTVT Fox Tampa © 12/09/2011)

NEW PORT RICHEY - It's early afternoon, and the final bell has sounded at Gulf High School. Students leave campus, many of them on their phones. The cell phone has become as standard as the book bag on most campuses. It's what students do with those cell phones that have some Pasco County School Board members considering tough policies on their use. Gulf High School student Emily Rude said she...

Tallahassee Democrat

Extension of special retirement benefits costing states millions

By Thomas Frank USA TODAY

December 9, 2011

Special retirement benefits once reserved for police, firefighters and others with dangerous jobs are now being given to tens of thousands of state workers employed as park rangers, foresters, dispatchers, coroners, even highway laborers, museum guards and lifeguards.

It's happening around the country, but the cost of expanding eligible jobs is stark in Florida.

Florida exemplifies the cost. Elected officials have expanded the state retirement system's "special risk class" five times since the 1990s, adding prison medical workers, paramedics and forensic specialists. "Special risk" workers retire five to seven years earlier than regular workers and get a lifetime pension after 20 years on the job equal to 60 percent of their salary. A regular worker retiring after 20 years gets a pension equal to 32 percent of his or her salary.

The additions helped boost the special-risk class to 75,135 workers from 48,188 in 1993, and spike taxpayers' bill for special-risk pensions to \$903 million this year, state records show. That's more than double the \$383 million cost in 1993. Meanwhile, the number of workers in the "regular" retirement plan has increased only slightly and the cost to taxpayers rose to \$2.4 billion from \$2.1 billion in 1993.

"Our workforce is shifting into special risk. That's a ticking time bomb," said former Florida state Rep. Juan Zapata, a Republican who sought to restrict entry into the special-risk class. "It has been morphed into something that was not its original intention — into this system that everybody tries to justify being in."

Florida state Sen. Mike Fasano co-sponsored a measure in 2005 that shifted 386 forensic specialists into the special-risk class after the specialists asked for his help. Their jobs seemed worthy of enhanced early retirement because the workers "show up to very horrific crime scenes at times" and must prepare evidence to help prosecutions, said Fasano, a Republican.

A 2005 legislative report on Fasano's bill reached a different conclusion, saying that unlike other specialrisk workers whose physical skills deteriorate with age, forensic specialists "have their skills increase over time since forensic science is an academic discipline."

Florida addressed its pension shortfall with a law this year requiring all employees in the state pension system to pay 3 percent of their salary toward their retirement, the first time the workers have had to contribute.

Zapata sought in 2010 to shift thousands of workers from the special-risk class to the regular class, but quickly withdrew his bill after getting threatening phone calls. "You try to explain, look, what's happening here is unsustainable," said Zapata, who retired last year due to term limits. "Unfortunately, the conversation didn't go too far because the (state-worker) unions did a great job of shutting everything down." In 10 other states, the number of workers eligible for early retirement has increased at more than double the rate of workers eligible for regular retirement after lawmakers expanded eligibility. The states are Arizona, California, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico,

South Carolina, Vermont and West Virginia.

In California, the number of workers eligible for enhanced early retirement jumped to 77,394 from 59,685 in 2000, while the number of workers in regular retirement plans fell to 170,942 from 175,495. The cost of enhanced early retirement to taxpayers soared to \$1.5 billion this year from \$385 million in 2000, state records show.

The trend will add heavily to the \$70 billion that state taxpayers owe state retirement funds each year and is costing states such as Florida \$15 million to \$30 million annually, a USA TODAY analysis shows.

"There's been a massive increase in the scope of who qualifies for (early) retirement benefits," said William Eggers, public-sector research director at Deloitte consultants. "They're supposed to be for people who are getting shot at and running into buildings that are on fire."

A 25-year Florida crime lab analyst can get a \$60,000 pension at age 50 and collect \$1.8 million by age 80, compared with \$575,000 if the person was not in the state's "special-risk class."

People in dangerous public safety jobs have long had enhanced early retirement to encourage them to make way for younger workers as their physical abilities decline, and to compensate them for lasting physical and mental damage.

"You could easily end up spending more on public safety workers while they're retired than when they're working," said North Carolina State University retirement expert Robert Clark, author of "A History of Public Sector Pensions in the United States." "If these folks are starting work in their 20s, they are eligible to retire in their late 40s, early 50s and get a pension and health insurance for the rest of their life."

Tallahassee Democrat

Editorial

A show of weakness

FAMU trustees fall short in reprimanding Ammons

December 9, 2011

By clumsily voting 8-5 to publicly reprimand Florida A&M University President Dr. James H.

Ammons for his lack of leadership following the death of band member Robert Champion, the university's board of trustees in effect deflected unwanted scrutiny but put the university's status in limbo.

Thursday's vote fell short of an effort by some trustees to place Dr. Ammons on administrative leave pending the outcome of a criminal investigation into the death of Mr. Champion, a drum major for the Marching 100, and a separate but equally weighty probe by the Board of Governors into what Dr. Ammons and his key administrators have done to eradicate FAMU's well-documented history of hazing.

At issue was Dr. Ammons' failure to communicate to trustees his response and plan of action to preserve the integrity of FAMU in light of Champion's death, which involved hazing and turned an unwelcome national focus on the university's trademark marching band.

By essentially expressing little faith in Dr. Ammons's skills in running the university or in his ability to work in concert with his bosses, the trustees' action further harmed the university without fixing anything. For instance:

It diminishes the leadership of Dr. Ammons, a man credited with reversing the university's downward spiral since being named president in July 2007. It also cripples Dr. Ammons' ability to defend the university and its handling of this crisis in a Board of Governor's investigation.

It weakens any defense of Dr. Ammons' controversial decision to fire Julian White, the long-standing band director and chairman of the university's department of music, following Mr. Champion's death.

It damages the credibility of the university by exposing the lack of leadership and understanding of responsibilities among trustees.

It forces Dr. Ammons to examine his own future at FAMU before the board's next scheduled meeting in February, when his performance once again will be reviewed.

Unfortunately, trustees were so caught up in repairing their own image that they failed to address the fact that Chairman Solomon Badger failed miserably in his handling of events. He let Dr. Ammons take the lead rather than calling for an emergency meeting of the board and directing Dr. Ammons in presenting a united, proactive image.

Thursday's vote to reprimand Dr. Ammons should have immediately been followed by a vote to remove Mr. Badger of his responsibilities as chair.

It's clear that Mr. Champion's death created an uncomfortable set of circumstances that the trustees — the overseers of FAMU's operations — were not prepared to deal with.

The two-day meeting in Orlando that ended Thursday showed a real disconnect between the trustees and Dr. Ammons, as well as a between trustees and Mr. Badger, in the biggest crisis any of them are likely to face.

If anything, the meetings showed how unprepared the university's administration, including the trustees, is to handle an event that reaches beyond the university's layers of protection.

Being investigated by the state's top law enforcement agency as well as the Board of Governors and the Governor's Office is a position in which no university in the state wants to find itself.

It was startling to hear trustees vent frustration, anger and bewilderment at the fact that this was the first time that they've been able to get more facts on the case and address the issue.

"We must still acknowledge we failed as a board to act and others are acting for us," trustee Rufus Montgomery said. "The Board of Governors had to act because we failed to. We're the governing body of the university, and we didn't do our job."

Through its actions — largely driven by Dr. Ammons' own inability to effectively communicate and seek assistance during this period — trustees didn't settle any uncertainty for Mr.

Champion's parents, alumni or the university.

Tallahassee Democrat

Leaders failed FAMU

My View Dale R. Landry

December 9, 2011

Where were the trustees when they were needed?

As the dark clouds of indifference, incompetence and unknowing gather over our beloved Florida A&M University, I call on my fellow Rattlers to take notice and lend their ears to the cries from our alma mater to help prevent her demise.

As a 2005 graduate of FAMU and one of 14 family members who have attended and graduated from FAMU, I am compelled to call attention to events that may jeopardize its continued existence.

Two events in November have exposed a malignancy that, if left uncorrected, could be fatal to FAMU.

This malignancy, lack of leadership, seemingly pervades FAMU. I am not referring to leadership displayed by President James Ammons on a national stage but to failures in the FAMU Board of Trustees regarding an investigation of the university's Division of Audit and Compliance and, more importantly, its failure to respond to theatrics in the wake of the death of drum major Robert Champion. In both cases, the state Board of Governors had to intervene and provide guidance in the absence of leadership from the trustees.

The FAMU BOT operating procedures state: "Board of Trustees is vested with all powers and the authority to govern and set policy for Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University" and "The Board shall serve as the governing body of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University. It shall select the President of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University to serve at the pleasure of the Board and shall hold the President responsible for the university's operation and management, performance, its fiscal accountability, and its compliance with federal and state laws and rules of the Board of Governors."

With these responsibilities outlined, we need to revisit the findings involving the Division of Audit and Compliance. A report in the Tallahassee Democrat indicated that in April, June and August, executive summaries of audits were submitted through the FAMU trustees to the Board of Governors that did not include the full audits. In June, BOG staff rejected an executive summary and requested the actual audits. In July, the inspector general for the State University System also rejected the executive summaries as actual reports or audits. Finally, in total indifference to the BOG and ultimately the trustees, another false executive summary was submitted in August to the BOG.

I remind you of the provisions in the trustees' operating procedures, that the president is responsible for the university's "fiscal accountability." However, the trustees have their own Audit and Compliance Committee that likewise failed to monitor the noncompliance. Collectively, this evidences the incompetence, indifference and unknowing that has become a part of the leadership culture at the university.

The events following the death Robert Champion have placed the flaws of FAMU leadership onto the national stage. Through the initial notification of the death of Mr. Champion, hazing being named as a factor in his death, the firing of Julian White by Dr. Ammons, and then the revelations that Dr. Ammons may be implicit because of his inaction, many asked: Where was the FAMU Board of Trustees?

Within 48 hours of the release of information by attorney Chuck Hobbs calling for the reinstatement of Dr. White and the implications of Dr. Ammons' knowledge of hazing and lack of leadership in responding to White's request for assistance in addressing it, the trustees should have called an emergency meeting, or at a minimum a meeting of the executive committee. However, the only response was a statement by Chairman Solomon L. Badger, explaining his support of the actions taken by Dr.

Ammons.

Dr. Ammons then created a task force to look into hazing. Where is the Board of Trustees? How can someone implicated in a lack of leadership regarding hazing on campus convene a task force to look into the issue?

The potential injustice that could result from the Ammons task force, coupled with the failure of the trustees to respond, prompted me to reach out to Adora Obi Nweze, president of the Florida State Conference of the NAACP, and ask her to request that Chancellor Frank Brogan and the Board of Governors intercede and conduct an independent investigation of the allegations by Dr. White. I want to thank President Nweze for her efforts, and Chancellor Brogan and Chairwoman Ava Parker of the Board of Governors for interceding and bringing objectivity in discerning the allegations by Dr. White. But Chairwoman Parker should not have been the one to write the letter requesting intervention by the inspector general; that should have come from Chairman Badger.

It does not end there.

When the trustees called for Dr.

Ammons to speak at a called meeting about what was going on regarding the events around the hazing, he refused, leaving the trustees to obtain information from the media. It was reported that Dr. Ammons didn't want to discuss anything with the trustees because of the ongoing investigations and, one would believe, potential litigation. However, again, provisions are made for this type of discussion in the trustees' operating procedures.

Clearly, Dr. Ammons could and should appear before the trustees to explain, at a minimum, his authority to dismiss Dr. White. He should provide some idea of the costs to be incurred by the university should Dr. White be able to prove that the actions taken against him were wrongful.

FAMU alumni, it is time to rise again. We must gather back on the Hill and call for the trustees to do their duty.

They should call a special meeting in Tallahassee before the students leave for Christmas. They should acknowledge their failure and accept responsibility for the lack of leadership at FAMU in Tallahassee, not in Orlando.

They need to place Dr. Ammons on administrative leave pending the outcome of investigations.

A committee should ascertain the fiscal impact on the university, including potential awards to Mr. Champion's family, to Dr. White and his attorneys, and the costs to the university if the Marching 100 is suspended from playing for a year or more.

I am reminded of a quote from Dr.

Martin Luther King Jr.: "The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand at times of challenge and controversy."

Alumni of FAMU, during this time of challenge and controversy, as dark clouds gather on the Hill, it is time to come home as FAMU the institution calls out to us for help. We must prepare to strike out the indifference,

strike out the incompetence and strike

out the unknowingness that pervade the leadership at our alma mater and be prepared to return the glory of the Marching 100 and our university as a whole .

Dale R. Landry My View