September 6, 2012

Dear College Freshman:

Congratulations on your decision to further your education. Over the next ten years, the world will face many challenges and opportunities. Innovation is moving at an ever-quickening pace: Facebook is just eight years old and the iPhone is only five years old. Just in the past two years, governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya have fallen, dramatically changing the lives of their citizens. Europe now faces a major financial crisis with countries such as Greece, Spain, Italy, and Portugal struggling to pay their national debts.

You will be a participant in these significant global challenges. Employers are hiring individuals around the world based on talent – you will be competing with highly qualified global applicants, including many from developing economies such as China, India, Brazil, and Vietnam. Being proficient in foreign languages is becoming more and more important.

Success is not dependent upon where you start; success is dependent upon your willingness to focus on obtaining the skills needed to succeed, and deciding what success means to you. This comes through both formal education and experiential learning in the job market. In my case, I started community college before joining the United States Navy. After my military service, I graduated from college and law school, practiced law, bought a small business for $7,500 (a donut shop), and used the skills learned in all of these areas to build successful companies.

Throughout your journey in higher education, have a goal in mind. What do you want from your career? Starting school living in public housing and watching my parents struggle financially, I focused my education in the areas where I believed I could secure a job paying well enough for me to build a family. To reach your goals, you need an employer to recognize that you will be an asset to their business (unless you plan to work for yourself). Be cautious about taking on debt. Demand a return on your investment of time and money to improve your skills and education. Use your time in college to obtain the skills and degrees employers desire – utilize your college’s
career services office; attend job fairs to talk with employers about the skills, degrees and experiences they consider important; and talk with recent graduates about their experiences in the job market. Take advantage of the career planning tools provided by the Florida Virtual Campus (www.flvc.org).

Find a job or internship while in school. The skills you learn and the individuals you meet will be valuable when applying for a permanent position. By working hard and developing skills, and setting goals, you will provide yourself with many opportunities. While life may present difficulties at times, I encourage you to persevere. Your hard work will pay off.

I wish you the best as you enter college.

Sincerely,

Rick Scott
Governor