U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION

FLORIDA HIGH TECH CORRIDOR COUNCIL – RANDY BERRIDGE

JUNE 23, 2008 – WRITTEN TESTIMONY

On behalf of UCF President John Hitt, USF President Judy Genshaft, UF President Bernie Machen, co-chairs of the Florida High Tech Corridor Council, thank you for the opportunity to present a brief summary of our 23-county Florida High Tech Corridor Council (FHTCC). Our mission is to attract, retain and grow high tech industry through our Matching Grants Research Program (MGRP) as well as through our marketing and workforce initiatives. On behalf of our three research universities, our council, our core team, our economic development, workforce, academic, corporate, governmental and community partners we hope that we can add value to the region's efforts during this time of transition.

Let me first start by providing a very brief background about the Florida High Tech Corridor Council (FHTCC). A dozen years ago, the presidents of the two major research universities on the I-4 Corridor, Dr. John Hitt at the University of Central Florida and then University of South Florida President Betty Castor, recognized the benefits of working together to provide research and other support needed by high tech, high wage industry. Through designation by the Florida Legislature the Florida High Tech Corridor Council was formed in 1996. The University of Florida joined the Corridor Council in 2005.

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Our Council recently commissioned a study to analyze the impact of our unique public-private partnership that engages university researchers with corporate entities seeking technological breakthroughs.

**The results are outstanding: During the first 12 years of operation, the FHTCC, through its Matching Grants Research Program, delivered an incredible 9-fold return on investment … $450 million on an initial investment of just $50 million.**

The basics are this: From July 1996 to June 2008, FHTCC invested $50 million in 900 applied research projects with more than 250 Corridor companies … attracting $450 million in corporate and federal matching grants. Importantly, these figures DO NOT include the application of a 3-to-1 multiplier commonly used in economic development assessments.

The sheer numbers and return on investment are impressive, but the real story is what's behind them. Each applied research project involved the keen minds of professors and students at the Corridor's three renowned universities (the University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida and the University of Florida) and their corporate partners at companies large and small. Let me give you just a few highlights:

- 20 participating companies leveraged our grants to attract 60 federal SBIR/STTR grants worth $12 million.

One such company is Rini Technologies Inc. Its scientists and engineers, along with UCF professors, have conducted applied research on a new system to cool laser weapons. Let me quote Dan Rini: "Without a doubt, the FHTCC matching grants research program had a measurable impact. The structure of the program is well thought-out, and it pays dividends. Without the program, more than likely I would not be in business."

- More than 100 patents have been awarded to participating partners and more than 130 additional patents are pending.
- 8 new companies have been created.
- 7 new centers of research have evolved, thanks in part to our FHTCC support.
- 1,500 graduate students have been engaged in these applied research projects.
- More than 120 of those students have been hired by the participating companies.
- 300 faculty members from the three universities have guided the research.

These applied research projects have generated countless technological breakthroughs, ranging from improved medical therapies and treatments, to vastly more efficient lasers, satellite communications, computing ability and power generation. **Whether for military, industrial or consumer applications, there are far too many technological accomplishments to list here.**

The study clearly demonstrates that the Matching Grants Research Program (MGRP) produces vast, tangible benefits for the companies that UCF, USF, and UF partner with in Florida's High Tech Corridor and for the state's economy as a whole. Whether it's developing new intellectual property, building a highly skilled workforce, obtaining specialized equipment for our universities, creating new companies to commercialize emerging technologies … or achieving technological breakthroughs that improve the human condition … the MGRP, through the leadership of our three universities, has consistently delivered a tremendous return on investment through this unique partnership with corporations, the state and the federal government.

As we have noted earlier, with the mission to attract, retain and grow high tech industry in our 23-county Corridor, FHTCC invests the majority of its state funds in its MGRP, benefiting companies in the varied industries we are working to attract, retain and grow. FHTCC focuses matching grants on the following industries targeted for growth: Agritechnology; Aviation and Aerospace; Digital Media/Interactive Entertainment; Financial Services; Information Technology; Life Sciences & Medical Technologies; Microelectronics/Nanotechnology; Modeling, Simulation & Training; Optics & Photonics; and, Sustainable Energy.

In addition to a recognized successful research program, FHTCC also invests in marketing and other programs with more than two dozen economic development partners throughout our 23-county Corridor.

So, as you would expect, we invest in advertising, tradeshows and conferences across the state, the nation and the globe as a way of promoting our Corridor as a high tech region. We also invest with EDO partners in programs designed to help companies in our various industry clusters. A prime example is our partnership with the Lynda Weatherman, President of the Space Coast EDC, and her associates, wherein we have invested in a program which she is managing to benefit not only Brevard County, but the other 22 counties in the Corridor. This initiative is designed to help companies obtain contracts to produce components and sub-assemblies associated with the new crew vehicle as well as the manufacture of components for a variety of military equipment.

The third major area of FHTCC investment is associated with workforce programs. We have invested in the development of associate degree programs by our community college partners in the areas of: Microelectronics; Biotechnology; Modeling, Simulation & Robotics; Photonics; IT Security; Wireless Technologies; and Digital Media. FHTCC, in partnership with Brevard Community College (BCC), invested $100K in a project designed to update the components of BCC's nationally recognized aerospace technician recertification program.

In addition to research, marketing, and workforce projects and programs let me conclude by showcasing an example of how I believe we can help Brevard County and the region mitigate the impact of the surplus of employees associated with the transition from the shuttle to the new crew vehicle.

I recently attended a gathering at which Enterprise Florida and regional economic development leaders hosted a major corporate relocation prospect. At that dinner, the CEO of this prospect corporation shared with us that our state was not in the top three locations he was considering for the expansion of his company. The reason he gave was his concern over his ability to hire some 300 engineers. I asked him if he was aware of the surplus of some 6,000 highly trained engineers, technicians and other personnel associated with NASA's transition from the shuttle to . . . the CEO did not let me finish the sentence. He realized the potential solution to his problem and told us that we had just made it into the top three.

This community of state, regional, county and city governmental, academic, corporate, workforce, economic development, and community leaders have and will continue to work together with NASA to resolve issues associated with the imminent surplus of some truly outstanding employees.