

# Election 2014

## THE FATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION HANGS IN THE BALANCE

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When we vote, nothing less than the future of higher education is at stake. In terms of policy, we have radically different choices. We know that education does not exist in a vacuum. Now more than ever the fate of public education is tied to other policy decisions.

Every year in Florida higher education we face funding cuts, larger class sizes, fewer courses open, and programs threatened on every campus. Every year some legislator proposes cuts in pensions and optional retirement programs, as well as in health insurance benefits. Last spring we barely defeated several draconian proposals – sometimes with tie votes in the Senate stopping the proposed legislative action. If these bills were to pass, how would it affect the faculty brain drain we are already experiencing as a result of low salaries?

Should we protect the right to collective bargaining? Or, should we leave faculty with no contractual protections against at-will decisions by supervisors? Should we protect tenure, continuing contracts, and pay raises, or is it okay to let legislators experiment with “flexible employment” and concoct schemes that supposedly reward performance?

This election is not a referendum on personalities or on whether voters like everything a candidate has done. If that is how voters decide, we will watch while large amounts of money dominate the airwaves, and higher education issues fade from view.

If voters have defeatist attitudes, or feel indifferent or frustrated, Florida will have low turnout like there was in 2010. Higher education and unionized employees have been under attack since that time.

**The political stakes are too high to tune out. Ask your colleagues, ask your friends, and ask your family to vote. Now is the time to get engaged on behalf of higher education in the state of Florida.**