

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

UCF Hosting 'Focus the Nation' Events Aimed at Solving Climate Change Issues

Gov. Crist, Mayor Crotty to Participate Jan. 31 in 'Teach-In' Day at UCF

ORLANDO, Jan. 24, 2008 – Harnessing the collective power of students across the country to find solutions to global warming, Focus the Nation will kick off next week at the University of Central Florida.

Students from more than 60 Florida universities and middle and high schools, joining their peers from around the country, are participating in Focus the Nation. Organizers hope the event will advance discussions about how to solve the problems the world is facing because of climate change.

UCF's Cocoa campus is hosting the national Web cast that will kick off the Focus the Nation events at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 30. A live panel discussion featuring UCF Sociology professor Penelope Canan -- and with UCF students in the audience -- will be screened at thousands of schools, universities and other sites around the country.

The next day, Gov. Charlie Crist and Orange County Mayor Rich Crotty will be part of a daylong program on climate change in the Pegasus Ballroom of the UCF Student Union. The day also will feature tours of a UCF green roof; presentations by UCF professors on how climate change affects polar bears and other species; and exhibits of hybrid cars, native Florida landscapes and a Florida Solar Energy Center solar-powered trailer that has aided in disaster responses.

“We know that we probably have a very short time to get America on the right track to make a difference with the challenges of climate change,” said Canan, a former executive director of the Global Carbon Project in Japan. “I hope that we will galvanize and use the next decade wisely to increase awareness and focus people’s attention on solutions. This is what has to be done for survival.”

All of UCF's activities Jan. 31 are free and open to the public. Free parking is available in Garage H at Centaurus Boulevard and Alafaya Trail.

That day will begin at 9 a.m. with a keynote address on “Drivers of Change: The Business Case for Sustainability and Protecting the Climate” by Hunter Lovins, whose company strives to help businesses and communities become more sustainable.

At a 10:30 a.m. ceremony near the gazebo in front of the UCF Bookstore, board members of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) will unveil the official new specialty license plate, TreesAreCool, which will be released statewide at the end of this month. At the same time, the planting of a tabebuia tree donated by ISA member Skinner Nurseries will commemorate Focus the Nation. In addition, more than 100 trees are being donated by ValleyCrest to be planted on campus or given complimentary to event attendees.

Crist and Crotty will speak at 1 p.m. about an expansion of solar power at the Orange County Convention Center and other local and state environmental initiatives.

Exhibits inside and in front of the Student Union will demonstrate how people can reduce their impact on the world's climate. The UCF Arboretum will have an exhibit on native Florida landscapes that use less water than traditional lawns. A "Climate Change and You" exhibit will offer tips on healthy and organic lifestyles, and a "Science of Climate Change" exhibit will feature an Orlando Science Center interactive digital globe that demonstrates the patterns of the Earth's climate.

Tours of UCF's green roof on the Student Union will be offered from 10 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. UCF became the first university in the state to install a green roof when it was added in 2005. The roof features Florida-native vegetation that helps to reduce energy costs and storm-water runoff and extend the life of the roof.

The Wednesday evening panel discussion will be Web cast from the WBCC-TV studios at the Cocoa campus shared by UCF and Brevard Community College. "The 2% Solution" program will focus on whether the nation can cut global warming pollution by 2 percent annually for the next decade. The Web cast can be viewed live or after the event at <http://www.earthdaytv.net>.

Focus the Nation's climate change theme coincides with UCF's emphasis on the environment in the classroom and facilities. The university's current general education undergraduate unifying theme focuses on the environment and global climate change.

UCF President John Hitt is a member of the leadership circle of the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment, which strives to reduce campus emissions of greenhouse gases. The university will construct all new buildings -- including the College of Medicine at Lake Nona -- to at least the silver standard of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards.

The gold sponsors for the UCF Focus the Nation events are the UCF Metropolitan Center for Regional Studies, Orange County, the City of Orlando, the Orlando Utilities Commission, the Global Green Alliance and Progress Energy.

For more information on Focus the Nation activities throughout the nation, go to www.focusthenation.org. Go to www.ftncf.org for more information on the UCF event.

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