

# THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

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Valencia has always been an eager and effective partner in the community, and in October 2009 we saw an event that marked a milestone in our long and deep relationship with the University of Central Florida. On October 29, 2009, we “cut the ribbon” on the new University Center on Valencia’s West Campus.

The building alone is noteworthy. At just over 100,000 square feet, it is the largest ever built at the college. It is LEED certified, sporting an array of solar panels on the roof and many innovations designed to conserve energy throughout the structure. With an expansive atrium and a grand stairway, it may also be the most attractive and striking building at the college. I encourage you to visit it.

But what’s really remarkable about the University Center extends beyond the building to the amazing partnership and remarkable opportunity it represents. It is designed to house both Valencia and UCF students in programs that lead to bachelor degrees and beyond, all offered within the framework of the DirectConnect program in which Valencia’s graduates are guaranteed admission to UCF. Engineering, business, accounting, education and other majors are represented in the program and in future plans that should accommodate as many as 5,000 upper division students. Since its inception in 2006, the DirectConnect program has enrolled more than 30,000 students seeking a Valencia degree and who intend to complete a baccalaureate at UCF.

We may well already have the largest transfer relationship in the nation. More than eighty percent of our graduates transfer to UCF and more than sixty percent of their graduates begin as transfer students, the lion’s share from Valencia. In the coming years this number will grow geometrically, representing an expanded pathway to opportunity for our students and the community.

The White House recently called attention to this when the Initiative for Excellence in Hispanic Higher Education, led by Juan Sepulveda, held a public forum on campus and cited this partnership as a model program. Their message was that this partnership works for all students, and especially those who are often under-



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represented in higher education. It works for the institutions, as well. Valencia is able to fulfill its mission of providing access without resorting to much more expensive alternatives or losing our sense of core mission. UCF is able to continue its march toward prominence, including highly selective freshman admissions, without sacrificing its commitment to outstanding local students. Everyone benefits. And that's the power of partnership.

Importantly, this powerful partnership has its roots in Valencia's founding, and those roots, too, were acknowledged at the dedication ceremony. A bronze plaque was unveiled honoring Dr. Charles N. Millican, founding president and president emeritus of UCF, who offered pivotal support for the

founding of Valencia. In 1967, President Millican endorsed the proposed Valencia Junior College and offered his assistance in its creation. By supporting the founding of Valencia at a time when some in the community were concerned that the Orlando area might not support both a public two-year college and a public university, Dr. Millican laid a foundation of institutional partnership rooted in service to the people of Central Florida with the aim of extending opportunity to all.

The plaque honoring Dr. Millican notes that the building is a physical expression of the strong UCF/Valencia partnership that continues to yield enduring benefits to our community, and invites all who enter the doors of the University Center to be

reminded of the hundreds of thousands of students whose lives have been and will continue to be touched as a result of Dr. Millican's visionary leadership and the continuing collegial efforts of UCF and Valencia. When you visit the new University Center building, please take a moment to reflect on the role that Dr. Millican played and consider the impact of this powerful partnership on our shared community. ■

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And that's the power  
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