

Sun-Sentinel

CORPORATE GIFTS

A new page for Office Depot

\$4.5 million earmarked for education

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Office Depot Inc. has splashed its brand across notepads, invisible tape and print cartridges, but on Thursday, the Delray Beach-based company put its stamp on South Florida's higher education-

al institutions.

The office supply retailer contributed \$4.5 million to three South Florida universities — Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University and University of Miami — as well as two national nonprofit organizations that promote opportunities for minority students.

The donations collectively represent the largest corporate gift in the company's 19-year history. Office Depot has donated millions of dollars to other area universities in recent years. In 2004,

total cash and in-kind donations totaled \$20 million.

Office Depot's contributions join a growing roster of seven-figure gifts to South Florida business schools, including a \$5 million donation to FAU in June from insurance magnate Barry Kaye. FAU, FIU and UM all have logged gifts with still more zeros for medicine and biological sciences.

According to Office Depot President and CEO Steve Odland, the donations are more than one-time cash offerings. Rather, they are multiyear partnerships.

"This is building the future leaders of our company," Odland said.

He also noted that members of the company's management team will serve on advisory boards at each of the universities, and opportunities will be created for student internships and joint research projects.

Office Depot's cash contributions included:

■ \$2 million to Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton to build

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UM, FIU, FAU receive cash gifts

OFFICE DEPOT

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an educational center for the College of Business.

■ \$1 million to Florida International University in Miami to help fund a new College of Business Administration center.

■ \$500,000 to the University of Miami in Coral Gables, to establish a "laboratory" for supply-chain management in the College of Engineering.

■ \$500,000 to both the Unit-

ed Negro College Fund and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities to support member institutions, scholarships and professional development programs.

Together, the company's donations to FAU and FIU generated \$3 million in state match funds for the respective projects.

Office Depot's gift to FAU will create a building for non-credit courses aimed at executives. These are popular classes that FAU wants to expand, but "we have been constrained a

lot by simply not having space," said acting business dean Dennis Coates. The courses are now held mostly off-campus.

FAU's programs won't be the only ones enjoying new space. The agreement envisions letting Office Depot use the new building for some training programs of its own. But Coates said the university's classes will have priority, and other businesses will have access to the space.

At UM, Office Depot is underwriting the brainchild of

graduate student Andre Spaulding.

Spaulding proposed the learning lab as part of his ongoing doctoral dissertation in industrial engineering and gives seminars at UM on how companies can align their people, processes and technology to gain a competitive advantage. He said the lab would allow him to teach students using a hands-on approach.

"You get the best of both worlds by having industry and academia collaborate," Spaulding said.