FIU’s graduate business dean targets top ranking for international business

By Sherri C. Ranta

The first dean of Florida International University’s Alvah H. Chapman Jr. Graduate School of Business won’t start his new job full time until July, but Jose de la Torre, an international business analyst, author and professor, is already busy preparing.

While completing his last year at the University of California, Los Angeles, Mr. de la Torre travels almost monthly to Miami-Dade, meeting with FIU officials and shopping for a home. The Havana native, has lived and worked at various times in Europe, Asia and Latin America, and will move to Miami for the first time this summer.

Miami’s geographical position between North and South America, Mr. de la Torre said, is a natural meeting place for international business leaders not only from the Americas but Canada and Western Europe.

“I think it’s a natural and attractive place to do international business. I have great hopes I can help create that type of meeting place that in turn can lead to additional academic programs, research and more executive programs for the university,” he said.

Mr. de la Torre’s contacts are many in the world of international business. In addition to his job as professor of international business at UCLA, where he was founding director of the Center for International Business Education and Research from 1989 to 2000, he also taught at business schools throughout Latin American and Europe, including the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD).

Mr. de la Torre said his goals, along with that of other FIU officials and College of Business Administration Dean Joyce Elam, are to promote FIU as a top school for international business and the study of information technology. “Our [his and Dean Elam’s] skills are complementary, and in that sense we bring added value to the school in a very credible way,” he said.

In addition to his position as dean, Mr. de la Torre will be associate dean of the FIU College of Business Administration and will report to Ms. Elam.

Already, FIU’s business programs have obtained some recognition. The information-technology faculty is ranked among the top 20 in the US for research productivity, school officials said. The Hispanic Business Association rated the college among the top five schools in the US in terms of friendliness, access and quality, Mr. de la Torre said.

The FIU graduate school of business, he said, should be a place where value is added. “The taxpayers in the state of Florida do not owe students a graduate education. People come out of the program with considerable, enhanced earning capacity,” he said. “Why should taxpayers subsidize graduate education? Therefore, we need to earn our way in the graduate programs.”

In addition to teaching and research, Mr. de la Torre said he and Dean Elam will be busy with plans for the construction of a $30 million graduate school of business facility that is to open in five years.

A November 2001 fund-raising dinner where FIU officials named the school for former Knight Ridder CEO Alvah H. Chapman Jr., a well-known Miami business and community leader, launched a $10 million campaign for the building. About $1.5 million was donated, FIU officials said, and another $16 million in state funds are committed.

In addition to work as a professor, Mr. de la Torre is the author of more than 50 books and articles and more than 30 case studies in international business and strategy. His latest book, Managing the Global Corporation, was revised and released in 2000.