Strapped FIU links business, hospitality programs

By Sherri C. Ranta

Florida International University is linking its hospitality-management and business-administration programs to prepare for an expected $4 million shortfall and 2,000 new students while needing to hold the line on faculty and course offerings.

The new partnership allows School of Hospitality & Tourism Management faculty to teach basic business-administration courses and College of Business Administration faculty to teach upper-level courses at the Biscayne Bay campus in North Miami.

The changes will reduce the commute for some business students who have had to go to Miami's University Park campus.

"It's a win-win situation for both of them," FIU Provost Mark B. Rosenberg said Tuesday. "We can expand offerings in business at Biscayne Bay and, through this partnership, find ways for them to complete the degree fully up there.

"It's also consistent with a lot of development in North Miami," he said. "The business community is eager to see the Biscayne campus grow. This was a pretty creative approach."

Under the new agreement, the School of Hospitality & Tourism Management is independent of the College of Business Administration.

The School of Hospitality & Tourism has about 870 undergraduate and 130 graduate students, said Dean Joe West.

Mr. West, who will be dean of both schools at the Biscayne Bay campus, said faculty will teach basic business subjects such as management, marketing and accounting.

Decreasing evening classes and holding faculty slots vacant are other ways FIU is coping with the state cuts, said Mr. Rosenberg.

"It's never been this bad before. But having said that, we still have a lot of community support," he said. "Our Legislature is beginning to understand the magnitude of the gap. We're working to fill that gap, but it is very large and getting larger."

FIU weathered a $12 million cut in state funds last year and expects more this year when the budget is final.

Enrollment will increase in the fall, but school officials say funds won't be available to hire new faculty. About 33 retirements are expected this year, and those slots will not be filled.

"Fortunately, our faculty have been heroic in their willingness to do more with a lot less," Mr. Rosenberg said.

The curriculum partnership is one way to keep from cutting faculty, Mr. West said. "Instead of trying to save money by laying people off, the hospitality faculty is taking on a greater teaching load."

FIU's School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, Mr. West said, is ranked sixth in the US in a survey by the Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Education. FIU outranks hospitality-management programs at Florida State University (10th), the University of Central Florida (24th) and Johnson & Wales (25th).

The FIU program offers bachelor of science degrees in hospitality management and in travel and tourism as well as master of science degrees in hospitality management and tourism studies.