



William T. Abare, Jr.

EDITORS' NOTE *President William Abare, Jr., Ed.D., began his career with Flagler College in 1971 and became President in 2001. He has devoted the past 42 years of his 47-year career in higher education to Flagler College, helping foster its growth and building its reputation as a school that nurtures future business leaders. Abare serves as Chairman of the Council of Presidents of the Independent Colleges & Universities of Florida. He was also recently honored with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges James T. Rogers Distinguished Leadership Award.*

INSTITUTION BRIEF *St. Augustine's Flagler College (www.flagler.edu) stands out among the small, independent institutions that are taking leadership roles in American higher education. Set in beautiful and historic St. Augustine, Florida, Flagler's costs are among the lowest in the nation for private colleges. Its graduation rate is high – 62 percent within six years versus 56 percent at public colleges and 28 percent at for-profit schools – and thanks to its entrepreneurial culture, American businesses see what they are looking for in Flagler College graduates. The College is named for great entrepreneur Henry Morrison Flagler, a Gilded Age industrialist, railroad pioneer, and partner with John D. Rockefeller in Standard Oil. Flagler was the single most pivotal figure in Florida's development. His remarkable vision helped create cities out of wilderness on Florida's East Coast. His spirit of entrepreneurship lives on in the college today, but with an added dimension: social responsibility.*

Flagler College is known for its commitment to developing leaders with keen entrepreneurial skills. Would you tell us about these programs and your success in this area?

We have created an exceptional entrepreneurial program through the international organization Enactus – Entrepreneurs in Action. Enactus

Preparing Future Leaders

An Interview with William T. Abare, Jr., President, Flagler College

teams create economic opportunities within their communities by organizing outreach projects that focus on market economics, entrepreneurship, personal financial skills, and business ethics. Flagler Enactus teaches students the positive power of businesses through service learning.

Our team has been incredibly successful. In May, for the third time, Flagler College won the U.S. Enactus National Championship and will represent the nation at the Enactus World Cup in Cancun, Mexico, in September.

With an enrollment of just 2,600 students, our school competed against more than 500 major colleges and universities including University of Florida, Arizona State University, University of Alabama, and Oregon State University and we are number one in the nation.

Our Enactus team is known for its creative solutions to business and social problems. This year, the team's projects included a pretzel business for the homeless, micro-franchises for wounded veterans, and an environmental and economic initiative for the City of St. Augustine.

Our students are actively involved for three or four years and are passionate about each of our programs. This is evident to the judges, who are the top corporate leaders in America and the world. Our students literally receive job offers as they walk off the stage.

How do you achieve this kind of progress at such a small school with such a short history?

With Enactus, we have two excellent leaders, Donna DeLorenzo and Barry Sand, who are former executives in the retailing and entertainment industries. They understand the bottom line and give students the opportunity to gain real-world experience. We have students who are completely committed to the idea of social responsibility. Students come from all academic disciplines. They learn that the college experience is not always about a grade, but about changing lives.

What are the needs of the nation and how should education address them?

One of our nation's major issues is the inequity between rich and poor. Poverty and inadequate education create a dependency on entitlements. America needs to put more emphasis on education and giving individuals the tools to achieve economic opportunity.

How does Flagler respond to this need?

We encourage our students to take what they learn in the classroom out to the community. All of our student clubs and athletic teams

are required to do community service. They volunteer in schools, prisons, homeless shelters, foster care homes, and programs for veterans.

How does this involvement prepare Flagler College students for future business leadership?

The service learning approach to education develops students who are capable of leading a project, exploring different alternatives, and conceptualizing a solution. They create programs and businesses that fill an economic need and help solve social problems. They are on the front lines. They are learning first-hand that the problems they read about in the classroom are not about numbers; they are about people.

When Flagler students are put in a situation where they have to solve a real-world problem, they realize that teamwork, discipline, and creativity change people's lives.

What does the future hold for Flagler College?

Our strategic plan tells us that Flagler College will remain primarily an undergraduate institution dedicated to providing students with an excellent education. We will continue to build and leverage our strengths and create new opportunities for our students.

For example, we are one of 14 institutions in the U.S. that has an undergraduate program certified by the Council on the Education of the Deaf. We are considering a master's degree program in deaf education so graduates can aspire to greater professional achievement and innovation. We recently added a major in Coastal Environmental Science and are establishing academic centers of excellence in many fields, such as Creative Enterprise and Public History.

As part of our commitment to a comprehensive college experience, we are enhancing our facilities for intramural and intercollegiate sports – we're an NCAA Division II school.

Our efforts are being recognized. Flagler is ranked 11th in *U.S. News & World Report's* "America's Best Colleges" baccalaureate colleges in the South.

We're included in Princeton Review's Best 377 Colleges and America's 100 Best College Buys. Flagler is also second in Education's 20 Gorgeous College Campuses and among MSN Travel's "15 Most Beautiful Campuses."

At Flagler College, we focus on building leaders and entrepreneurs in the spirit of Henry Flagler, to continue advancing our nation and the world. ●