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Forethought

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ACCORDING TO conventional wisdom, there are three unmentionable topics of conversation among polite people—religion, politics and... money. Well, I guess, maybe it’s OK to talk about other people’s money. Hypothetically, of course. Just as long as it doesn’t get, you know, personal. How much you made? How much you paid? How much you got? How much you gave? At the risk of becoming a total social pariah, I’ll continue.

In this issue of USF Magazine, you’ll find a number of examples of university programs and research paid for—uh—with other people’s money. Not our money. Not our taxes. For example, Graphicstudio was started with other people’s money. Ten people in the community each gave $1,000. That small investment compounded over time into an internationally renowned magnet for the hottest talents in the art world. Today, 40 percent of Graphicstudio’s budget is self-generated through art sales.

Professor Jay Sokolofsky, using grant money from the Florida Humanities Council, was able to generate a community-wide oral history project in St. Petersburg, rescuing 100 years of black history from inevitable oblivion.

In Sarasota, the young authors’ conference was once again held on the USF Sarasota campus. The conference, which inspires young children to pursue the art and craft of writing, had been suspended for several years because of lack of funds. Because of a gift from the Hugh and Joy Culverhouse Endowment, the conference was reborn this year. More than 500 local elementary school children had the joy of meeting famous children’s book writers and illustrators and learning from them.

Many people harbor the erroneous belief that state universities are funded almost entirely by the state. USF gets less than half of its funding from tax dollars—48.5 percent. Student tuition and fees cover a mere 15 percent. More than half of the university’s budget supports instruction and research. The other less-than-half supports student services, operations, maintenance, salaries, scholarships and everything else. It’s other people’s money that pays for the rest—the scientific research, graduate education, merit scholarships, special programs and facilities.

Last year, USF announced a $220-million capital campaign which will conclude in the year 2000. So far, the community has rallied in response to the tune of more than $145 million with the inclusion of state matching funds. The Alumni Association recently gave the university a $1-million gift to fund scholarships.

Money. That’s what it takes to build a first-class operation. This is not a direct appeal for money. I don’t have my hand out. I’m a writer, not a fundraiser. But, wearing my journalist hat, I just wanted to state the facts and set the record straight. I’ll shut up now.