

# OPINION

## The Times-Union

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### OUR VIEW

# UNF finds its new president

By Times-Union Editorial Board

Let's hope the University of North Florida's board of trustees has accomplished one goal above all others in naming University of Cincinnati business dean David Szymanski to succeed the retiring John Delaney as UNF president. Let's hope it has hired another John Delaney. During his 15 years as UNF's president — a role he assumed after two terms as one of the most successful mayors in Jacksonville's history — Delaney has redefined the phrase "transformational figure."

### Delaney's Huge Legacy

When Delaney arrived at UNF in 2003, the typical grade point average of an incoming UNF freshman was 3.6; today, it's 4.27. When he arrived, racial and ethnic minorities made up just 18.2 percent of UNF's student body; today, they make up 31.6 percent. When Delaney arrived, the average student-to-faculty ratio was 22 to 1; it is now 18 to 1. In 2003, UNF's endowment was a relatively low eight-figure amount; today, after 15 years of Delaney's leadership, it is a robust \$109 million. UNF now awards 14 times more doctoral degrees during an academic year than it did before Delaney became president. UNF's student body has increased by 17.5 percent since Delaney arrived; it now stands at more than 16,500. UNF's graduation rate is 13 percentage points higher than the national median. UNF now has the fifth-highest graduation rate among public urban-regional universities in America. UNF has 2 million square feet more of laboratories, classrooms and other learning space than it did before Delaney arrived — and it has doubled the campus acreage and acquired \$187 million in construction funds during his presidency. By the time Delaney retires as president this spring, he alone will have awarded more diplomas as president — 61,454 — than were awarded during UNF's first 30 years of existence.

### Embrace the visionary spirit

Those accomplishments and many more speak to a university president who will depart UNF with a legacy that will be hard to follow. Clearly the best way for Szymanski to fill Delaney's massive footprints is to embrace the same visionary, forward-looking spirit that made Delaney such a difference maker. If fundraising and increasing enrollment are any indication, Szymanski already brings proven success. There will be plenty of major questions for the new president to take on. Here are just a few of them:

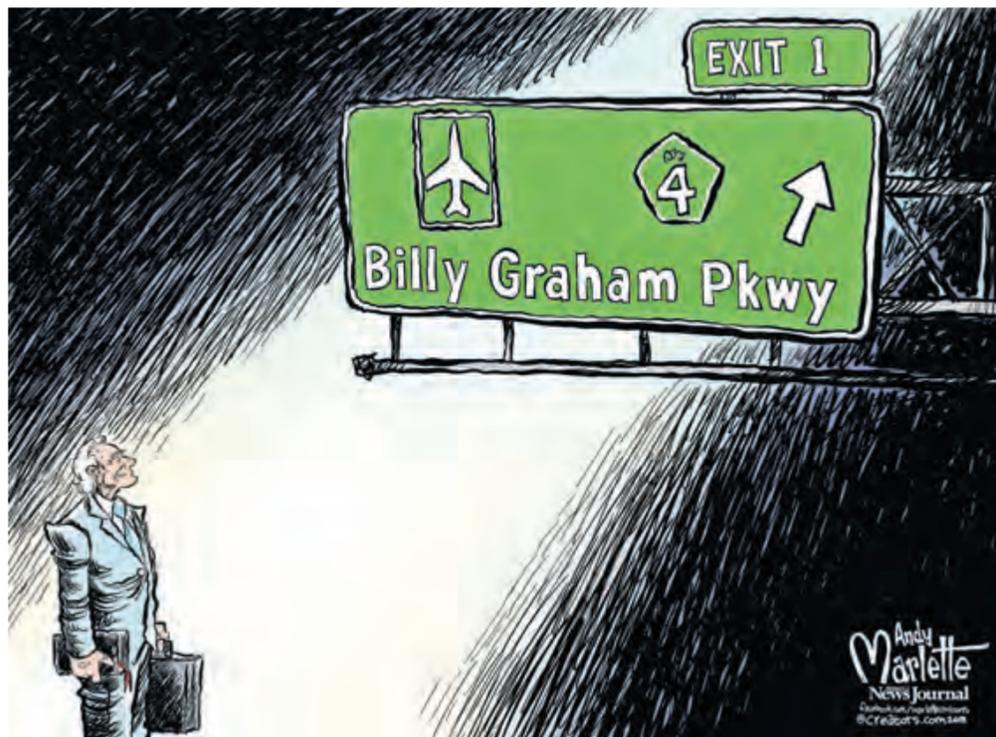
- Throughout its history, UNF has focused on being a small to mid-sized university. Should that continue to be its philosophy — or should UNF look to become a bigger institution?
- What kind of role can and should UNF play in the efforts to revitalize Downtown Jacksonville? UNF is now a large enough institution to have a greater impact in the rebirth of our city center. So how can it make the biggest impact?
- Should the future UNF be known as a "teaching" university — or should a greater emphasis be put on branding UNF as a top-tier research institution?

These and other issues will require Szymanski to expand on Delaney's successes and set even bigger goals. So let's welcome incoming President Szymanski to Jacksonville — and wish him the best in filling some very big shoes.



A coup for UNF. CNN held a Republican presidential debate on the campus of the University of North Florida in 2012. [FLORIDA TIMES-UNION, BRUCE LIPSKY]

### ANOTHER VIEW



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## Tough questions on JEA sale

I read with interest Sunday's editorial making light of concerns regarding the sale of the JEA. My presence was cited as proof that opposition to the sale was "political". Though I have many titles: Senior Vice President of a small business, grandmother, mother and wife, Christian and yes, Chair of the Duval Democratic Party, my most important title is citizen.

So when I spoke to Council, that's how I identified myself. During the hastily called special Council meeting, I appreciated the hard questions asked by many members of City Council from both parties. Council Members Garrett Dennis, Reggie Brown, Katrina Brown and my

former opponent, Al Ferraro, were superstars that night. Councilman Danny Becton put it best when he asked the most central question of the night, "why have we not had a public conversation about whether we should consider selling the JEA before we expend public funds on a valuation?" Many citizens across Jacksonville, including me, are asking the same question.

When the city was wrestling with the proposed passage of the HRO, I appreciated the three community conversations that Mayor Curry organized on the issue. Bringing together diverse communities across our city to discuss and debate contentious issues is something I applaud and shows the nature of democracy.

Why isn't the mayor taking the same tack for this incredibly important issue? I support transparency in government and issues discussed in the sunshine, no matter who pursues it. In this case, I'm grateful for the leadership of Republican Council President Anna Brosche, who has taken the lead in ensuring this principle is fulfilled.

When I ran for Council I was proud to be endorsed by the Florida Times Union. However I am disappointed the Florida Times-Union Editorial Board has jumped on the "quick sale" bandwagon and as Councilman Hazouri said, "put the cart before the horse."

Lisa King, Jacksonville

### LETTERS FROM READERS

#### Trump has shown he's a fit, able leader

A letter writer stated that President Donald Trump is a racist and unfit to lead, but did not provide any facts to support the claim.

I find this typical of the left. Trump is doing more for the black community than former President Barack Obama ever did — and Trump has reached out to all Americans. Is Trump unfit because he wants to secure the border, bring companies back to America or reduce taxes? If this classifies as being unfit, I will gladly be one of Trump's "enablers" for another four years.

#### Thomas Vaughters, Fleming Island

#### There's no reason to oppose abortion bill

A bill that would restrict the most common type of late-term abortion — in which the baby is removed in pieces — is ready for a vote in the Florida House. Can you believe the Florida National Organization of Women opposes this bill and claims it is standing up for women's rights? If this kind of procedure is supported in our society, can you not see how

disrespect for life leads to school shootings that also display an inability to value human lives?

#### M.T. Schaefer, St. Johns

#### Rutherford clearly under the sway of NRA

It is relevant to point out that U.S. Rep. John Rutherford voted in favor of the Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017 that passed the U.S. House last year.

If the same measure passes in the Senate, a person licensed to carry about a firearm in any state will be constitutionally protected to carry about firearms in all 50 states.

I had hoped that a former Jacksonville sheriff would have enough gumption to resist the National Rifle Association's tentacles. Instead Rutherford has embraced the "more guns is better" paradigm.

#### Michael Hoffmann, Duval County

#### JEA sale would not benefit citizens at all

The big question of the day is whether the city should sell JEA. And here are my questions about that: What's the hurry, Mayor Lenny Curry?

Do you know something we don't know? Kudos to City Council President Anna Lopez Brosche for slowing down the freight train and providing us with a moment to breathe and to think.

The Florida Times-Union published an editorial that appeared to support a sale and listed all of things we could do with the money.

It is shortsighted to give up the control of a utility for instant gratification. We all know that when you privatize a public entity, the buyer must find ways to make money off the deal.

That means the costs will go up for the consumer, and no agreement to hold down the costs and keep jobs could realistically be enforced.

JEA customers depend on the relatively low rates for our utilities, and the city counts on the annual contribution it receives from JEA.

Selling JEA is not for the long-term benefit of its customers; it is for the benefit of developers, corporations and politicians. The T-U editorial stated that "elected leaders need to put their feelings aside and act for the people."

That is what Brosche did. And that is what Curry needs to do instead of bullying Brosche, City Council and the citizens of Jacksonville.

Sandra Lee, Jacksonville

### A VERSE FOR TODAY

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7

### LETTERS POLICY

Letters of about 200 words are preferred. All letters are edited for space, clarity and newspaper style. Include a name, address, phone number and occupation. **Email:** letters@jacksonville.com. **Mail:** Letters from Readers, The Florida Times-Union, P.O. Box 1949, Jacksonville, FL 32231.