Florida Atlantic University is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout 2011 to commemorate the year it received initial funding from the Florida Legislature. The university opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth institution in Florida's state university system.

To celebrate this milestone year, FAU will host the "50 on the 50" black-tie gala at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 29 in the tower of the new 30,000-seat football stadium on the Boca Raton campus. This event will span three levels of the Stadium Tower and Plaza. Each area will feature a different theme, including the beach resort-themed Plaza, the "Copacabana" Club on the Priority Level, the jazz-themed Premier Club and the American Bistro on the Suite Level.

Other highlights include a "halftime" show on the field; a silent auction featuring rounds of golf, tickets to local attractions, computers, gift cards and more; and opportunities to see FAU's 50th Anniversary Book brought to life through a video presentation.

"This will truly be a night to remember, one that will allow us to reflect on the university's tremendous growth over the past half-century as we look forward to charting its course for the next 50 years," FAU President Mary Jane Saunders said.

The gala also serves as a fundraiser for the President's Scholarship Fund. President's level sponsors of the gala include Balfour Beatty Capital; Balfour Beatty Construction; Barnes & Noble; Chartwells; Dell Inc.; Christine E. Lynn - E.M. Lynn Foundation; Richard and Barbara Schmidt - Schmidt Family Foundation; and Wells Fargo.

FAU originally served upper-division and graduate students exclusively. In October 1964, President Lyndon Baines Johnson officiated the dedication of FAU, making the university one of the few to be so honored by a sitting chief executive of the United States. In 1984, the student body expanded to include freshmen and sophomores.

Today, FAU serves more than 29,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses and sites. FAU's student body is the most diverse among Florida's 11 public universities, with 46 percent classified as minority or international. People from all 50 states and more than 180 countries study, live and work at FAU.
Sponsorships for the gala are available at the $2,500, $5,000, $10,000 or $25,000 level. Tickets are $250. To become a sponsor or purchase tickets, call 561-297-3010 or visit http://www.fau.edu/50th. •

Cover photo: Howard Schnellenberger, left, Mary Jane Saunders and Robert Stilley (photo by Gina Fontana) Coverbox 1: Steve Sheer, left, and Dane Graziano. (photo by Kara Starzyk) Coverbox 2: Lorna Hanson, left, and Sandy Brockington (photo by Gina Fontana)
Dr. Ira Gelb, left, June Gelb and Robert Rubin

Left: Richard and Barbara Schmidt  Right: Chef Jeramie Garlick, left, and Greg Moran