

**FRENCH GOVERNMENT DESIGNATES UF AS A
*CENTRE PLURIDISCIPLINAIRE***

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Gainesville—The French government has chosen the University of Florida as Florida's site of a *centre pluridisciplinaire*, or pluridisciplinary center. The designation will help create the France-Florida Research Institute (FFRI) at UF, which will serve as an umbrella organization to centralize and promote the numerous existing partnerships between UF and French and Francophone research centers. The new institute will receive funding from the French government for at least three years, and UF will provide additional support. "This designation recognizes the international academic excellence at UF. We are proud to join this esteemed group and plan to build on our successes in French studies," said Professor of French Carol Murphy, who will serve as the institute's director.

UF's designation as a *centre pluridisciplinaire* will give it the opportunity to apply for a \$1 million grant from the French government within the next several years. Currently, *centres pluridisciplinaires* of French studies are located at 18 American universities, including Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Stanford and Yale. In addition to UF, the University of Texas at Austin also received the honor this year.

The French Embassy invited universities in Florida to apply for the designation. Chantal Manes-Bonnisseau, who is the Cultural Attaché at the French Embassy in Washington, DC, served on the committee that evaluated UF's proposal and visited the campus. "UF is remarkable for its clear strategy of international development, supported by enthusiastic leaders, important funding and long-lasting links with French universities in all fields of knowledge," said Manes-Bonnisseau. In the past several years, the French Embassy has made an effort to extend its network toward the Southern region of the US. In 1999, a *centre pluridisciplinaire* was created at Louisiana State University, and last year, Duke University established one.

France is the top country of collaboration with UF, and 18 official partnerships with French institutions and research centers already exist. In October, Murphy will travel to the cultural services of the French Embassy in New York City to meet with the directors of other *centres pluridisciplinaires* to discuss plans for UF's institute. Murphy expects the FFRI to be officially established by January 2003.