



**Address at the 2013 Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine  
Sapphire Celebration**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on April 13, 2013**



*This speech was presented to 2013 Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine  
Sapphire Celebration.*

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and thank you for joining us for our Sapphire Celebration. I would like to recognize all of our special guests tonight. You heard her-our Hannadys Ale: "You have no idea what you started!"

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight we are celebrating a miracle, a medical school miracle. We all found a way to get this done. And now, we are celebrating our first graduating class of physicians. Our very own doctors!

The medical school that we are building, the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine is a tribute to hope. As one observer stated years ago, "Hope arouses, as nothing else can arouse, a passion for the possible." This medical school and our larger Academic Health Center is about hope. We know about hope at FIU! Hope is an adventure that we have never abandoned at FIU!

In this case, we educated key decision makers. We built an incredible political coalition in our community, and with the University for Central Florida, to activate our hope for accessible public medical education right in our community. We will never forget the courage of a band of FIU administrators and faculty led by President Maidique to dare to hope that a medical school was possible. We will never forget our Trustees, then and now, who take courageous positions to bring needed programs to our community. Tonight, we thank Claudia Puig and Herbert Wertheim. We will never forget our Board of Governors. Tonight, thank John Dasburg for his courage to do the right thing. We will never forget our State Legislative Delegation, and other state legislators, for their willingness to stand up for hope and their miracle medical school. This medical school is a tribute to those who have helped us reach our milestone achievements.

It is a tribute to Dr. Herbert Wertheim, for whom our college is named. A Horatio Alger Award recipient, Dr. Wertheim overcame the hardships of his youth to become a veteran, engineer, optometrist, educator, inventor, and entrepreneur who has changed millions of lives through his discoveries, innovations, and contributions in eye care and other scientific fields.

As an FIU trustee, he stepped up to Light a Torch. You see, he was the one to first propose the creation of a medical school at FIU, and helped secure approval for our medical school and led the way in establishing it. And did he ever lead the way. Once it was established, he recognized what a new medical school could do for the future of our community and the future of medicine in our country. As a result, he gave us the largest gift in FIU history to help us educate doctors for many generations to come. He has supported us, nurtured us and inspired us. He believed in us before WE believed in us! Thank you, Dr. Wertheim for your longtime and steadfast commitment to FIU.

Our medical school miracle is also a tribute to Benjamín León Jr. Benjamín León also made a landmark gift to our college, to establish the Benjamín León, Jr. Family Center for Geriatric Research and Education and the Leon Medical Centers Eminent Scholars Chair in Geriatrics. We are proud of the partnership we have forged with Leon Medical Centers, which is helping us educate doctors who now have first-hand experience working with the older people in our community and understanding their unique needs. Benjamín Leon is a pioneer in meeting the health care needs of a culturally-diverse elder population, and thanks to his generosity our students and faculty also can make a difference in how we care for our aging population. Thank you, Benjamín and thanks to your family for your commitment to our College of Medicine.

Our medical school miracle is also a tribute to the Green Family and the Green Family Foundation. The Green Family Foundation already has had a dramatic impact on our institution: an endowed arts lecture series, and our dramatic Steven and Dorothea Green Library. In our medical school, they have made an impact by funding the Green

Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP program, the groundbreaking program that has allowed our medical students, joined by their fellow students in nursing, social work, law and other disciplines, to help the families in our community that need us the most. We look forward to continuing this trailblazing partnership that is uplifting our community. Thank you to the Green family, Steven and Dorothea, and the Green Family Foundation for helping us heal our community.

Our medical school miracle is also a tribute to our College of Medicine administrators and faculty, led by founding Dean John Rock, who have worked tirelessly to bring to fruition the dream of a public medical school in South Florida, honoring a commitment we made all those years ago, to educate a new generation of doctors and to heal our community. And this medical school miracle is a tribute to our students, our first 33 doctors and the hundreds that will follow in their footsteps. Inaugural Class, Class of 2013, it is your hard work, focus and determination, that have truly made our medical school dreams come true. As you go forth in your careers, giving your future patients competent, compassionate care you will represent what FIU, our Academic Health Center, and the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine is all about. And as we sit here, enjoying this wonderful evening, and celebrating our students and our successes, we must remember that the work is not done.

Just as we achieved full accreditation in record time; Just as we have changed lives through our Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP program in record time; Just as we educated 33 doctors who have the knowledge and skills to earn competitive residencies throughout this country; We can continue to set the bar higher and continue to shatter expectations!

But, we must not rest on our laurels. We are serving 650 families through NeighborhoodHELP, but we need to serve hundreds more. We must expand hope; it's the only way to combat despair. We are graduating 33 doctors. Our nation needs thousands. We have achieved one medical school miracle, but that miracle needs to

serve as a model for medical education throughout our country. The hard work begins now.

Dr. Wertheim, you lit that torch. Dr. Leon, you lit that torch. Kim Green, you and your family lit that torch. Now, the rest of us must do our part to keep hope alive and light the torch that illuminates the way for our FIU Hebert Wertheim College of Medicine!

And now it is my pleasure to introduce the founding dean of our College of Medicine and Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs, Dr. John Rock.

*Following the Presentation of the First Annual Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine Awards, President Rosenberg Concluded the Program with the following:*

To conclude the formal portion of the program, I ask that you raise your glass and join me in toasting to the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine's inaugural class of doctors, to the many achievements that we've rapidly accomplished, and to the donors that helped us in building our medical school. I also ask that you consider making a contribution to our College of Medicine using the pledge cards on your table that will help us to continue on our path of success and in creating culturally competent doctors at South Florida's only public medical school. Cheers!

This has been a memorable evening where we've shared the history of FIU's medical school and provided a glimpse of what we hope for in the future. Thank you all for joining us this evening and for sharing with us in this joyous occasion as we celebrate this significant moment for the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.