



2013 Torch Awards Gala

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on March 23, 2013**



This speech was presented to the attendees of FIU's 2013 Torch Awards Gala on March 23, 2013.

We are here to celebrate our FIU and our Alums! This is a joyous occasion; it captures the hope, spirit, and accomplishment of our graduates, our alumni. My message this evening is simple: It is to challenge you to step up! Since I started as President, I have met with thousands of our graduates. From Sweetwater to Singapore, from Allapata to Atlanta; from Coral Gables to Chicago; from Westchester to Washington; from Liberty City to Lima.

My purpose? To learn about your experiences as students at our university, and of course to build our alumni association. Let me share with you some observations that I take away from the consultations that I carried out with you since July 2009:

- 1) You care deeply about what happens at FIU.
- 2) You have affection for faculty and staff that helped you in your journey.
- 3) You understand that our investment in education is the key to lifting people into productive lives.
- 4) You have been invigorated by the expanding visibility of FIU graduates and proud of the accomplishments of members of our community.

Let me address the issue of community, because it bears on what happens at FIU and certainly will impact and be impacted by our growth in the next few years, whatever it is. Let's face it: these are challenging times; fragmentation is the order of the day; uncertainty is the norm; and community is more important than ever. As a consequence of the sustained conversation that we have had, I am convinced that we understand that we have something special. We have our FIU! Our sense of community signifies the presence of an agenda of common caring and hope. This gathering is a celebration of our values truth, freedom, respect for diversity, responsibility, excellence, entrepreneurship, a commitment to research and creativity, and a will to succeed.

Our agenda embraces a love for institution, determination, and accomplishment: There is reverence for the mission that brings us all together. There is caring for the individuals in the community. There is respect for the policy and physical systems in which we relate in both work and play. There are shared values that shape and guide behavior. Our space is where we can celebrate moral purpose and a higher calling. Ultimately we exist to develop knowledge and skills in our students. And, when they

graduate, we are increasingly perceived by our students as a source of meaningful work.

Let me remind you about our past because it is prelude to our future: Remember how we were born. Late in the annals of public universities in this country out of grudging compromise with limited vision and less optimism that we could succeed. And to ensure a low altitude lift-off, here is what they said and still often repeat in one form or the other:

- That we would never have freshman at FIU; We showed them!
- That we would never have residence halls at FIU; We showed them!
- That we would never be able to carry out serious bench research; We showed them!
- That we would never have a football team and win a conference championship
- and bowl game at FIU; We showed them!
- That we would never have a law school at FIU; We showed them!
- That we would never have a medical school at FIU; We showed them!
- That we could not raise funds from our own faculty much less over \$2 million in the first ever faculty-staff campaign; We showed them!

Now, here's what they say: That we will never achieve our campaign goal of \$750 million! You know why they say this? Because FIU does not have that generous or supportive of an alumni and community? Do they know who we are? What we have already accomplished in our short history? Do they know that day by day, month by month, year by year we have built this university? And that we will not rest until we can compete with the best public universities, in every category of measurement, including fund-raising? Will we show them? Do we want to be better off in Five years than today?

I want to challenge you. It is F-I-You! It's time to step up to help us build our scholarship programs for needy students. Almost 20% of our students come from families with incomes less than \$30,000. Nearly 80% of our students work! Textbooks cost nearly \$200 a book! If not you, then who will make a difference in helping us to expand scholarship support? It's time to step up! To help us build our program endowments so we can continue to hire the best and brightest faculty! Don't you want your family members, your employees, your neighbors' son or daughter to be taught by the best faculty in the world? If not you, then who?

It's time to step up to help us expand and enhance our facilities. Quality bricks and mortar will still define in part who we are! Quality bricks and mortar will still be key elements attracting the best and brightest students! Isn't it time that we get on with

building the Alumni Center? If not you, then who? It's time to step up to help our students launch successful careers by offering them internships. Internships are a vital component of college education today. This year, we have identified more than 100 valued internship partners who are providing these opportunities to our students.

I would like to thank some of them today. Thanks to Baptist Health Systems, Carnival, The Department of Energy, Disney, IBM, Miami-Dade County, PricewaterhouseCoopers, State Farm, Target, and Telemundo. You have paved the way for our students to be successful! These companies have set the bar. I challenge you to step up. If you want to join our Internship Program, please fill out the contact card you received when you arrived and return it to the registration table or by the valet station as you leave this evening.

Yes, we have something special here at FIU. FIU allows us to be masters of our own fate! Speaking of fate; it is the 500th anniversary Spain's exploration of Florida! Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492 with flag of Queen Isabella. Artists depicted these flags with the words "Ne plus ultra" or "nothing further" as Spain was believed to be the westernmost country. Upon Columbus' return to Spain, that the flag needed to be modified to state "plus ultra" or –"more beyond" or "more out there!"

Today, that phrase means even more for FIU. FIU is "Plus Ultra!" It is our destiny to take you where you want to go. But we cannot do this without you. It is.... F-I-You! So step up FIU! Let's build the endowment. Let's show them it is about our pride! Our determination! Our community! Just like we have in everything else we have attempted – let continue to show them! Congratulations Torch Awardees! You Lead the Way! Congratulations FIU! Plus ultra!