



**Address at the 2018 Honors College Freshman Convocation**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
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**Office of the President**  
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

*This speech was presented on September 26, 2018 to the attendees of the 2018 Honors College Freshman Convocation.*

Good afternoon! It's an honor to be here with you!

Class of 2022, we're so proud that you and your families have chosen us for this very special journey that you are on at our FIU as an Honors College student.

There is no place like our FIU. This is a university that is a powerful force for good, that is committed to impact! That steps up and takes responsibility 24/7, 365! Let me tell you, as a Panther – you have a lot to be proud of.

For the first time in our history, FIU was ranked as one of the top 100 public universities in the country by U.S. News & World Report! This follows on the heels of our FIU being ranked second in the state in performance by the Florida Board of Governors. And our recognition as a “Great College to Work For” by The Chronicle of Higher Education. These rankings are important because they are a reflection of the hard work and dedication of our faculty, and staff – and the determination of our students to excel!

Now, that's not all! Speaking of U.S. News – FIU also has 18 programs in the Top 100 in the U.S. News & World Report Best College rankings. From business to law, nursing, social work, engineering, education, criminal justice and more – our programs are truly the best of the best!

Your FIU is also a top research university. Did you know only two percent of universities in the U.S. have earned the Carnegie R1 classification for highest research activity? FIU is one of those universities!

Here is something else to be proud of and look forward to: FIU graduates are top earners! In the State University System, FIU graduates are the most likely to find employment within the first year of graduating. Their average salary also ranks among the top in the state! You have to graduate in four years so you can get out there and be a top earner, too!

Your FIU has the best students in the 305 – and beyond. This fall, we welcomed the best incoming freshman class in FIU history! You and your fellow freshmen have an average GPA of 4.1! All of you made this happen, because right here in this room are our very best and brightest!

Indeed, our Honors College is the heart of undergraduate excellence at FIU. Just look at our Class of 2022! We have so many star students, like Angela Santalo, who started a non-profit called Art for Others that brings art to those who need it most. She routinely visits the Ronald McDonald's House Charities to host art workshops and donate supplies for the sick children. Now she's going to be studying nursing at our FIU!

Students like Jaquan Starling, who is our only freshman to receive the prestigious Horatio Alger Florida Scholar Award. He published his first book of poetry as a sophomore in high school – and dreams of being an engineer and leading us into the next generation of space flight! Every one of you has something in common with Angela and Jaquan!

You are hardworking, talented and proof that FIU is an incredible cluster of talent!

Make no mistake – there is no greater educational journey that you could take than here at our Honors College. It's going to prepare you for the challenges ahead – regardless of your major.

During your time here, you're going to develop amazing powers of invention, resilience, character, and confidence, so that you can make a difference in our rapidly-changing world. And today, this is what I want to talk to you about.

The pace of change has never been faster. This is a digital age – driven by computers, software, algorithms, and artificial intelligence that's getting more and more intelligent. Technology is transforming society and revolutionizing everything – how we communicate, work and play.

It's also raising the educational bar. An education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century means focusing on this new technology and how it works. It also means focusing on what technology cannot do. That means harnessing and empowering our unique and inherent human strengths of creativity, innovation and invention to leave our world a better place than we found it.

At FIU, we know that education must stay ahead of this change – to better prepare you to live and work in a world filled with big data and an endless stream of information. We're committed to moving from a more traditional institution of higher education to a more 21<sup>st</sup> century lifelong learner institution of higher education!

We want this university to be the home of great thinkers and learners that use their unique talents and creativity to move our community and world forward.

Our Honors College is going to give you the new literacies and cognitive capacities that you need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Let me tell you how!

We're giving you technological literacy. You've grown up as digital natives. Now, it's time to take your learning to the next level. That starts with learning the language. Coding is the language of the digital world. It's growing more and more important. This isn't about whether you want to learn it. You'll need to learn it!

Our Honors College is here to help you learn specific computer languages and the basics of computer science. In fact, we have workshops that teach coding, as well as systems networking, and more!

We're giving you data literacy. By 2020, it's estimated that we'll live in a world of 50 billion smart objects. These devices are going to have lots of information that will need to be analyzed and interpreted.

Data literacy is going to become increasingly important – to break down and make sense of the information. After all, data has no meaning without interpretation and context!

This fall, Honors is offering courses you won't find anywhere else at FIU, like Data Analytics and Digital media in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These courses are the result of a collaboration between our Honors College, StartUp FIU and Google. Yes, you heard me right... Google! They will be taught by industry experts and Google staff! And you will gain a Google certificate!

This will also open up opportunities to possible internships with Google clients and even opportunities to teach digital skills to small businesses in lower-income communities!

We foster critical thinking. Let me tell you: this is more important than ever. Employers are looking for this skill! We have many opportunities to use and cultivate your critical thinking skills. We teach history class through a game, so you can be a part of history by stepping into 18<sup>th</sup> century France during the French Revolution.

In Randy Pestana's Cybersecurity class, you'll be put in the role of a policymaker – to develop a strategy to counter current and emerging cybersecurity threats...

We're giving you entrepreneurial experience! Did you know that 65 percent of children entering school today will work in jobs that don't exist yet? As I said, technology is changing the world – and it's also presenting us with new opportunities to come up with new jobs.

Universities are the perfect place to foster a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem. At FIU, you'll have access to different entrepreneurial opportunities, like StartUp FIU.

Since the very beginning, Honors has had a close relationship with StartUp FIU. In fact, honors students helped make StartUP a reality! The first two people hired to work for StartUP were from Startup cofounder and director Bob Hacker's Honors classes. Then, they recruited ten volunteers – who all came from Honors – to do student and community outreach. The rest is history! Today, there are eight student assistants and interns from Honors working for StartUP.

Entrepreneurial opportunities are going to be critically important throughout your life in order to distinguish yourself in the digital workplace. Whether you are running a startup, or working for a traditional business or institution, you'll need entrepreneurial thinking!

We provide experiential learning. We know learning happens everywhere! That's why we cultivate experiential learning and help you put what you learn into practice – through internships and global study abroad experiences. When you put your knowledge into practice, you not only develop a better understanding of yourself, and your skills – you also continue to enter into another, deeper form of learning.

Class of 2022, your FIU Honors College education is going to give you these literacies and capabilities – and so much more. Honors is ahead of the curve!

During the next four years, you're going to get an education you won't find anywhere else. And it's going to give you the experiential, hands-on and interdisciplinary education you'll need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Class of 2022, I have every confidence in you. You are part of something very important at FIU and something that will be with you forever. Have pride, work hard – you will succeed.

Now, before you leave here today, I'd like to give you four modest challenges.

Class of 2022, I first challenge you to have high expectations for yourselves. Set the bar high! At FIU, we're Worlds Ahead. Be Worlds Ahead – do something great with the opportunities that you are given here!

Never be afraid to dream big. Did you know our FIU began as a dream? This university sprung up from the grounds of an abandoned airfield and is now one of the top research universities in the nation. Our world has been built and created by people who dared to dream differently. Now more than ever, we need your creativity and ingenuity. You have the power to help solve some of our world's biggest challenges.

Be curious – and never stop finding wonder in the world around you. Your curiosity will open you up to new experiences, new people and perspective. Curiosity will lead you to creativity. It will also make you a lifelong learner!

And last... Can you guess this one? Never stop learning! Remember – FIU is here to be with you every step of the way on your journey as lifelong learners. We're here to help you – and your parents and loved ones – get another degree, certificate and competency!

Class of 2022, I cannot wait to see what you accomplish here at our Honors College. When you graduate, in four years – or less – you will be ready for a good career – and a good life. And the world will be a better place because of you!

Congratulations, Class of 2022!