



**Address at the  
8<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Watch Party**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on March 10, 2018**



**Office of the President**  
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

*This speech was presented on March 10, 2018 to the attendees of the  
8<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge Watch Party.*

Almost two years ago, we came together and we stood not far from where we stand today. We lifted shovels of sand and marked the place where – one day – this bridge would rise up and stretch over 8th street.

Where there was once a mountain of sand, there is now a shining symbol of our commitment. Our commitment to keep our university open and accessible for this community!

In my office, I have the 3-D model of this bridge on display. I pass by it so often that standing here – looking at the real thing right before my eyes – is almost unreal. To know that our UniversityCity is taking shape is truly a blessing. And this blessing is only possible because of the hard work of the many, who believe deeply in our FIU.

First, a very special thank you to our representatives in Congress: Mario Diaz-Balart – who is joining us today – as well as Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who could not be here. We're so proud that you're part of the FIU family!

I would also like to thank Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz. She could not join us today, but her support was crucial in securing the grant that made today possible!

Another longtime friend to our FIU, Senator Bill Nelson also deserves our thanks. Unfortunately, he could not be here today, but we're grateful for all of his efforts on behalf of our FIU.

We also want to thank the U.S. Department of Transportation. We wouldn't be here without your support! As you may know, this project was funded by an \$11.4 million TIGER grant. It's helping us grow this area into a true innovation district! We can only begin to calculate the future economic growth that it will bring to this area!

Thank you, as well, to the Florida Department of Transportation for your overwhelming support! And thank you to MCM Construction, FIGG and Barnhart Crane & Rigging for designing, building and moving this bridge!

We're also thankful for the support of our local leaders: Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez and county leadership. Commissioner Jose "Pepe" Diaz, and a special thanks to Mayor Orlando Lopez and the leadership of Sweetwater, who are our neighbors and partners on so many initiatives!

I also want to acknowledge some of this project's unsung heroes: Former VP Steve Sauls, who has come home today! Tom Gustafson, and, last but not least, Dr. Jessell!

From day one, our FIU has never existed in isolation. We rose from an airfield and we rose for this community. We continue to grow and we continue to grow for this community. This project is proof!

It's our promise: that our FIU will never let anything stand in the way of relationships that uplift and better our community! We let nothing stand in the way of the hope and opportunity that this university gives to the sons and daughters of Sweetwater – and beyond.

We let nothing stand in the way of progress or projects that will transform this area and open the doors to more and better opportunities and innovation. We let nothing stand in our way... especially not this road!

We go beyond... We build bridges! We break barriers!

Before we know it, we will soon see students who live in 109 Tower, Fourth Street Commons and the soon to be built Bridge Residences crossing this bridge to get to class. And we will see our community crossing, too.

This is a path to all that FIU has to offer... To better health, to art and culture, sports and entertainment.

There are healthcare services at FIU Health. Concerts and cultural events at the Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center. World-class art exhibitions at the Frost. Football, soccer, basketball, baseball and so much more at the stadium and arena. There is no end to what is available to our neighbors. This is for them! Our entire FIU is for them!

At the groundbreaking, I said this was the bridge to the future! It truly is... because it's just the beginning for our FIU and for Sweetwater. The beginning of even greater connectivity and even more transportation options that will link FIU, Sweetwater and Greater Miami! We have a bright future before us!

Again, I thank all of you for being here today and I look forward to seeing you again, when the bridge is completed!

I would now like to introduce someone who has always had FIU's back... Who has always recognized that FIU's future is our community's future...

He represents Florida's 25th Congressional District, and is also the Chairman of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations. Please join me in welcoming Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart!