



College of Law's 10 Year Anniversary Celebration

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on September 29, 2012**



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Adrienne Clarkson said that “each of us is carving a stone, erecting a column, or cutting a piece of stained glass in the construction of something much bigger than ourselves.” And so it is this evening! Welcome to this celebration of our College of Law’s 10-year anniversary.

The last decade has been an incredible journey. In fact it started long before that, almost with the inception of this University: when our visionaries on the fifth floor terrace and in the faculty trenches, some of them are here in this room, believed that Miami deserved a public law school. This College of Law is another example of how we turned the impossible into the inevitable.

As described by Dr. Maidique, the truth is that we forced this through persistence, determination, political brilliance; and we made it clear that we would keep coming back until we got what we needed for our community. That’s the way it has been, that’s the way is it, and that the way it will always be! I would like to take a moment to recognize some of our community leaders and FIU supporters who are here with us today: C.A.M.P. for Justice Foundation, The Costa Foundation, Cesar Alvarez and Greenberg Traurig, The Miami Foundation, and Judge Aaron B. Cohen.

You have seen it. You have lived it! At FIU, We turn dreams into reality. Tonight, we are living our dream: To create a world’s ahead college of law. More than 10 years ago, a group of courageous leaders recognized the need for our best and brightest – some place bound, others who wanted new careers or jumpstart their lives to have access to a high-quality public legal education. The vision was to educate a new multicultural generation of attorneys committed to helping the people of South Florida resolve legal issues that affect their lives. This vision was first made possible from within FIU! You see, it was the FIU faculty who initially came together to say that this College of Law must be created. And it was President Maidique who had the courage tell the story, take the hits, forge the alliances, and get the job done!

Tonight, we celebrate and offer our gratitude to these leaders for their pivotal role in making this dream a reality. The support of many in and outside the institution: Ron Berkman, , John Stack, Victor Uribe; from South Florida’s legal community, among them, **George Knox, Carlos Castillo, Cesar Alvarez, Katherine Fernandez-Rundle,**

Bennett Brummer, The late Chesterfield Smith, Robert Beatty, FIU alumnus Judge Jose Rodriguez and FIU alumna **Judge Cecilia Altonaga**. Many community leaders also stood with us, including **Pat Frost, Darryl Sharpton and Alberto Ibarguen**. And then of course, key legislators from Miami Dade County: Gaston Cantens, Alex Villalobos, and Kendrick Meek. But, without a doubt, without a shadow of a doubt, we owe our greatest debt of gratitude to **Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart** and the entire **Diaz-Balart Family**. Please rise and be recognized!

Then a state senator in Tallahassee, Mario-Diaz Balart worked tirelessly against significant odds to win approval for the College of Law. The legislation establishing the law school was signed into law by **Gov. Jeb Bush**. With that signature, these elected officials transformed lives of many for generations to come. As Gov Bush stated in the video, he saw, in our College of Law, a more powerful tool for good! Please join me in thanking these courageous and visionary leaders. But we must also recognize the hard work of our founding Dean **Leonard Strickman** and his equally dedicated wife Danielle, and the Founding Faculty who are here tonight. Please stand to be recognized.

And now just ten years later, today, ladies and gentlemen: Our amazing FIU College of Law competes with top law schools in Florida and across the country. The world-class legal scholars who make up the college's faculty hail from around the world and are leaders in their fields. Our students represent the future of the legal profession: diverse, hardworking and determined to succeed against all odds. And our alumni are fulfilling the promise we made 10 years ago: to graduate civic-minded attorneys determined to make a difference. No doubt one day soon, these lawyers will assume judgeships, and leadership positions in both the public and private Legal sectors!

With Dean R. Alexander Acosta at the helm, our law school continues its impressive climb in national rankings. Our graduates consistently are very high performers among of Florida's law schools in their bar passage rate and beat more-established schools in national moot court competitions. So, dear friends, we can all take pride in this moment of celebration. The College of Law represents what is possible when we work together as private citizens, elected officials, community leaders and educators. As Gov. Bush said prideful in regard to our College of Law: commitments were made and **they were kept!** But we cannot go to the next level without your continued support. The great law schools of the country have the philanthropic backing of their communities. Not just their graduates, but others in the Community like you sitting here. At FIU, we reach high, we want more. We strive to be among the best. That is in our organizational DNA. FIU is about hope. The American Dream is

still alive in the Hall that we proudly named after Rafael Diaz Balart. Every day, hundreds of law students and their hard-working families depend on us to get the job done. And every day, we must find a way to get better; not for our vanity or ranking, but because the world will not wait on us or on our graduates. We/they and their families must be ready for the world.

In the 15th century Spain considered itself the western most point of civilization and emblazoned on its coat of arms **ne plus ultra** – or *nothing more beyond*. But when Columbus returned from his voyage of discovery in 1493 – Queen Isabella decided to have the motto repainted. The new phrasing eliminated the “ne” and read **plus ultra**, or “more beyond.” Whether you are carving a stone, erecting a column, or cutting piece of stained glass, to get better we will need your support – your philanthropy! This financial support is critical if we are to go from good to great! If we are to go beyond! The better our College of Law gets, the better FIU will get; the better FIU get, the better our community will get! Ladies and Gentlemen – we want to thank you for your support for our College of Law! We want to urge you to deepen your support for the College and help us keep the promise to our hard-working students and their families! To take them and our community beyond, way beyond. We can only do this with you!