

MEMORANDUM

July 8, 2015

Dear members of the FIU and SUS community,

Words cannot express the sense of loss and penetrating sadness we feel with the passing of a beloved member of our FIU and SUS family – Deborah “Debi” Galloway. A consummate professional and one of the most decent people you will ever meet, Debi passed in Shands Hospital on July 7, 2015 after a courageous nine year on-and-off battle against cancer.



Debi exemplified the notion that it is not the years in life but the life in years. Her very being and essence continually communicated her passion for her family, friends, students in our system and the people of our state. She had a keen intellect, a sharp wit (“Oka loka arti-choka”) and an uncommon sense of self-deprecating humor that gave her a magnetic appeal. Having a coffee with Debi was an experience not to be forgotten. She was a personal family friend and mentor to me. But I know that today there are countless others at FIU and around the State University System who feel exactly the same sense of loss – such was her impact and connection. She always conveyed her willingness to have your back. She gave comfort as freely to others as anyone you will ever meet.

She had a storied trajectory in state higher education policy and politics. Debi was one of the most respected policy and budget experts for our state education system. As the years passed, her tireless working knowledge about the critical issues of this state and the financial dynamics underlying state appropriations proved to be invaluable to all who sought her advice. She directly served as advisor to two Florida governors, SUS regents and governors, every SUS Chancellor for four decades – including me, university presidents, innumerable provosts, and legislative leaders and activists from both political parties. Millions of Floridians will never know how much her life’s work transformed their lives and made the opportunity of a good education possible.

Her zest for life, her ability to see the light beyond the darkness, and her strong, positive attitude were infectious and provided obvious strength to us all as we watched her battle recurring cancer.

Debi completed her education at the University of Florida and began her career in higher education in 1974 as an assistant law librarian for the administration at UF's Law Library. By 1978 she was a budget and policy advisor in the Office of the Governor.

Debi soon became a force within our Florida State University System, combining her passion for education with a disciplined absorption of policy and budget detail. She went from the Office of the Governor to the Florida Board of Regents. We will never forget the behind the scenes role she played in the drama that played itself out over the FIU and FAMU law school initiative. Her professionalism and collegiality set a very high standard during a difficult chapter in higher education politics. She subsequently was named vice chancellor of the Florida Division of Colleges and Universities amidst the reorganization of the higher education system.

In 2003 we jumped at the opportunity to ask Debi to join our FIU family as an integral member of the governmental relations team; she became associate vice president for education policy and budget. With her unique expertise and statewide political savvy, Debi could see trends and policy initiatives before they actually took shape. Her uncanny ability to track state revenue, and spot impactful nuances in technical legislative language were consequential assets in the inevitable bumping and grinding of the legislative process.

Debi Galloway's steady hand and fearless no-holds-barred approach were vital to our successful campaign to initiate and fund new colleges of medicine at both FIU and UCF. Most recently, she played a pivotal role in our efforts to understand performance funding and secure that funding for our FIU. She provided critical all-in guidance to move forward as a university even as she fought her devastating battle.

It is said that a person starts to truly live when she commits herself to a cause higher than her own. Debi's career in higher education led to a life filled with passion and purpose. She believed in creating communities of teaching, learning and discovery for all students, not just a few. Her teachings will live on for generations in the policies she championed, the leadership she mentored, and the students whose lives she selflessly helped to transform.

Shortly after our May 2015 graduations, I had the privilege of conferring on Debi Galloway our FIU Medallion of Courage at Shands Hospital. Her resilience and steadfast commitment to family, friends and community in the face of continuing health challenges illustrated her character and quality as an exemplary and courageous human being.

Debi's presence was truly a blessing for those of us who knew and worked with her. Thus, her passing leaves an aching void in our hearts.

Please join me in sending our condolences to her husband David Beggs; children Kate Beggs and Colin Beggs; and the rest of her loved ones. We will share details about services for Debi as we learn more.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark B. Rosenberg', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Mark B. Rosenberg  
President