



Address at the Engineering Expansion Press Conference

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on April 12, 2016**



This speech was presented to the attendees of the Engineering Expansion Press Conference held at the Parkview West Sky Lounge on April 12, 2016.

Good morning! Thank you for joining us to discuss the vision of the future for the College of Engineering and Computing and FIU.

Before I begin I'd like to comment on recent remarks made by the President of the Fair.

Yesterday, the President of the Fair chose to attack in a local newspaper our students and their hard-working families. This attack was part of his criticism of our university and its approach to adding more and better educational and job opportunities to our community.

Voters know what they were supporting when they overwhelmingly approved FIU's expansion on November 4, 2014. They know that they need FIU to expand for generations of students to come. And more recently City Commissions in Homestead, Cutler Bay, Florida City, Doral, Sweetwater, have unanimously approved the relocation of the Fair. So when Mr. Hohenstein levels a broadside against our students, he is attacking the will of the people who voted with a large majority in November 2014 to expand FIU and move the Fair.

The simple truth for us at FIU is that there are no more dedicated or determined students in this world than right here in our community. We proudly serve our students. We want to improve our service. That is why we are here today.

The Fair president chose to disrespect almost all of our students and the will of the community by criticizing our students for not graduating in four years - as if he did not understand: that most of our students work full or part time; that nearly half of our students are first generation in college; that most of our students support family members – mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, grandmothers and grandfathers who need help; that most of our students themselves depend on Pell grants or other forms of financial support given their limited family incomes. That this *disrespect* strikes at the heart of our community – these same students are pursuing their version of the American Dream!

Indeed, many of our community leaders – including four county commissioners – are proud FIU graduates. They may have had the same challenges of present day students who the Youth Fair President criticizes. Other students are here to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, architects, entrepreneurs, and teachers.

Mr. Hohenstein's *lack of understanding* and his *insensitivity* to our students, families and our community and its future educational and employment needs is at the heart of our dilemma.

How could a three week Fair impede the future of our community and our public university?

This aggressive attitude toward our students, and by implication their hard-working families, is NOT acceptable. If you remember only one thing, this insensitivity by the Fair is enabled by a nearly 100 year agreement with the county – one of the worst in the history of our community – that strikes at the heart of community well-being and the hard working families who depend upon education to uplift their sons and daughters to a brighter future.

Mr. Hohenstein – respect the will of the voters that spoke on November 4, 2014: **make way for the future and stop criticizing our students who are the leaders of tomorrow.**

And now, please allow me to repeat my statement for Spanish-language media in the room:

Hace algunos días, el dueño de la feria hizo unos lamentables comentarios sobre nuestros estudiantes. Al Sr. Dueño de la feria, le debería dar pena llegar a menospreciar a nuestros estudiantes – los hijos y nietos de esta comunidad – por no graduarse en 4 años. El debería saber que si les toma un poco más terminar la carrera es porque están trabajando, velando, para mantener sus familias.

Hay que recordar que el voto popular de nuestra comunidad en el 4 de Nov. De 2014 dejó claro el mensaje que FIU tiene que expandir.

Así es, que criticar a nuestros alumnos es criticar a los ciudadanos de nuestra ciudad por entender que el futuro bienestar se basa en las oportunidades educativas que ofrece nuestra universidad pública.

Me da pena con el Sr. Hohenstein por la falta de respeto a nuestros estudiantes, porque **no hay estudiantes más dedicados y trabajadores que los nuestros.**

Una gran mayoría son los primeros en sus familias de recibir una educación universitaria. Muchos de ellos toman más de 4 años para graduarse no porque quieren tomar más tiempo, sino porque tienen que trabajar para ayudar a sobrevivir con dignidad con sus familias.

No es justo que la Feria, que goza de un subsidio a través de un acuerdo muy favorable con el condado, se tome la libertad de atacar a nuestros estudiantes que son luchadores y trabajadores.

Cuando atacan a nuestros alumnos, al fin y al cabo está criticando a la familia hispana y afro-americana, la cual es la base primordial de nuestra universidad y comunidad. Su falta de sensibilidad a nuestra comunidad hace daño a los valores que nos unen aquí en nuestra ciudad.

Sr. Hohenstein -- respete la voluntad del pueblo a través del voto popular del 4 de Nov de 2014; **abra sus terrenos al futuro y dejen de criticar nuestros alumnos que son los líderes de mañana!**

Now, the reason we have gathered you all here this morning – FIU’s Phase 1 expansion plans into the Fair property.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) education remains an important conversation across the nation. Occupations in these fields are projected to see continued growth, and on average, those with a degree in a STEM discipline earn higher wages. The reality is that these careers are the driving force behind innovation and groundbreaking ideas. They advance research and new discoveries. They fuel the economic growth and stability of the region and the nation.

Behind all innovation and growth, though, are *people*. Scientists, mathematicians, technologists, engineers: these are the ultimate change-makers in these fields. That is why this conversation is so urgent – higher education institutions are responsible for preparing the next generation of these change-makers. STEM education is a part of FIU’s contribution to workforce preparation, innovation and research – for Florida and the nation.

In the last academic year, FIU awarded 15% of all degrees and 44% of 189 doctorates in National Science Foundation defined STEM fields. Among these, 70% of STEM degrees – at all levels – were awarded to underrepresented minorities compared to 20.5%, nationally.

As a majority-minority institution, 80% of our students are minority. FIU is number one in awarding BS in Engineering degrees to Hispanics in the continental U.S. and number five for African Americans nationwide. African-Americans, American Indians and Hispanics between 18 and 24 account for 34% of the total U.S. population but earn only 12% of all undergraduate degrees in engineering. This is extremely important when we talk about STEM fields.

Diversity in STEM, and especially working toward improving diversity in STEM, is also a national concern. FIU is a proud national leader in awarding STEM degrees to minorities. Every day, we make a real and noticeable difference toward the future of STEM, and play a unique role nationally in educating minorities, specifically in educating minorities in Engineering.

One major contributor to STEM education has been the College of Engineering and Computing (CEC). In the last academic year, they awarded 56% of STEM degrees at FIU! FIU continues to see tremendous growth, overall.

In the FIU *BeyondPossible2020* Strategic Plan we determined that in order to meet the increased demand for an educated workforce in South Florida we need to increase the number of graduates by 20% by 2020. Every year, we add 2,000 students. By 2020, we project we will have 65,000 students. A part of our growth will be in STEM-studies.

The President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness called for an increase of 10,000 engineering graduates per year. Additionally, needs analysis by the Department of Defense indicates that increase should vary across engineering disciplines. The largest required increases are in:

- Biomedical Engineering 27%
- Information Technology 22%
- Civil Engineering 20%
- Computer Science 15%
- Environmental Engineering 15%

The Engineering disciplines identified by the Department of Defense are primarily ones that are interdisciplinary. Interdisciplinary extends well beyond engineering disciplines. Much of the growth in engineering will take place in disciplines closely aligned with medicine, nursing, health sciences and public health.

Leading innovation companies and research centers have long recognized how essential propinquity is to creativity and interdisciplinary stimulus. This is where our FIU's expansion plan become essential. FIU is in a unique position to contribute to the prosperity of our region and our nation through STEM education. But to do so, we must grow.

In November 2014, 65 percent of almost 500,000 Miami-Dade voters demonstrated their confidence in FIU and our future. Despite what you may have heard, they gave us a mandate to expand to the 64 acres contiguous to our Maidique Campus.

We are talking about more and better job and educational opportunities. The expansion will allow us to enhance teaching, research and creative endeavors in areas such as engineering, as I have shown you today. We also can have an impact on the sciences and entrepreneurship. Doing so can only increase our standing among the great universities of this nation.

South Dade is important in our expansion plans. We have reviewed 30 different sites for the relocation of the Fair. Of all of them, South Dade is the most feasible site. We presented a proposal to County leaders outlining a win-win partnership.

We also have discussed our plans with our neighbors in Homestead, Cutler Bay, Florida City, Sweetwater and Doral. The commissions and councils of these municipalities have unanimously passed resolutions supporting our efforts. We see the Fair's relocation as a significant economic development initiative for our community. It is an initiative that aligns with the Fair's traditional roles and with the key drivers of South Dade – agriculture and tourism.

In addition to the traditional activities of the Fair, we see a new world of related initiatives that will create a 365-day Fair, and fuel a jobs creation initiative attuned to the opportunities of the 21st century. This is good for South Dade and the entire community.

This win-win partnership focuses on three agriculture and food science initiatives. Some of the highlights include: an Agribusiness Incubator (Biotechnology/technology production facility and Food Venture Center); Farm to Fork (Agritourism, Agrifestival, FIU Kitchen Lab, Pop-up Restaurants, Miami-Dade County Farm to Fork Festival); and Education (Agroecology program, Agritourism certificate program).

This expansion initiative is important for our institution and our community. But we cannot move forward until the leadership of Miami-Dade County carries out the wishes of the voters and demands that the Fair relocate.

We have found a location that meets the requirements of relocation under their lease with the county – an 85-year lease, by the way. Mayor Gimenez himself has called this “an incredibly sweet deal.”

That “sweet deal” however does not trump the education of thousands of people in our community. That “sweet deal” should not stand in the way of FIU carrying out its duty to provide access to higher education to the young people of our community who have the preparation, drive and determination to pursue higher education.

The Fair prides itself on having awarded \$10 million dollars to the young people of our community. We, on the other hand, award more than \$170 million each year in financial aid and scholarships to students.

We create jobs.

We are building South Florida's workforce.

We are contributing to the highly trained professionals that we need, here in Miami-Dade and beyond.

To continue being a beacon of hope and opportunity in our community, we must expand.

We serve the greater public purpose.

We have identified a win-win-win solution.

Now it is time for our leaders to step up.

It is time for the Fair to come to the table and negotiate in good faith.

I know I can count on your support as we urge our county leaders to do their part to make FIU the university this community deserves.