



2011 Faculty Convocation Presentation

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on September 22, 2011**



This speech was presented to attendees of the faculty convocation awards ceremony on September 22, 2011.

Good Afternoon!

We gather here today to celebrate:

- A record number of your students that graduated last academic year
- Faculty accomplishments that routinely exceed our high expectations
- An invigorated staff that habitually goes beyond in support of our community;
- Student achievement that makes us proud like SIPA's Model UN, our Solar Decathlon, the Honors College in Sweetwater, and our health.

This gathering is what I call an emotional hub – focusing on faculty. It is intended to reinforce our sense of identity – that that your work is valued; that your commitment is meaningful; that our hearts are filled with pride – in who you are and what you do!

And as I asked last year:

If you are not to be the guardians

Of the life of the mind, who will?

If you do not build our community, who will?

If you do not tell our story, who will?

We have something special here at FIU. It is a deeper and more energized pride in community. And this is making us stronger, and more viable, as we change to meet the challenges of the time.

Our FIU is a community that gives meaning and belonging. It gives identity and identification. It – you – gives hope and promise for the future. This in turn has resulted in a surging pride in our community for FIU.

I am continually asked: “what is my biggest challenge?” I normally answer: to manage expectations! Lately I am exploring this further. I am reaching for a new and better understanding of how to foster greater pride in and commitment to FIU. So let me walk you through this.

Universities are communities of memory and hope (Howard Foster Lowry, College Talks, 1969). You understand this. You respect this. Imagine your best professors and

teachers. Remember your worst. You can all remember the formative moments, in and out of the classroom, that were critical during your college years. With all the uncertainty and heartbreak out there now, the constant for your students is you as teacher, professor, mentor, advisor, coach, leader, innovator, truth teller, and yes, role model.

The rocker Bruce Springstein reminds us that: "one spark lights a fire." As faculty, we light fires in the mind. But our history as an institution is one of lighting fires! We lit fires when we demanded a freshman class; when we insisted on residence halls, advanced programs and doctoral degrees; when after two earlier and failed applications, we finally were admitted into Phi Beta Kappa; when for three decades we set fires for a law school, and were extinguished at least twice before building a statewide bonfire that is burning so brightly that we are first in the state in bar passage. We lit another statewide fire, that is burning so brightly, when we went after a medical school, and now have a miracle on Eighth Street that has been fully-funded, even with economic collapse all around.

Here's a new fire we just have lit - This is from an email that I received last night:

Dear President Rosenberg,

We are New Hampshire residents and our daughter, Jill, is a fourth year student at FIU.

It was her dream, from the time she was a middle schooler, to attend a "Div. 1 college with sports excitement".

Congratulations to you, Coach Cristobal, and FIU for making this a reality. Jill's dad watched the game on ESPN3 and I followed along with the FIU blog while I chaperoned a high school dance.

We are both teachers and value education. Jill made an excellent decision when she decided to transfer to FIU last year to study journalism.

We are very proud of her and her school!

Sincerely, Pat Boucher

Here's another take from an academician right here at FIU:

Mark, It was an unbelievable day. For those of us that have seen FIU grow, brought tears to my eyes to see our students' excitement, painted in blue and gold, their school pride.

As you know, I fully believe that our destiny is linked to our ability to be high-touch, not just high tech. High-touch comes in many forms which you play a critical role, both

in and out of the classroom. Our Worlds Ahead branding is about high-touch. It is about the heat of the fire!

Faculty pride, identity and commitment are critical components of the emotional hub that we are building at FIU. Student pride is on the rise. No doubt it is engendered by Student-athlete performance and that great American university tradition called football. Now, this is something new for us. Therefore, social identity, as a concept in the life of the mind, cannot be denied.

Meyer (2002) tells us that the best kind of organizational commitment is affective commitment, based on an emotional attachment. The positive visibility of our student-athletes and their success is compelling. People need good news. They need identification. They want to be identified with something good. People want to bask in reflected glory. There is a whole literature out there.

Reason is a slave to emotion.... Welcome to another part of our Worlds Ahead experience!

So I stand before you today to tell you that what you do is important, if not critical, to sustain an educated workforce and a prideful community. We can justifiably be proud of our institution.

We must use the accomplishments of our colleagues, and the positive energy of today and the past few days, to recommit ourselves to being Worlds Ahead – in and out of the classroom.

Dear Colleagues, we have something special here at FIU. It is a deeper and more energized pride in community. And this is making us stronger, and more viable, as we change to meet the challenges of the time.

Thank You for your commitment to FIU!