



**Address at the Faculty Convocation 2015**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on September 24, 2015**



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*“Light a Pathway to a Better Life”*

I assume that most of us as professionals, dedicated to the life of the mind, operate implicitly or explicitly with a personal Pantheon. We each have a collective group who were our best teachers, or who inspired us, mentored us or otherwise motivated us to be who we are today.

Listen to Dr. Seuss: “To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world.”

This quote isn’t from a book, but rather from Dr. Seuss himself. I appreciate this quote because it reminds us how much the actions of one person can make a difference to someone else – how it creates each of our Pantheons throughout our lives.

My Pantheon is filled mostly with my teachers, advisers and mentors – mostly from my years living in a university community growing up, and then studying at Miami OH and the University of Pittsburgh.

But I have been lucky to have some excellent teachers, advisers and mentors right here at FIU. I want to assure you: this institution you are connected with and the colleagues around you make a difference. We push each other to take responsibility for everything we do and for everything we don’t do – responsibility equals IMPACT – and we are Florida Impact University!

Listen to Kayla Riera-Gomez, a practicing attorney in town whom I met days ago right here on campus: “That FIU program saved our family.”

What program? She was referring to the Summer Treatment Program offered by our Center for Children and Families this past summer. Her son, suffering from behavioral issues, went through the program along with family members.

Listen to her words again: “STP and the FIU team led by Dr. Katie Hart and Dr. Paolo Graziano are unique.”

She clearly has a place in her Pantheon for two FIU faculty who led the program. Like with so many of you, and what you do professionally, the skills that were put to work

for Kayla's son derived from years of research, debate, testing, evaluating, teaching, and applying.

What a noble cause – putting the blessings of your talents to work for the benefit of others. But, our environment is not static to sustain our work in this complex era, we must continually reframe who we are, and what we do, and how we do it.

Proudly we are a university, to thousands of people who depend on us, we are much more! A solutions center, a beacon of hope and opportunity, a social, political and financial network center – a sanctuary from all that may be hurtful, disagreeable, ugly.

Regardless, we want our community to have high expectations for our faculty, staff and fiduciaries. This is a political season as we enter a new round of presidential campaigning and the inevitable primaries. The contrasts are stark.

On one hand, candidates for public service are attempting to dignify discourse and to frame alternatives using data. On the other, a candidate who seeks out the lowest common denominator, and then gleefully lowers it, debasing core tenets of civility and the golden rule.

But here, every day we can dignify discourse and nullify the base instincts that this political season engenders by inspiring our students with research, discovery, and application that makes the world a better place, by mentoring, advising, and listening.

Every day we have a unique opportunity to elevate the human spirit, to provide hope and opportunity, and to light a pathway to a better life. So let me introduce you to Jose Nino.

Today he is the chief operating officer for the e-commerce division of a major public company right up the road – Perry Ellis International. His work is critical to this major employer in Miami Dade County. Many of you wear the Cubavera products.

Two degrees from FIU. A passionate, unyielding, unapologetic supporter of this university – he is the kind of graduate who every university wants. Passionate for FIU.

Ask him - he will tell you. He has clarity about us. He says that if it would not have been for Prof. Tillie Fox, and if it would have not been for staff in the Office of Career Planning and Placement, he would NOT have the opportunities he has today.

Whenever I meet with our board members, I hasten to make sure that they know that we get it: that our work in this new century requires a new level of commitment and understanding of the times; that students go deep into debt to get their educations from us, and that they and their families see us as their only pathway to a better life.

We get this. You get this. This is our responsibility. But most importantly, to one person, you are the world.

To Kayla and her son – wow, most certainly, they – your colleagues – are in the Pantheon of that grateful family. To Jose Nino, at least two of your colleagues are in his Pantheon.

What I want for you – is that you are admitted into many Pantheons as you live your professional lives here at FIU. If you do, I promise, you will be fulfilled and enriched, and as importantly, the world will be a better place. Congratulations to our award winners this year!