



Steve Sauls's Farewell Reception

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on December 11, 2014**



This speech was presented to the attendees of the farewell reception for Steve Sauls, in honor of his retirement, on December 11, 2014.

This has been a very rich afternoon. This afternoon we gather as a community to thank Steve Sauls. His impact is both immediate and lasting. His legacies are everywhere. His lessons are transcendent. As Steve begins this newest phase of his incredibly rich and varied life, let me tell you, we are losing more than we realize.

How do you distill into a few moments, the work of a life? So let me try. Patriotic American who loves his country. Steve Sauls is a veteran of the US Military. How many veterans do we have in this audience? Steve paid his dues during a time of incredible angst in this country. A decade of assassinations of our most gifted: JFK, MLK, RFK. Three years at Langley AFB, and the ROVN. Then he returned to his UF to finish his degree and start his political career.

He represents a level of maturity and professionalism that we needed when he started in 1990 at FIU. Wherever he goes, he brings adult supervision to the table. Now no doubt he got a lot of this from his beloved mother, who I was privileged to meet along the way. What a paragon of rectitude and independence.

Just look at who mentored Steve along the way. Four great Floridians, giants in the history of our States 20th century:

- Ralph Turlington
 - 25 years in the Florida legislature.
 - Speaker of the House.
 - 15 years as Florida's commissioner of education.
 - Two buildings named for him, one in Tallahassee where I worked for three years; one in Gainesville at this Alma Mater.
- Bob Graham
 - State legislator, two term governor and US senator.
 - A determined master of the political game and a man of steadfast principle.
- Tom Gustafson
 - A visionary Floridian who served in the Florida House for 14 years, and as its Speaker in the late 1980s.
- Jack Gordon
 - A Miami leader who served first on the Miami Dade County School Board.
 - A state senator for 20 years whose legacy and impact on FIU set a very high standard for current and future legislators from our community.

No doubt, these great Floridians made Steve better, just as he has made us better.

Look around our campus. Everywhere you go, you can find monuments to the work of Steve Sauls and his Governmental affairs unit. And let me tell you, Michelle, and the Governmental Relations team; we expect you to build on the platform that Steve carefully, and at times painfully, built. He had nothing in the 1990s when he started our governmental affairs capability, except a belief in this institution and its inherent goodness. You have everything, including all the incredible good will here in this sanctuary this afternoon!

But it's not the physical monuments. This is where he challenges us all, and this is where we must honor his legacy. No, it's not the physical monuments. Maya Angelou said it best that one of her greatest blessings had been her ability to turn people into children of mine. Look at the list of individuals, mostly FIU students and so many associated with FIU, who Steve himself has mentored or encouraged. Look at who they are and what they have accomplished! By the way, I am one of Steve's mentees. The lessons that he has taught me have made me a better human being. A better and more decent person.

I was really touched reviewing Steve's biography and his resume. The two page biography is chocked full of the monuments that mark his incredible career. What struck me, however, was the modesty and humility of the last sentence of this two-page elegy. "Despite these achievements, Sauls considers his greatest achievements to be the successes of the many students he has mentored along the way". And here is his lesson. "Against the material markers of life, what really matters is the people around you and the hope and opportunity that you can bring to their lives ". The FIU experience is about this, people helping people. People caring about others. People honoring the life of the mind. And the power of hope and opportunity! Steve Sauls embodies this aspiration and intention!

Steve, it's not the years in life, but the life in years. I am grateful, FIU is grateful, and your community is grateful. We are a better world, in a world that needs help, because of your commitments and being.

Thank you, Steve Sauls!!