



Address at the Dreammakers Breakfast

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on October 21, 2014**



This speech was presented to attendees of the Dreammakers Breakfast, which was hosted by the FIU President's Council as a fundraising event for First Generation scholarships, on October 21, 2014.

Good morning! Thank you for joining us to celebrate another successful President's Council Dreammakers breakfast in support of the First Generation Scholarship.

At FIU, we understand that we are a beacon of hope and opportunity for this community. As an anchor institution, we are willing to take responsibility for our community.

We are committed to providing access to higher education and to provide high quality educational opportunity to all young people in our community who have the preparation, drive and determination to pursue a university degree. We are committed to our student's success. We are committed to and passionate about impact.

You are associated with FIU today because you want to move the needle and you have a sense of urgency about this!

We live and work in a world of contrast. Mayhem is everywhere. Dark weapons and grim acts of violence are drivers of discourse and social media from the local to the global. Yet, here we are, believing that it is important. It is important to keep hope alive for so many who desire to get their educations while working with some of the most determined and appreciative students anywhere.

As Thomas Friedman said several years ago when we inaugurated our new SIPA, "You did not get the memo that average is ok".

A different NY Times columnist upon his first visit to FIU said that FIU was unstoppable.

So let's have a frank talk about money - the funds to help students get their educations, achieve their dreams. I know that as thinking individuals with a heart and a commitment to community, you have a sense about things in our community.

Here's a happy factoid: Bloomberg recently reported that Miami ranked no. 7 above Dubai, Paris, and Beijing, among cities that matter to high net worth investors. Indeed, international buyers have purchased more than \$10 billion of South Florida property since 2008, according to the Chicago based National Assoc. of Realtors. That's the good news.

Here's the flip side: Did you know that Miami's income inequality is third highest among US cities after Atlanta and New Orleans. Miami's income inequality is higher than Buenos Aires and Rio. It mirrors Mexico City's level. Our Miami has the third highest gap in the US between Households at the 20th percentile of the income scale and those at the 95th percentile. This income gap in Miami has grown faster than all cities except San Francisco and Atlanta since 2007. Miamians at the 20th percentile earned at most \$10,438 per household or about \$4,175 per person. This translates to about \$11/day.

Data from the U.S. Census Bureau showed that, in 2012, a student in the top quartile of family income had a 73 percent chance of completing a baccalaureate degree by age 24 compared 8.3 percent in the bottom income quartile. The unmet financial need for our students is almost \$370 million dollars!

Our students are facing even bigger financial hurdles since the criteria changed for the Bright Futures scholarships. At FIU, for Fall 2013, over 2,000 freshman received Bright Futures this fall; only 860 received this state support.

Ladies and gentlemen, the proverbial Barbarians are at the gate. We can't let this happen!

The reduction in Bright Futures hits us in the heart of our university. You see it's, first generation students, by definition are the ones who need the financial support the most. The change has had a disproportionate effect on lower income and minority students.

So who are we? We care. We fight. We don't apologize for taking action. We refuse to shut the door of opportunity to eligible students because of the accident of their zip code of residence, race, ethnicity or because their parents did not earn a university degree.

Who are we? We are FIU. We embrace the reality of who we are and where we are! We are who we are! We embrace the radical idea that we take responsibility for the advanced education that eligible students in our community deserve.

You see we too have weapons. The weapon of clarity about helping our students! And the weapon of generosity, for hopeful students deserving of the best college education available, through FIU. With these two bright weapons, we can keep hope and opportunity alive for countless thousands and we will be better for it!

So I end by asking each of you, if not now, when?! If not us, who?!