

FIU needs to expand to serve the future

As Miami-Dade's public research university, FIU is in a unique position to contribute to the prosperity of our region and nation. One way we do that is through the education we provide our best and brightest, specifically, through STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, which most experts agree is the way of the future.

Last week we unveiled a new vision for the future of engineering education at FIU — a plan that includes a new engineering building at our Modesto A. Maidique Campus. To accomplish this vision, however, FIU must break new ground and expand.

We envision this \$150 million building will be the first built on Miami-Dade County land currently occupied by the Miami-Dade County Youth Fair. But we cannot build until the fair relocates.

For the past six years we have been working with the fair and Miami-Dade County officials, who are the landlords, to find a suitable site for the relocation. Despite a great site being identified in South Dade and a clear mandate from voters (65 percent approval in a November 2014 referendum), the fair refuses to move.

We have committed to raise \$50 million to pay for the fair's relocation. Its leadership insists the cost is higher. We disagree. More important: What is the price to our community if FIU does not expand?

FIU has the hardest working, most driven students. All they need is opportunity. We currently educate more than 54,000 students and graduate some 13,000 a year. We plan to be educating 65,000 students by 2020.

FIU is uniquely suited to move the needle when it comes to STEM education in this community and beyond, particularly among minorities.

We must get on with the business of building Miami-Dade's future to meet the challenges of the 21 Century. If you agree, consider signing our students' petition at expand.fiu.edu.

-MARK B. ROSENBERG

President, Florida International University