MEMORANDUM

December 26, 2014

Dear Member of the FIU Community!

Here we are at the end of 2014—a momentous and very challenging year for so many reasons. As the holiday season and New Year is upon us, we have yet another opportunity for renewal, another opportunity to recommit to adding value in this world to our friends, families and those who count on us to get it right. Our connections to Florida International University give us an unprecedented way to have an impact, to help those who have hope and want an opportunity to make a difference.

One need only talk to our faculty, staff, students, graduates and their families to see how that happens in the real world.

• From a December 2014 First Generation Accounting and Finance graduate with a job offer from Deloitte:

  I just wanted to thank you once again for providing business students with endless opportunities. As a first generation student coming from a family with scarce financial resources, my experience while attending FIU has been a dream. My most recent opportunity was with Deloitte in South Africa…I had never traveled outside my home country, Colombia, and the United States, so it was an unbelievably valuable and rewarding learning experience. There are no words to express the magnitude of my gratitude.

• From the spouse of a December 2014 graduate:

  I attended yesterday’s commencement ceremony at FIU. My husband graduated with a master’s in IT. I enjoyed the commencement immensely. I have never been to a graduation ceremony with so much energy and music. It was wonderful and we are so proud of him.

  I especially enjoyed your presentation of Christian [a Worlds Ahead student]. I believe you mentioned he had autism. It was uplifting. My husband and I have two sons with pervasive developmental disorder. One is 16 years old with college on the horizon. I can only imagine the pride his family feels. Kudos to FIU for embracing him and students like him.

• From a former employee on the definitive vote for FIU on Nov. 4, 2014:

  Congratulations on FIU’s victory at the polls. [The]…vision for FIU’s future was recognized and confirmed by voters. Our community has embraced FIU and supports the efforts of making this university even better than it already is. I feel so proud of FIU’s accomplishments.

If you read no further, please know that as we begin 2015, there is gratitude out there for what you are doing to foster student achievement, improve lives and enhance the quality of living in our community.
It’s been a banner year here at FIU and the contributions of the entire FIU family are the reason why. As we look back on 2014, and ahead to 2015, I wanted to share with you highlights of the past year and give you a taste of what’s to come in the New Year.

**FIU Expansion:** Sixty-five percent of almost 500,000 Miami-Dade voters demonstrated their confidence in FIU and our future by overwhelmingly voting for our expansion to the 64 acres contiguous to MMC campus. FIU’s expansion means more and better educational and work opportunities for our community. We couldn’t be prouder of our FIU family who helped make our case to the community.

Commencement: Just a few days ago, more than 4,200 FIU students participated in our seven fall commencement ceremonies. It was great to see so many loved ones packing our arena to share our graduates’ special day!

Every year we recognize a few of our most outstanding graduates as Worlds Ahead graduates in our spring, summer and fall commencement ceremonies. Here are some of our most inspiring graduates from throughout the year:

- Haitian-born Elcana Jean-Pierre suffers from cerebral palsy but was not diagnosed for years. When she was 9 years old, Elcana, her mother and sister boarded a small boat hoping to reach the United States, but were intercepted by the Coast Guard. Elcana and her family were taken to the U.S. military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. After two years of living in tents, Elcana fell ill and was flown to Miami for medical treatment. Shortly after, she officially began her schooling at age 12. The following year, Elcana was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. Against all odds, Elcana graduated from high school and set her sights on a career in social work. She excelled at FIU and last summer earned her bachelor’s degree in social work.
• U.S. Army veteran Rodney Demerritte overcame post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and homelessness to become the first graduate from FIU’s partnership with the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program. He is also helping others suffering from PTSD overcome the challenges he once faced. He graduated in the fall with a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies.

• Sally Sarmiento’s family struggled to gain political asylum in the United States after falling victim to guerrillas in her native Colombia. Despite challenges that included working to pay for her schooling and not having a regular place to live, Sally became a successful public relations student and is now pursuing a job in her field.

• Maria Martinez immigrated to the United States from Cuba during her senior year in high school. Always ahead of the curve, Maria served as a mentor to her peers as a tutor in the Student Support Service Office. As a Ronald E. McNair fellow she conducted research in the Titan America Structures and Construction Testing Laboratory, completed an internship at the Florida Department of Transportation, and earned a coveted NACME Fellowship and a FGLSAMP scholarship. She is currently at Stanford University pursuing a master’s in structural engineering.

These are just a few of our outstanding graduates. To read more about them and other Worlds Ahead graduates, click here.

ABC Bridge Conference: In early December our Accelerated Bridge Construction University Transportation Center, led by Professor Atorod Azizinamini (FIU ABC-UTC), held the 2014 National Accelerated Bridge Construction Conference that brought together more than 800 bridge experts from around the globe to address building economical and long-lasting bridges. As luck would have it, the conference started just as a local bridge made headlines by crashing down on a yacht. This called for experts to comment on bridge safety and Dr. Azizinamini was on hand to speak with the media.

Model UN: This past October, FIU’s Model United Nations (Model UN) team had their first big win of the academic year.

FIU Model UN, comprised of 12 delegates, earned Best Small Delegation honors, the equivalent of first place, beating out small delegations from the University of Florida,

**Badia Spice Contest:** Eddie Zeng, a hospitality management graduate student, was declared the winner of the second annual student spice competition, sponsored by FIU’s Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management and Badia Spices Inc.

More than a contest, this is applied research and coursework that provides grassroots experience for students, giving participants a comprehensive understanding of production, research and development from the ground up within a real, scalable market.

The winning blend is a combination of thyme, kosher salt, celery seed, fennel seed, cumin, paprika, black pepper, and smoked paprika. The spice will debut—and its name will be revealed—during the Food Network & Cooking Channel South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by FOOD & WINE in February 2015. It is expected to be available in stores by summer.

**Worlds Ahead Faculty:** This past semester some of our Worlds Ahead faculty members have been recognized for their outstanding achievements and work. Let me share two of them with you:

- **Aileen Marty:** TIME magazine recently named the selfless medical workers who have waged the war against Ebola as “Person of the Year.” We’re proud that our very own Dr. Aileen Marty contributed to the global fight against this deadly disease. Marty, an infectious disease specialist at the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOM), spent 31 days in Nigeria, serving with the World Health Organization’s Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network.
• **Angela Laird**: FIU associate professor of physics Angela Laird has been named one of the world’s most highly cited researchers by Thomson Reuters in its “The World’s Most Influential Scientific Minds of 2014” report. She heads FIU’s Cognitive Neuroscience and Imaging Center, which conducts research on brain activity, including language, cognition, emotion, action, sensory perception and mental health.

Research:
• **FIU’s Aquarius Reef Base**, the world’s only underwater research laboratory, is going strong. Over the summer, Fabien Cousteau carried out a landmark mission in Aquarius. Scientists from FIU’s Southeast Environmental Research Center (SERC), under the leadership of director Todd Crowl, have expanded their research through the transfer of the operation of the Aquarius Reef Base from NOAA to FIU. Located in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, at a depth of 63 feet, the laboratory received more than $2 million of research funding from NOAA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and private industry. The Medina Family Foundation gave a $1.25 million gift to establish the Medina Aquarius Program.

• Earlier this year, four astronauts participated in a NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO) nine-day mission at Aquarius Reef Base. They conducted activities on the ocean floor that will inform future International Space Station and exploration activities. These studies provide information that correlates directly to life aboard the space station, where crew members must frequently...
perform critical tasks that present constraining factors similar to those experienced in an undersea environment.

- FIU has also been named a major research, monitoring and education partner of the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, under an agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

![Aquarius Reef Base](image)

- Recently, FIU’s School of International and Public Affairs received three prestigious Title VI grants to fund programs and student scholarships in areas of strategic importance for the United States: Latin America and Africa.

- Earlier this semester, FIU’s electrical engineering students partnered with local middle and high school students to build a satellite that will be launched into space next year. The satellite will send back pictures, speed and temperature readings as it orbits high above the earth every 90 minutes. This is believed to be the first such U.S. satellite developed by a team that includes middle, high school and college students.

- FIU and the National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG) have joined forces to create the International Center for Tropical Botany at The Kampong in Coconut Grove. The center’s headquarters will be built on land donated to FIU from NTBG, and will be adjacent to The Kampong, the NTGB’s only garden outside of Hawaii. Scientists at the center will lead efforts to preserve and study tropical plants for future generations. Research will have a strong focus on the economic uses of tropical plants. The center is supported by a $2.5 million gift from the William R. Kenan Jr. Charitable Trust and a matching $2.5 million gift from the Batchelor Foundation.

**eMerge Americas:** Last May, FIU partnered with the Technology Foundation of the Americas to host eMerge Americas Techweek, a conference that brought together local leaders with the idea of establishing a technology hub for the Americas. This spring FIU
will once again join eMerge and showcase some of this year’s biggest projects. Stay tuned!

**Linda Fenner 3D Mobile Mammography Center:** A $1.1 million gift from the Braman Family Foundation now allows the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine to offer state-of-the-art screenings at its Linda Fenner 3D Mobile Mammography Center, the first of its kind in South Florida. 3D mammography detects more breast tumors with fewer “false alarms” than standard or digital mammograms alone.

**TEDxFIU:** Our third installment of TEDxFIU, “Fearless Journey,” was a bittersweet event. While it was wonderfully successful and thought provoking, with appearances by educator Charles Bleiker, author John Dufresne, vocalist and composer Karla Gutierrez and global philanthropist Doug Jefferies, among others, there was sadness as well: FIU grad and English teacher David Menasche, originally scheduled to speak at the event, passed away in November, just days after TEDxFIU. As a community, we mourn his loss.

![TEDxFIU team](image)

**Education Effect:** As part of FIU’s Education Effect initiative at Booker T. Washington Senior High, Miami-Dade County Public Schools has agreed to refurbish the school’s 25-year-old planetarium at a cost of more than $250,000. The Education Effect is a university community school partnership between M-DCPS and FIU that began in 2011 at Miami Northwestern Senior High School in Liberty City. With a $1 million investment from the Lennar Foundation, the partnership was expanded earlier this year to include Booker T., one of Miami-Dade County’s oldest schools in the historic African-American community of Overtown.

In addition, Engineers on Wheels – launched in September at Booker T. Washington - is a high-tech van that will visit schools in Dade and Broward counties to offer students hands-on engineering activities and lab experiments – while exposing them to career
opportunities in STEM fields. The work will be led by FIU engineering students and overseen by FIU faculty.

**Rankings:** FIU and its programs continue to make it into national rankings:

- This year, FIU ranked **number 13** among institutions whose students graduate with the least debt load, according to U.S. News & World Report’s 2015 edition of Best Colleges.
- FIU’s College of Business’ international business program tied for **eighth** among the best undergraduate programs in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report.
- FIU also was recently named among the top universities in the country in terms of engagement and contributions to its community. Washington Monthly ranked FIU **24th out of 277** higher education institutions.
- HispanicBusiness named **FIU Law the top law school for Hispanics** in its 2014 Diversity Practices annual report. It also rated the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine **ninth among medical schools** in the country for Hispanics.
- What’s more, for the first time in **FIU Law**’s 12- year history, the college has been ranked in the **Top 100 in U.S. News & World Report’s Best Graduate Schools rankings**.
- The **FIU Department of Interior Architecture** has been ranked among the **top 10 interior architecture degree programs in the nation, and first among universities in Florida by DesignIntelligence**. The “America’s Best Architecture & Design Schools” survey is conducted annually by DesignIntelligence on behalf of the Design Futures Council. The research ranks undergraduate and graduate programs from the perspective of leading practitioners. The FIU Department of Interior Architecture ranked ninth nationally. It also ranked number four among undergraduate programs and number two among graduate programs in the southern U.S.

**College of Engineering Anniversary:** The College of Engineering and Computing celebrated its **30th anniversary** in 2014 by graduating an all-time high of 1,011 students, increasing the number of students enrolled by 10 percent, and reaching an all-time high in research expenditures. Our hope in 1984 was that we would offer a quality, affordable engineering education for our community and I am proud to say that our college produces the most Hispanic engineers and computer scientists in the country and is the sixth largest producer of African-American engineers. I am excited to see what the sure-to-be bright future will hold!

**Walk on Water:** Last year marked the 25**th** anniversary of what has become an iconic event, the assignment of architecture Professor Jaime Canavés for his Materials & Methods of Construction class: build shoes that sustain a human while walking across a lake. The annual Walk on Water competition celebrates innovation and creativity among our architecture-minded Panthers.
Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum: In the New Year, the Frost gets a new director: Jordana Pomeroy, who comes to FIU from Louisiana State University’s Museum of Art in Baton Rouge where she has served as executive director since 2012.

Pomeroy steps into the large and dedicated shoes of Carol Damian, who has been director and chief curator at the Frost since 2008.

This year also continues a series of ground-breaking exhibits by internationally acclaimed Chinese artists, which started last year with Simon Ma and Wang Qingsong.
In 2015, the Frost will showcase the work of Xu Bing. Special thanks to Lidu Yi, FIU art history professor, for curating this amazing show.

**Fundraising and Helping our Students:** Once again, this year, we came together as a university to raise money for FIU initiatives, scholarships, and for those in our community who need us most. We’ve raised close to $200,000 for United Way and are still counting! We also raised more than $1.3 million for First Generation scholarships! This amount is eligible for state matching funds and represents a 52 percent increase from the year before! Approximately 1,500 students will benefit from the scholarships. We also exceeded the FIU Foundation goal of $50 million by bringing together a record number of donors and making our impact that much stronger!

**FIU Construction:** We are building a better university for a better community.

Over the past two years, we have completed renovation projects on all campuses for a total $45.5 million. This includes upgrades to the housing facilities; new computer labs and work stations at College of Law library at Diaz Balart Hall at MMC and Glenn Hubert Library at BBC; renovations to the student lounge at Wolfe University Center at BBC; the installation of a new iconic Panther sculpture in Panther Plaza at BBC; upgrades to the arena; and improvements made to the Engineering Center.

During 2014 we opened Academic Health Center 5 (AHC 5), inaugurated our FIU@I-75 facility and the Stocker AstroScience Center, which has modeled its control room on the bridge of the U.S.S. Enterprise from “Star Trek: The Next Generation.” Its main telescope made its debut at the end of the fall semester.

This winter we will be inaugurating the new Management and New Growth Opportunity (MANGO) building, and later this spring, Parking Garage 6 and the Ambulatory Care Center.
Looking forward, Royal Caribbean’s state-of-the art facility at the FIU Biscayne Bay Campus is expected to open this year.

We also have begun construction of the Student Academic Support Center (SASC). Expected to open in March 2016, this facility will be the focal point for student services on campus including admissions, student orientation, advising, registration, student financial services and career services.

**FIU at 50:** Finally, the coming year marks the 50th anniversary of FIU’s founding. What a long way we have come! From our first freshman class of about 5,000 students, pioneering a homegrown public university in an abandoned air field to our current enrollment of 54,000 Panthers strong, we have become a keystone Miami-Dade County institution.

As an anchor institution in our community, we understand our role in producing more talent to fill the pressing needs of both the local and global marketplace. This translates into helping our students earn their degrees in a timely manner. And we are doing so through the high-tech and high-touch Graduation Success Initiative (GSI) that features online systems that provide students with information and guide them throughout their undergraduate education. Our efforts have made waves. In fall of 2013, FIU was one of only two public universities in the country recognized with a high profile national award from the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities for making visible progress toward improving graduation rates. As we enter this landmark year, let’s keep moving toward our goal of helping all undergraduate students get their degrees on time.

To celebrate our 50th anniversary, FIU is embarking on a university-wide year of service to encourage students, employees and alumni to volunteer in the community and extend FIU’s 50-year history of making a difference.
Your first opportunity to contribute with other members of the FIU family will take place during the MLK Day of Service on Saturday, January 17, at MLK Park and Gwen Cherry Park. I invite you to join your fellow Panthers as we clean up the grounds and plant new trees. Sign up here.

Other opportunities to get involved will be posted on the website we’ll launch later this month. There we’ll ask you to share your stories, photos and videos throughout the year. We’ll keep track of the hours we collectively put in and call out the heavy hitters. So lead by example: take your coworkers, friends and family along wherever you see a need. The power of community service is catching. The power of the Blue and Gold is infinite.

No doubt, the best is yet to come! Our institution and community are blessed to have your commitment to student achievement, learning, the life of the mind and community well-being. There is much ahead of us, our Next Horizon is so promising.

Rosalie and I are privileged to be a part of FIU and share in the accomplishments and joys that make it a Worlds Ahead Experience!

All of you had a hand in our achievements this year. Thank you for all of your hard work and all of your contributions.

I know that working together, as we always have, we will continue to make FIU the beacon of hope and opportunity that it is for our community.
Wishing the Panther family a healthy, happy and successful New Year,

Mark B. Rosenberg
President