

MEMORANDUM

January 1, 2012

Dear FIU Community!

Happy New Year to you, your families and loved ones! As we look forward to this new year and semester, we have significant momentum as a consequence of your efforts throughout 2011, and a “December to remember.”

Last month could not have been more fulfilling. So many of you participated in the six exhilarating commencements, where we graduated nearly 3,000 joyful students. The jam-packed events showcased our 2011 graduates, including numerous students whom you helped us identify and salute as *Worlds Ahead!* We also recognized with an honorary degree philanthropist and humanitarian Ms. Kimberly Green, a senior fellow-designate in the School of International and Public Affairs.

We hit important milestones this past month. Dr. Herbert Wertheim completed his pledge to donate \$20 million to the College of Medicine! On the fund-raising front, for the first time since the creation of the First Generation Scholarship Fund in 2006, we surpassed the challenge from the State of Florida, raising \$516,328 to be matched 100 percent by the State. For our hard-working students, this means an additional \$1 million in scholarship funding for qualifying students.

The deans and others in our health initiatives (Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, Arts and Sciences, Engineering) provided a first-ever briefing to the full board of the John T. MacDonald Foundation about the many initiatives being carried out by faculty and staff worthy of the foundation’s philanthropic support. And we subsequently hosted the new senior leadership of Blue Cross Blue Shield, who had never previously visited FIU!

And thanks to your generosity, we surpassed our \$200,000 pledge to the United Way and raised more than \$210,000 for the neediest in our community.

FIU faculty had quite a month. Just a few of many faculty highlights in December included: Campbell McGrath, English, being one of three poets to win a United States Artists Literature Fellows award; Golam Kimbria, Mathematics & Statistics, publishing his 100th peer-reviewed article; Fenfei Leng, Chemistry, publishing his ground-breaking research on DNA in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*; Jorge Rodriguez, Physics, along with other colleagues at FIU, Caltech, University of Michigan, and CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research) breaking a world record for data transfer hitting 186 gigabits per second; Tom Frankovich, Southeast Environmental Research Center, serving on an AAAS sponsored three-day visit to Cuba to explore collaboration in meteorology, and marine sciences, infectious diseases and informal science education; and three faculty and eight graduate students and postdocs from Earth and

the Environment department presenting papers at the American Geophysical Union meeting in San Francisco.

Years of work materialized for several faculty with books published in December. Jennifer Gebelein published *A Geographic Perspective of Cuban Landscapes* with Springer; Ana Luszczynska's, *The Ethics of Community*, appeared from Continuum Press; and John DuFresne's edited collection, *Blue Christmas*, was published by Books and Books.

Several faculty received notice that they had received significant external funding in December: Wonbang Choi, Mechanical and Materials Engineering, \$600,000 from Department of Defense for his work on "Fabrication of graphene field effect transistors;" Mary Jo Trepka, Public Health, an additional \$500,000 from NIH for her work on "Retrospective cohort study of racial disparities in HIV survival" in recognition of her Presidential Early Career Award; and several faculty in History and a colleague in Education received \$500,000 to improve teaching of history in Miami Dade County Public Schools.

In association with Art Basel, the exhibition that John Stuart, Architecture, curated "Bringing Beauty Into Our Lives: Art and Architecture in Coral Gables During the New Deal, 1933-1941" at the Coral Gables Museum was selected as one of the top local exhibits by the critical online journal *Art Circuits*; Pip Bryant exhibited *Transformations* at MBUS on Miami Beach; and Mette Tommerup had two exhibitions, *Full Salute - object or subject* at Dorsch Gallery and *Ping Pong 2011 Swiss/US Artist Collaborative Group* show at DACRA.

Our Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine received accreditation to offer Continuing Medical Education programs, an important building block for our new Academic Health Center.

During December, we hosted the annual [Children's Holiday Party](#), bringing nearly 100 public school fifth graders and their teachers from throughout the community to celebrate Christmas and learn about FIU. Special thanks to Dr. Rosa Jones and her able team of sponsors whose generosity allowed for our youth to receive gifts that they otherwise might not receive during this holiday season.



Our annual Holiday Party for staff and faculty proved to be another success, bringing together our FIU family for an afternoon of fun and dance to close out the year. We also did some good with this gathering, collecting and then distributing nearly 1,600 toys for needy children throughout the community. The Biscayne Bay Campus Holiday Party rocked as well, and we had a chance to thank our North Miami Mayor Andre Pierre for his participation in this holiday gathering. Our Human Resources staff and Biscayne Bay staff are to be congratulated for allowing us to pause and enjoy each other's fellowship and the Holiday Season together.

Our student performers and faculty musicians were inspiring in performing Handel's *Messiah* and the *Nutcracker* – both works sold-out to members of our university community – including many from our Board of Trustees, Foundation, and Presidents Council. Right after, a unique musical experience, sponsored by the Cuban Research Institute, "Havana's Calling Me - Classically Cuban in the U.S." played to a full house as well in the Wertheim Performing Arts Center.

We also initiated for the first time ever an abbreviated Winter Semester that brought nearly 600 students to class during the recess period. This experiment in expanded instruction for students achieved expectations, and will be evaluated for possible improvement and enhancement next December.

Our jam-packed finale for the month? The Beef 'O' Brady Bowl on December 20 in St. Petersburg, Florida. While our Golden Panthers football team was not victorious on the field, we were pleased that so many FIU fans and families traveled to be a part of this unique FIU experience. I invite you to read my [blog](#) from St. Pete and watch a video about the [bowl experience](#) and another featuring the [Battle of the Bands competition](#) so that you can grasp the range of activities and events that engaged members of the FIU community, including a riveting tour of the new Salvador Dali Museum led by FIU's Carol Damian and the building's architect Yan Weymouth, who gave us an insider's approach to designing and building the iconic structure and its famed hurricane-resistant geodesic atrium.

Leaning Forward into 2012

Now as we lean forward into the New Year, I want to assure the FIU community that we are poised for another significant year.

During this coming semester, faculty and staff will carry out one of the most critical elements of our responsibility to students and the community: to identify and hire the 108 new faculty (including 47 incremental hires) for the 2012-2013 academic year whose research and creative energies will help our university to fulfill its mission to foster learning, discovery and engagement! Few universities in the country these days have such a significant opportunity to craft the learning environment through the acquisition of new faculty talent. I am very excited about this prospect alone because I know that if successfully carried out, this faculty hiring process will help to shape our institution and community for the next few decades!

But there are other important developments for the next two months that help to set a tone for what's ahead.

In mid-January, we commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King during a week long period. The Annual Breakfast gathering on January 13, 2012 highlights the celebration. Our keynote speaker is Dr. Alvin Poussaint MD, Professor of Psychiatry and Associate Dean for Student Affairs at the Harvard Medical School. He will focus his comments on "health equity." There are other noteworthy activities. Please check out the Frost Art Museum, where you will find an MLK "Wall of Hope – featuring the winning thematic essays written by students who matriculated at FIU, MLK Videos, a compilation of videos created by FIU students and staff for past MLK breakfast events at FIU; and a MLK Wall of Fame exhibition, honoring successful FIU Alumni of Color coordinated with the help of Ms. Jessica Lettsome.

Consistent with our global learning theme, we will host the New York Times' Thomas Friedman during our Geopolitical Summit on February 13, 2012. Friedman is one of the country's leading foreign affairs columnists. Most recently he authored "That Used to Be Us: *How America Fell Behind in the World It Invented and How We Can Come Back.*" His visit coincides with the formal ribbon-cutting for our new School of International and Public Affairs building.

Another noteworthy development bears on our community becoming a national leader in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education. Our faculty and students have taken the initiative to make major changes in STEM education at FIU. This coming semester, we will have a record 300 students providing peer-led teaching/learning for students in physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and engineering! This development constitutes nothing less than a silent revolution in teaching and instruction. It is the consequence of our faculty in the sciences coming to grips with the need to enhance the quality of science instruction and expand the numbers of students who master these high demand fields. As evidence, our Physics program alone has experienced an 800% increase in the number of majors – when compared with a decade earlier. Special recognition to our colleagues in these departments who have dared to step out of their comfort zone and think out-of-the box. I know that there are similar thoughtful efforts around FIU to address the new challenges ahead, and I am anxious to learn about these as well as we go forward.

There is much to be grateful for as we transition to the New Year. Rosalie and I want to wish each of you the very best for 2012. We thank you for your pride in FIU and your dedication to making it a Worlds Ahead experience for all who choose to be a part of our community!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rosalie', written in a cursive style.

Mark B. Rosenberg

President