

MEMORANDUM

January 1, 2014

Dear FIU family,

Hope your holidays were full of joy and wishing you a prosperous New Year!

I continue to be amazed by the energy, purpose and hope that can be found at our university. Anyone familiar with our institution knows that this energy is a hallmark of the FIU experience. Nowhere is it more on display or more focused than in November and December of every year. We always finish strong the final weeks of our calendar year. This year was exceptional as you will see below!

So, as we take stock of the dreams and accomplishments of this year as it ebbs into our memory and begin to lean forward into the next, I wanted to share with you two touching moments to demonstrate our strong and inspiring finish.

First is the remarkable statement by Mike Arbitmans from Pembroke Pines at our [TedxFIU](#) happening on November 7. Blinded six years ago by a rare eye infection, our grateful [guest expressed gratitude to our enterprising students](#) for something that most of us take for granted: the ability to read. Speaking before a hushed Wertheim Performing Arts Center audience, he declared that thanks to the eye-talker invention of these students in a social entrepreneurship initiative, he was able to read a bedtime story to his daughter again.



Mike Arbitmans demonstrates EyeTalk at TEDxFIU 2013

Just one month later, we witnessed for a final time the exuberance and dedication of one of our senior award-winning faculty from the School of Music, John Augenblick. Here is a colleague who started his career right here at FIU in 1981 as director of choral studies. He has taught hundreds, if not thousands of music students. Many of these same individuals, now alums, gathered to honor their professor as he conducted his last performance through the final melodies of Handel's Messiah on December 6, 2013 before a grateful holiday audience. I will never forget the look of satisfaction on all the performers' faces as they honored their professor/conductor through his final musical at the school that he helped to build. It was an unforgettable moment and an example of finishing strong! Special thanks to John Augenblick for his commitment to our students. You may scroll down to a clip of his performance at the end of this letter.



John Augenblick

But there were other noteworthy developments that we want to celebrate, and share with you what's ahead!

Graduation: Just a few weeks ago, more than 4,140 [FIU students participated in our seven fall commencement ceremonies](#). For the first time in 10 years, we had ceremonies on Sunday. It was great to see so many loved ones packing our arena to share our graduates' special day!

Miami-Dade County Commissioner Juan Carlos Zapata was the commencement speaker at our first ceremony. He predicted that our graduates will be "the next greatest generation, not for your impact on America, but for the impact you will have on all of mankind. Yours will be the unconquered generation, for you will revolutionize the world and not be conquered by fear, disease, ignorance or apathy. Embrace that responsibility and grasp its significance."



Juan Carlos Zapata

Our distinguished honorees included Univisión anchor Pamela Silva Conde; Urban League of Greater Miami President and CEO T. Willard Fair; physicist and chemist Carl Stocker, whose generosity allowed us to build the [Stocker AstroScience Center](#); and hoteliers and philanthropists Deborah Plutzik Briggs and Jonathan Plutzik, owners of The Betsy-South Beach.



Pamela Silva Conde

T. Willard Fair

Carl Stocker

*Jonathan Plutzik and
Deborah Plutzik Briggs*

We also honored members of the FIU family, such as law professor [H.T. Smith](#), founder of our College of Law's Trial Advocacy program; [Gordon Hopkins](#), founding dean of the College of Engineering and Computing; and Graham Center Executive Director Ruth Hamilton, who challenged our graduates to "Be an original!" Ruth will soon be retiring from FIU after 34 years of dedicated leadership to our institution!



H.T. Smith

Gordon Hopkins

Ruth Hamilton

Research: Our research is Worlds Ahead! [Marianna Baum](#), a dietetics and nutrition professor at the [Robert Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work](#), recently published in the [Journal of the American Medical Association](#) (JAMA) the results of a seven-year study on HIV that found that multivitamins combined with selenium delayed the progression of the disease. She conducted this research in conjunction with FIU Professor Adriana Campa, doctoral student Sabrina Sales, and Harvard University researchers.



Marianna Baum

To see a JAMA interview with Dr. Baum please click [here](#), and to learn more about the study please click [here](#).

Other FIU research that made national and international news last year included Aquarius, which was featured on the [Today show](#) and [CBS This Morning](#); [Phillip Carter's](#) research on the Miami accent which was highlighted on [CNN](#), and [Ryan C. Meldrum's](#) work on the relationship between sleep deprivation and juvenile delinquency which made the [Huffington Post](#).



FIU students conducting a mission at Aquarius Reef Base

To see an interview with Dr. Carter please click [here](#).

TedxFIU: Our second installment of [TEDxFIU](#), “Reimagine Possible,” was a huge success! [Ronin Taiko with the Wadaiko Academy](#) and the hip hop classical music duo [Black Violin](#) gave electrifying performances, [Physics Professor Pete Markowitz and Artist-in-Residence Xavier Cortada](#) discussed the “[Art of the God Particle](#),” and School of Environment, Arts and Society Director Mike Heithaus and Professor Deron Burkepile gave us an inside look at the Aquarius Reef Base in a talk that was [telecast live from the bottom of the ocean](#).



Black Violin rocking at TEDxFIU 2013

If you missed it, you can watch these and other TEDxFIU talks [here](#).

Fund-Raising 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

exceeded our [United Way](#) goal of \$200,000 and surpassed the goal set by the state for [First Generation](#) scholarships by raising more than \$500,000, an amount that's eligible for state matching funds! I'm also proud to report that our faculty and staff keep supporting our FIU by giving annually through the [IGNITE](#) internal campaign. To date, the campaign has raised nearly \$3.5 million! Thank you for giving back!

We also are grateful for the generous contributions of longtime members of the FIU family. In September we celebrated a [\\$10 million gift from Dr. Herbert A. Wertheim and the Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Family Foundation](#) to name the [Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences](#), in honor of his wife. The Wertheims are now the only couple in the U.S. to name a medical school and nursing school at the same university. Over the past semester we also [announced a \\$1.2 million gift from Ted and Rosalind Spak](#) for the largest College of Law endowment to date; [a \\$1 million planned gift from Patrick J. Russell](#) to support initiatives that benefit lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning and ally (LGBTQA) students; and [\\$1 million from Gerald and Jennifer Adger Grant](#) to create a scholarship fund for College of Business students.



The Wertheim Family at the Nightingala

Our student retention and degree completion programs are blazing a trail and winning prestigious awards! FIU's University Graduate School received the Educational Testing Service (ETS)/ Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) award for [Innovation in Promoting Success in Graduate Education: From Admission through Completion](#). The [Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities](#) also recognized FIU's Graduation Success Initiative, or GSI, with its Most Visible Progress (MVP) award. This award was for FIU's high-tech, high touch efforts in increasing our graduation rate by nine percentage points in the course of two years.

Partnerships:

Last month, FIU and [Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. \(RCL\)](#) [signed an agreement to enhance preparation and training](#) for RCL's shipboard performers and provide great learning and practical opportunities for our FIU students. This groundbreaking

partnership includes the construction of a 130,000-square-foot, state-of-the art facility at our Biscayne Bay Campus!

This is just the latest in our pioneering partnerships that are helping us fulfill our role as a solutions center for our community. Another initiative that has been an incredible success is The Education Effect at Miami Northwestern Senior High School (MNW), part of our [ACCESS](#) (Achieving Community Collaboration in Education and Student Success) partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS).

As many of you know, we launched this initiative in 2011 with a seed investment from JPMorgan Chase and in collaboration with MNW and M-DCPS. Through this collaboration we are improving student achievement, increasing graduation rates and promoting a pathway to higher education. Our efforts have borne fruit. MNW just earned the first “A” grade in its history under the school accountability rating system. This has historically been a “D” or “F” school, but by working together we are changing the lives of Miami Northwestern students and the surrounding Liberty City community. Congratulations to M-DCPS Superintendent Alberto Carvalho, MNW Principal Wallace Aristide, Education Effect Director, Maria Lovett, College of Education, and the hardworking faculty and staff of the FIU Office of Engagement for taking the lead on this important initiative and exceeding expectations!



Vice president for Engagement Irma Becerra-Fernandez, Miami Northwestern Principal Wallace Aristide, Ann Marie Tagliente from JPMorgan Chase, and Education Effect Director Maria Lovett

FIU continues to make teaching, outreach and research on Haiti a priority. This semester under the new leadership of Frank Mora, director of the [Latin American and Caribbean Center](#), the Haiti Task Force will continue working with our Haitian diaspora community in South Florida and on the ground in Haiti.

The Latin American and Caribbean Center is also doing great work in other areas. On February 3, we will host the former president of Peru, Alan Garcia, at the Modesto A. Maidique Campus. We will share more information on his visit soon!

Entrepreneurship:

We are educating our students for the new world of work and that new world requires innovation! I am proud to say that many of our students are Worlds Ahead in their innovative and entrepreneurial efforts. One great example is Jenifer Bound, a senior hospitality management student who won a [\\$5,000 Soul of Cooking scholarship from Badia Spices](#). Badia Spices and FIU's Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management teamed up to host a spice rub competition. Jenifer's original creation – smoked paprika, white pepper, roasted garlic powder, cumin, smoked sea salt, cocoa powder, chipotle chili powder and brown sugar – will be launched at the Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival presented by FOOD & WINE in February 2014. A percentage of worldwide sales of this unique spice blend will benefit FIU students. Way to go, Jenifer!

Athletics: We were so pleased to retire the jersey of our All-American student-athlete Jerica Coley on December 7, 2013. One of the country's most prolific scorers during her college career, Coley was named an All-American athlete during her sophomore and junior seasons and will likely repeat with this honor during her final season this year. She not only leads on the basketball court. She consistently is one of our highest performing students in her academic major of nutrition and will likely graduate cum laude in the Spring 2014 commencement. For the ceremony at Center Court at the U.S. Century Bank Arena, Jerica was joined by her parents, brother, Coach Cindy Russo and other team members!



Jerica Coley with her friends and family

With this brief recap of our strong finish in 2013, we can confidently predict that the best is yet to come in 2014. As we promised, here is the [stirring finale of Messiah](#), conducted by our friend and colleague, John Augenblick! Enjoy!

We expect many more achievements in the New Year, along with our share of challenges. I know that working together, as we always have, we will reach FIU's next horizon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark B. Rosenberg', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Mark B. Rosenberg
President