

MEMORANDUM

December 31, 2018

Dear FIU family,

The final day of 2018 is here... can you believe it? We're about to close the book on this year - one that was certainly filled with many highs and lows.



One of the highs is that we have the most determined students anywhere, like [Daniel Padron](#). Daniel was one of our Worlds Ahead Graduates during our fall commencement ceremonies. Daniel's dream of pursuing a career in chemistry was almost derailed during his sophomore year. That's when his father suddenly moved out of the country and stopped supporting him, his sister Christina, and their sick mother, Mercy. They lived for months without water or power. Faced with eviction, they took shelter in a cramped 2009 Honda Civic and lived there for four months.

Daniel reached out to our Counseling and Psychological Services office, which connected him with [Fostering Panther Pride](#) - a program that helps students who are homeless or transitioning out of foster care to continue their education.

Soon, Daniel and Christina had tuition waivers to cover the cost of classes and funding to live on campus. After living in a car for so long, Daniel says the first night sleeping in a bed, freshly showered and no longer hungry was transformational. In early December, Daniel walked across the stage in the Ocean Bank Convocation Center with his bachelor's degree in chemistry.

And I know many of you are now familiar with another outstanding graduate, Aldo Amenta, who sustained a severe spinal injury while diving into a pool. His family had a difficult choice to make: paying for therapy or for his education. This past fall commencement season, Aldo graduated because of your generosity and support of our **Ignite Campaign**. In fact, he **walked across the stage with the help of an exoskeleton** – a walk that happened only because he never gave up on his dreams and because our FIU family came together to help make his dreams come true! Aldo's inspiring story has received national and international attention – and truly reflects the meaningful work we're fortunate to have at our FIU!

The experiences of Daniel and Aldo show how our FIU family comes together to do the right thing. I'm inspired by your spirit of strength and optimism.

Now, as we pause and reflect, let us remember that our FIU family excelled and accomplished remarkable things this past year. Let us remember that:

- We're unstoppable, we're on the rise! Today, FIU is a **top 100 public university in the nation**. We were **ranked second in the state in performance funding by the Florida Board of Governors**. And we were also named a **"Great College to Work For" with Honor Roll distinction by The Chronicle of Higher Education – for the third time in a row**.
- We have hard-working faculty and researchers, who have taken our efforts to the next level by attracting more sponsored research than ever before and accelerating our work with patents, so that we were ranked among the **top 100 of universities in the world granted U.S. utility patents!**
- We have outstanding alumni who are making an impact in sectors and industries around the world! We recognized **several of our alums at our 17th annual Torch Awards**. What an honor it was to celebrate their many accomplishments!
- And we can't forget our **Bowl victory in the Bahamas** where our hard working student athletes, our FIU Marching Band and our Cheerleaders and Dazzlers put on memorable performances.

We're turning the impossible into the inevitable, because of you!

As we continue our journey ahead and continue to reach new heights, we must remember that our success as an institution is meaningful in many, many ways. Without FIU, our community would have tremendous gaps – in talent, employment, education and groundbreaking, life-changing research.

As I have said before, the 21st century is going to require everyone to be a lifelong learner. That means our responsibility is greater than ever. Now more than ever, our community is counting on us to help them stay ahead of the change by giving them the chance to earn another degree, certificate or competency.

The time has come to raise the bar and get to our **Next Horizon**. Save the date! Our capital campaign kicks off on **Saturday, January 26**. We need to secure the critical funds to remain a top research institution on the rise and prepare students for the 21st century workforce. We've set ambitious goals and know you're going to help us exceed them!

Thank you, again, for being a part of truly life-changing work we have at FIU. I know I can continue to count on you to help send a resolute message that FIU is an institution that takes responsibility and makes a difference.

Rosalie and I wish all the best to you, your families and loved ones. Have a happy, safe and prosperous New Year!

The best is yet to come in 2019... Let's go!

[Read more](#)



Mark B. Rosenberg
President