

December 23, 2009

Dear FIU Community,

As we edge into the holidays, I want to take a moment to thank all of you for the encouragement that you have offered during this time of transition. I hope you are proud to be part of an institution that plays such an important role in uplifting our community. I know I am proud of the incredible enthusiasm, resilience, and loyalty I see demonstrated every day as we turn the impossible into the inevitable.

Rosalie and I would like to extend to each of you our warmest wishes for a happy and safe holiday season. We feel blessed to end the year at home with our FIU family in the city that we love.

During this season, please take a moment to remember those members of our FIU community who are serving our country overseas. They will spend their holidays far from home and family. We are grateful for their sacrifices and await their safe return.

This new era builds on the foundations of an unbelievable institutional trajectory, with strong leadership at all levels and even stronger faculty and professional staff commitment. Working together, we can continue to transform FIU into a truly student-centered institution of academic excellence. I look forward to 2010 with great excitement as we move FIU closer to achieving its destiny as one of our country's leading urban, public research universities.

Since I started as your president in early August, I have held dozens and dozens of meetings with the intent to build bridges that will help us gain financial security, become even more student-centered, enhance the quality of our research and teaching, and be more engaged with the local and global community. I could not have been more supported. Below I want to share with you an abbreviated report that sets the stage for our efforts in 2010.

Financial Security

While our financial health is the single largest challenge we have, I am pleased to report that we are stable and strong as an institution – in part as a result of the thoughtful plan assembled by President Maidique, Provost Berkman and CFO Sanchez. Our new financial planning team, under the direction of Senior Vice President Kenneth Jessell, is now firmly focused on the challenges that still lie ahead given the continuing budget uncertainties and the slow economic recovery.

Our team has secured a \$32 million bond to build a new parking garage that is rising on the north edge of the Modesto Maidique Campus. PG5 will house the new Public Safety offices and some snazzy retail and classroom space – that will provide added service and convenience for our community. This garage is specifically designed to support the expected growth associated with the Academic Health Center.

Our financial team is keeping close tabs on the end of year statewide revenue projections. It will continue to monitor the economic outlook for 2010 so that we can be proactive and prepared as far as our own budget planning is concerned.

On the private front, our objective is to “widen the circle” of supporters beyond our traditional pool of private donors. As I said at my installation, we must have a sense of urgency about expanding our private financial support and it is this sense of urgency that will drive us to meet our goal of raising \$50 million in private support this year. I have been very pleased with the expanding levels of interest in FIU from individuals who have not previously supported our institution. Of course there is a big gap between interest in and actual commitment to our university. Since we have a great story to tell, I am confident that we can make this interest work to the betterment of FIU!

Student-centered Academic Excellence

We are proud of the recent report that our FIU teacher education program topped those at all other state universities in Florida in the first Florida Board of Education report on the effectiveness of first-year teachers in educating their students in reading and mathematics. The percentage of first-year teachers whose students advanced a full year in their reading and math FCAT scores ranged from 70% to 85% with FIU graduates obtaining the 85%. The Board of Education also looked at the percentage of teachers from each teacher education program whose students made particularly high gains in reading and math. Again FIU graduates led the state with 23% with other SUS programs ranging from 7% to 20%.

In this new era we are committed to preparing students who will be competitive in today’s global labor market. To accomplish this, we must have leading faculty in their fields, who will teach and mentor our students and we must create an environment for our faculty to thrive academically and professionally.

Enhancing Research and Creative Activity Faculty colleagues continue to carry out state-of-the-art groundbreaking research to help solve our most critical problems. I am very proud of our Florida Coastal Everglades Long Term Ecological Research Program (FCE). Supported by the National Science Foundation, this \$5.6M research program examines the changing dynamics of the south Florida environment. Established in 2000, the program currently includes the collaboration of 48 graduate students and 67 senior scientists from a variety of ecological and social science disciplines.

In November 2009 , the NSF recognized FCE's innovative research by awarding project collaborators with a highly competitive grant (\$300,000) to study climate change and

community vulnerability in Miami. This FCE program reflects our commitment to producing science for better decision making, environmental sustainability, and in keeping with the vision of "Hit the Ground Running," a dedication to community engagement. This engagement includes mentoring dozens of high school students, collaborating with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as developing scientific "report cards" to help policy makers and the public evaluate Everglades restoration success.

Another example of how we are putting our expertise to work for our community: we recently signed an agreement with the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority to work together on solutions that will reduce traffic bottlenecks in Miami-Dade County. Led by the Lehman Center for Transportation Research at the College of Engineering and Computing, this alliance is part of FIU's efforts to secure partnerships that will help fund our transportation research and help make us a major transportation think tank.

As part of our commitment to enhancing research, we are identifying some of the academic areas where we are strong and others where there are opportunities for us. This focus has led to a new approach to recruiting faculty in which we hire clusters of faculty in areas of particular strength. The most recent example of this is our hiring of Dr. William Pelham and his colleagues, Dr. Daniel Waschbusch and Dr. James Waxmonsky, who come to us from the State University of New York – Buffalo as leaders in the study of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children. With Dr. Pelham and his team aboard, working in collaboration with colleagues Wendy Silverman, James Jaccard, and others, FIU is poised to become a leader in ADHD research. Dr. Pelham is already in discussions with schools in the Miami Dade system to work with them in dealing with children who suffer from this disorder.

These are examples of instances in which the university can do what it does best, high quality research, and at the same time have a positive impact on our community. Much of the research of our faculty may not have as direct an impact in our immediate community, but is none the less equally valuable research for FIU's role as a nationally and internationally recognized research university.

Community Outreach

I have spent a significant amount of time interacting with internal as well as external stakeholders. Within our university community, I have met with groups of newly hired faculty, others who have been with us a long time, countless other faculty members one-on-one and in small groups, as well as staff. I am pleased to say that, even after having spent nearly my entire career at FIU, I have learned and been inspired and encouraged by these encounters.

We have engaged the community with nine receptions, most of which have taken place in neighborhoods such as Sweetwater, Coral Gables, Liberty City, Kendall, Aventura, Key Biscayne, and Fisher Island. Each has been attended by 30 to 40 individuals selected by our host. A few more of these receptions are scheduled in the coming weeks in Homestead, and Pinecrest, for example.

We have also hosted two community leaders' summits that have yielded a wealth of ideas and valuable feedback. We have prepared a summary of these meetings that will soon be circulated. Many of the points raised and discussed through these exchanges will become part of the deliberations during our strategic planning process that we will begin in 2010.

I am happy to report to you that one of the partnerships that has emerged in the past few months directly addresses this strategic concern. Miami-Dade College President Eduardo Padron, Miami-Dade Schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho and I have agreed to work together to present a united funding agenda in Tallahassee. We have met several times including two public appearances - a "town hall" meeting sponsored by Univision Radio and a presentation before the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce Education Committee in early November- where we have been unequivocal in our commitment to delivering quality education from kindergarten through graduate school. We firmly believe the success of each of our institutions is intertwined with the others and with the future of South Florida as a whole.

As anchor institutions in our community, the Miami Dade County Public Schools, Miami Dade College, and FIU intend to present a unified and effective plan to our legislators during the next legislative session. Leading up to session, we will host a follow-up "town hall" meeting with Univision at FIU in the Spring, 2010. Please look for more information about this in the coming weeks and plan to attend. Your ideas as to how our institutions can further collaborate will help shape our joint agenda.

Our partnership with Miami-Dade Schools also has resulted in an exciting new program: the Academy for Advanced Academics. Managed through our Office of Undergraduate Education, this academy allows Miami-Dade's top high school students from neighboring schools to take all of their classes at the Modesto A. Maidique Campus - a combination of FIU courses and advanced placement high school courses. Through this program we hope to encourage these students to form relationships with the university and continue their studies here. We are carefully monitoring the partnership to ensure its success. A special thanks to the Office of Undergraduate Studies and collaborating faculty and staff who have worked together to pull this initiative together in time for the 2009-2010 academic year.

We plan to further strengthen our relationship with public schools through our College of Education, under the leadership of Interim Dean Marie McDemmond, who comes to us with an extensive background in higher education and a track record of connecting with the communities she has served. In fact, we are already working with FIU alumnus and Miami Edison High School Provost Pablo G. Ortiz to develop a mutually beneficial relationship between the two institutions and we have initiated dual enrollment at Miami Central High School in an effort to help that struggling school provide quality instruction to its students.

Understanding the financial environment in which we must make decisions and set priorities, I have made it clear to all our external stakeholders that our collaborative activities must align with our teaching and research mission and must be supported by the community, not by the university. FIU will continue to be a leading urban public research university that focuses on education of our students and research and creative activity of our faculty and students. Whenever possible, these activities will align with, and contribute to, our community.

People

Perhaps you have heard me say that universities are communities of memory and hope – and that could not be more true than at FIU. We have a history of turning the impossible into the inevitable and all around we can see examples of that spirit at work. Even in this difficult economic environment we continue to engage in strategic faculty recruitment because clearly the faculty is at the heart of the institution.

Our students, of course, are the primary reason we exist as an institution and I want to make sure we do not lose sight of that. If you have visited my office, you may have noticed the sign on my door: “Every Student Counts.” I am in constant contact with students and encourage every member of our faculty and staff to do the same. We are here to listen to them, help guide them and support them in their academic endeavors.

No doubt, one of the signal student accomplishments this year for our institution is the recent American Volleyball Coaches Association “All-America” recognition of student athlete Yarimar Rosa from our women’s volleyball team. Yarimar has been named an All-America for each of her four years at FIU! She is the only FIU student athlete ever to have been named All-America in each of her four years of competition.

What an inspiration to listen to the accomplishments of our staff at the Employee Service and Recognition Awards Ceremony held before standing room only Graham Center ballroom in October! It was an afternoon to celebrate what we are doing well and an opportunity to draw inspiration for another great year focused on service and making our students’ experience at FIU the best it can be. I invite you to watch a short video about this event produced by the news.fiu.edu team.

<http://news.fiu.edu/2009/11/employee-milestones-contributions-celebrated/>

Because I firmly believe that our people are our biggest asset, I have asked Vice President of Human Resources Jaffus Hardrick to put in place a series of initiatives to support our employees. Examples of this are the Presidential Salutes, through which we publicly recognized members of our team who excel at customer service, and the Tender Love and Care Brigade. I am particularly proud of the TLC Brigade because I believe they personify what I mean when I say we must excel at being “high-touch”! The Brigade, co-chaired by retired professor and administrator Raul Moncarz and my wife Rosalie Rosenberg, is tasked with assisting any member of the faculty and staff in need of a helping hand. Then in mid-December we held our first ever FIU Talent Night. At this gathering, staff showed their stuff through singing, dancing and skits that reminded us it’s alright to have some FUN! The traditional staff Christmas Party at the

US Century Bank Arena brought us all together in fellowship and celebration for the end of the year.

The same way we take care of our own and put students at the center of everything we do and every decision we make, our alumni – 140,000 strong – are an important group for us, since they are our most genuine ambassadors to the world. We have an active board and a dedicated professional staff focused on consolidating our alumni power and enhancing their experience and connection to FIU. The recent Silver Pride Homecoming gathering brought back graduates from the early 1970s through 1984, commemorating 25 or more years since their graduation. We also hosted in early December a path-breaking lunch in the beautiful Frost Art Museum for past presidents of the Student Government Association and our Alumni Association. What stories they told about how as students they were engaged in building FIU! Rosalie and I are proud lifetime members of the Alumni Association and we urge all members of the university community to join – whether you graduated or not from our great institution.

SACS/QEP

Our accreditation report has been very well received and we are now preparing for the three-day visit from the accrediting team in March 2010. As part of the accreditation process we have created a Quality Enhancement Plan, which in our case is the Global Learning Initiatives, through which we harness so much of what we are already doing as a 21st Century institution blessed with our location at the crossroads of our hemisphere. The goal of our QEP is to ensure that every FIU graduate has the educational opportunity to achieve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of global citizenship. Several groups around campus are working on details such as how to integrate the QEP into the curriculum. I invite you to visit <http://goglobal.fiu.edu> and learn about how you can get involved in this university-wide effort.

As a social scientist interested in Latin America, I could not be more proud of our institution and the decisions we are making to embrace our unique geographical position and our diverse faculty, staff and student body. I look forward to working with you to overcome our financial challenges, create new funding streams, set our sights on fostering the learning environment our students require for success in the global economy, and conducting the research necessary for our region and nation to thrive in the 21st century.

I passionately believe in the importance of the “life of the mind” and feel privileged to have the opportunity to help lead this institution of higher learning. Everything you do, from the arts to the research, inspires me. I thank you for the warmth and support you have given me as I rejoined the FIU family. It is indeed good to be home. Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Mark B. Rosenberg

President