



**Address at the 2013 "Ignite!" Campaign Breakfast**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on February 20, 2013**



*This speech was presented to FIU Community to commemorate the start of the 2013 Ignite! Campaign on February 20, 2013.*

Thank you Howard Lipman, Reena Ramnarine, & Steve Fain for getting us moving! For Igniting us! We are here today because we all want the same thing: We want a better institution, a better FIU; one that towers above average; one that we can believe in day and night, 24/7/365; one that perseveres as a beacon for hope; one that serves as a moral high ground giving meaning!

In our community today, among you, are individuals who have poured body and soul into this university. You have made your own sacrifice. You have done this because you understand that your sacrifice is right and because it brings tangible results for so many. Each, in your own way, takes as much as you give: you or your loved ones were educated here or will be educated here; you have made lasting friends here; you have laughed and cried here; you have hoped and dream here; you have helped to manufacture hope; you have catalyzed dreams and big ideas here.

Today we rejoice, knowing that you have pride and confidence in this good institution. But we also know that the world is changing around us! Institutions come and go with alarming frequency. I still see the bumper sticker out there: "Pan Am—gone but not forgotten." Yes, there are the proverbial "barbarians" at our gate: Those who believe that the university as we know it is outdated, old fashioned and ill-suited for the post-industrial digital world of the rapidly changing 21st century. There are

those who believe that a traditional college education is a luxury that we no longer can afford; and that it is ok to settle. There are those that believe that the American Dream is only for those from certain zip codes.

But we know different: Why? Because we know that individuals such as Richard Blanco deserve to live the American Dream! Here is a young man raised in Westchester of Cuban exile parents. Here is a young man who as a kid rode his bicycle across these precious grounds when there were just three buildings! Here is a young man who attended Christopher Columbus High. Here is a young man who received two degrees from our FIU! And wanted a third! Here is a young man who just stirred the world with his inaugural poem "One Today." Here is...why we are here. Why we sacrifice. Why we get up in the morning! You, we helped to make this possible. And we have over 200,000 Richard Blancos out there and another 100,000 in the next ten years! Imagine the hope. Imagine the good. Imagine the promise! So our work is not done. We must send a message: We must lead by example if we are to have a university that endures. We must take additional responsibility to strengthen this cathedral of hope and possibility called FIU. In order to build a solutions center that is a beacon for all who aspire to their Version of the American Dream: We must ignite!

Our objective is to send a message to the larger community: Show them that our FIU is valued by the people who work here! Show them that the pride that we have in our own institution is matched by our willingness to give. Show them that we are serious about creating a new 21st Century American University; one that cares for its

community, and one that sees its own institution as a rightful, just place where good occurs every day. We have a higher calling: It's about our community. It's about being relevant in a sea of uncertainty. It's about being there when no one else is. It's about a special education sanctuary and its people. These are people who care for and respect each other; People who have a passion for learning, and for student success; People who contribute to the good life and social justice that we all seek. It's about hope for so many who strive to do better. It is about those who want more for their families, their church, and their country.

Today we stand before you to Ignite. Please, make a pledge whether large or small. We seek 100% participation at our FIU. Giving will set you free. Giving is about helping others. Show our community, who we will ask next, that there is a complete belief in our mission and our purpose from those of us here that are part of this good institution!

So I conclude with 4 questions: Will you show that our FIU is sustainable even when the naysayers deny our relevance? Will you show that we can take this institution to the next level of excellence? Will you show that we have pride in our institution that you are helping to create? Will you show that we can Ignite? My dear friends, I ask that you do what you do best: Turn the impossible into the inevitable and help our good institution to attain its goal of being Worlds Ahead! Let's Ignite together! Thank you.