



Address at the Launch of FIU's "Ignite!" Campaign

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on February 15, 2012**



**This speech was presented to FIU's Faculty and Staff at the launch of the "Ignite!"
Campaign on February 15, 2012
Ignite!**

Thank Howard Lipman, Reena Ramnarine, Steve Fain for getting us moving! For Igniting us! As I look out today at our FIU community, there is so much on my mind about why we are here! Truthfully, this is a day that I have dreamed about for a long time. This is a milestone day for FIU!

In our community among you today are individuals who have poured body and soul into this university. Individuals who have spent, or hope to spend, their full professional lives at FIU. Individuals who have dreamed big dreams about this university. Individuals who can remember when there were only "two buildings" at FIU. Individuals who attended the Popes mass here at FIU in 1986! Individuals who have poured their sweat and blood into cleaning up this place after the devastating Hurricane Andrew in 1992! Individuals who sadly released balloons into the sky following the 9-11 tragedy in 2001 to commemorate the loss. Individuals who have helped tens if not hundreds, if not thousands of students to achieve their dreams!

Among you are individuals who have met their spouses at FIU. And individuals who themselves have studied here, and received your degree or certificate here. We have individuals who have entrusted their very children to this good institution, it's staff and faculty. And individuals who everyday brag to their neighbors and friends about the good things that happen here. And of course individuals who have spent precious moments in orbit looking for that illusive parking spot. How many of you are in one of these groups?

Isn't it interesting that we have never had a campaign for FIU? Even while we have raised millions for the United Way over the past decades – And even while we have asked many in the community to underwrite our buildings and programs. We have never, ever asked those who work here for support for the very institution that gives us so much!

Why was this? What is this about? There are so many reasons – but it boils down to one thing: We were afraid to ask you – we were worried that our own did not feel that strongly about their good institution, their FIU! Today we turn that page. We put that era behind us! We Ignite! Today we know that you have pride and confidence in this good institution. Today we believe that you get it! For us to ask our external community for support, we must lead by example. We must send the message that we reach into our pockets for our good institution because we believe in what we are

doing...we believe in us, our purpose, our mission, our people, our students. We believe in what we are doing! Today we stand before you to Ignite!

Here, I am reminded of Churchills dictum: We make a living by what we get, but make a life by what we give. Truthfully ladies and gentlemen – who among us has not allowed FIU to help us make a life for ourselves and our families? No doubt, these are difficult times, I know! Two days ago, we were blessed to hear from Thomas Friedman, a New York Times reporter who spoke here on these difficult times. The topic of his presentation: how America fell behind in the world it invented and how we can come back. He worried about how America has become average in a flat world, how costly our settling for average has become. He mused about FIU – about how optimistic we were as an institution; look--we had created a law school, a school of public health, and a medical school in the last ten years; particularly the medical school just as the economy was going into the tank! About how we did not get the memorandum that average was ok. So let me ask you a question Just to make the point: will we settle for average at our Worlds Ahead institution? NO! No – we will never settle for average.

Today, we stand before you to Ignite! Our objective is to send a message to the larger community:

- That our FIU is valued by the people who work here.
- That the pride that we have in our own good institution is matched by our willingness to give
- That we are serious about creating a new 21st Century American University; one that cares for its community; One that sees its own institution as a rightful, just place where good occurs every day.

Mother Theresa reminds us: If you cannot help many, help one! Today we stand before you to Ignite! Our new strategic plan provides a blueprint; it is a journey and also a destination!

But the “Happy ending” that we seek after all is not just about us – 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 – 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, who want more for their families, their church, their country.

If you need beacons to guide you – they are here! There is Founding Faculty Judy Blucker – who has unselfishly given what she can! It is about Professor Jean Claude Garcia Zamor who underwrites scholarships for needy students; it is about Steve Fain who finds a way to keep hope alive; About Professors Salmon and Perez Stable, who understand the importance of commitment. About Danny and Felicia Townsend, who are always there when FIU calls!

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

- So I conclude with 5 questions:
- Will you show that Average is over?
- Will you show that we are Worlds Ahead!?
- 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 – the sanctuary that you are helping to create?
- Will you show that can Ignite?

My dear friends: Do what you do best: Turn the impossible into the inevitable and help our good institution to attain its goal in being Worlds Ahead! Let's Ignite together. Thank you