



Presidential Installation Speech
Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
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This speech was presented to attendees of the installation ceremony for FIU's fifth president on August 28, 2009.

Your Honor – my former student, Judge Altonaga, Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair-elect, Members of the Board of Governors, Members of the Board of Trustees, Fellow Chancellor, Fellow Presidents, Family, Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen: With us today are hundreds of friends and supporters, fellow faculty and staff, mentors and coaches who have made this day possible. Rosalie and I want to thank you all for being here. Our gratitude is eternal.

We are here today to celebrate this magnificent institution. **We are here today because we care.** We are here today because of our hungry heart for FIU.

We are here today because of our commitment to the life of the 21st century mind – our commitment to learning, to entrepreneurship, research, innovation, and to creativity.

We are here today because we know we can work better together to prevent and solve problems using the blessings of our knowledge and passion.

We are here today because there is more to be done. In this New Era, students will be at the center, research and creative activity will be the driver, engagement and partnerships will be the mode.

I: FIU is a community born out of hope and determination. If one belief defines our development, it is our ability to turn the impossible into the inevitable.

Let us revisit how our hopes transformed into reality. Conceived in 1943, then chartered by the state legislature in 1965, we opened our doors to the public in 1972. At first, our university found itself on the margins of Miami – near Sweetwater on a Tamiami Trail that was but single lanes east and west.

Who then could have imagined that we would shake off our isolation and become a major public research university? **Who then** could have predicted the dynamic growth of South Florida and greater Miami as a path-breaking *international* community with a global reach?

Thanks to faculty and staff engagement and spirited leadership from Chuck Perry, then Greg Wolfe, and then Mitch Maidique, FIU became what only a few – **some** in this room, had imagined.

Today we are a major university with world class programs and faculty. **Today** we are a key driver of economic development, innovation, and job creation in one of the most energetic cities in the world.

How did this happen? **We became masters at turning the “impossible into the inevitable”!** Let me explain!

When Tallahassee said no, or said “maybe” but meant “no,” “we turned the impossible into the inevitable.” Working together, building partnerships and win-win relations, we made it happen.

Let me illustrate by calling out to you and let’s do this together – I need four responses:

- From no lower division to a nationally competitive freshman class – you see, “we turned the impossible into the inevitable.”
- From a university with no residence halls to two campuses with thousands of residential students – you see, “we turned the impossible into the inevitable.”
- From a handful of masters and professional degrees to dozens of advanced degrees that give an unprecedented selection to our community – you see, “we turned the impossible into the inevitable.”
- From no public legal and medical education in Miami to new law and medical schools in less than a decade that are becoming the envy of the state – you see, “we turned the impossible into the inevitable.”

Ladies and Gentleman let us pay tribute to the first era, the Era of Growth, an era that began with you.

We had a lot of help – from Governors Bush and Crist, from our Board of Governors, from courageous key federal and state legislators, and from pioneering and far-sighted donors – Herbert and Nicole Wertheim, Benjamin Leon, Steven Green, Martin Margulies, Kirk Landon, Patricia and Phillip Frost, Sergio Pino, Armando Codina, Roz Kovens, the Chaplin Family, Sanford and Dolores Ziff, the Batchelor Foundation, the Knight Foundation, and thousands of others – many sitting right here.

Five other leaders have been recognized with our Pillar Award for their transformational impact on FIU: then State Senator, now Congressman Mario Diaz Balart; the late State Senator Jack Gordon; Congresswoman Carrie Meek; Ambassador Paul Cejas; community and business leader, the late Alvah Chapman; and Ocala’s Carolyn Roberts, who, for nearly three decades, has been one of the state’s great public university advocates at the Board of Regents, the State Board of Education and the

Board of Governors. I also want to thank Board Chair Sheila McDevitt for being here in the midst of a difficult schedule!

What we dreamed then in the era of growth, we are living now.

Our fourth president, Mitch Maidique, has accomplished so much. There is no one who has dreamed, and fought the fight for FIU, longer and more successfully than my friend and mentor Mitch. Thanks to President-Emeritus Maidique and Nancy for all that they have done for our great university. Dr. Maidique will be the first to acknowledge that more needs to be done now and that new eras demand new approaches.

II: Today we begin a new era that speaks to the times we are in and to the heart of who we are and what we will do! And it begins again with you...

This new era is not like the last. There is a great deal of uncertainty now about our economy; about our ability to sustain our well-being; about meaningful work and jobs in a global economy where we must clearly reinvent ourselves. Some have lost their nerve and seem to be giving up and giving in. With your help we won't let this happen at FIU!

Hope is necessary. Courage is needed. Determination is a necessity. Urgency is a common denominator:

- **We *must*** have a sense of urgency about expanding our private financial support;
- **We *must*** have a sense of urgency about faculty and their ability to thrive academically and professionally;
- **We *must*** have a sense of urgency about our staff. Without their professionalism day in and day out, this organization cannot exceed your expectations or mine;
- **We *must*** have a sense of urgency about building stronger "win-win" partnerships with key institutions in this community.

Ladies and Gentlemen, listen with your head and your hungry heart to three major challenges in this new era. Let me spell out where our hope and future lie - the three challenges...

(1) The first challenge of access.

We must be accessible so that the best and brightest in this community, regardless of zip code of residence, can get access to the ticket to prosperity in the 21st century: a cutting edge university education.

I pledge that we will redouble our efforts to ensure that eligible students get as much financial assistance as possible.

Governor Crist and the legislature, with the consent of statewide **student** leadership, have given us the responsibility and privilege to set our students' tuition. This is unprecedented in our state.

I *pledge* to you that we will wisely use this new authority, only after we can assure our students, our Board and the broader community that we are operating as efficiently and effectively as we possibly can.

(2) The second challenge? - quality.

Let me ask you something: do you think that quality is important? [YES!] I can't hear you!

Our students graduate into a global labor market. To be competitive, they must be taught and mentored by faculty who lead their respective professions! They must have access to curricula that looks forward to the worlds ahead. They must have modern laboratories and facilities.

If you are committed to quality, then join me in finding innovative ways to assure our students that we will not turn our backs on them. We must help FIU to gain a lasting level of financial security. Our future depends upon this commitment. Ladies and gentlemen – when you step up financially, as many of you have already done, when you donate to FIU – large or small – you make a consequential investment in our future. You help turn dreams into realities.

So access, quality, and...What is our third challenge?

(3) Sustainability – More high *tech* cannot come at the expense of high *touch*. *We must* move more quickly to use technology in this 24/7 world, so that our students can benefit from our teaching, anytime, anywhere! The digital tsunami coming at us is bigger than we think! The revolution in education that high tech is bringing threatens us in the same way that the traditional newsprint media are challenged – to re-imagine how to best serve their customers. While we move more quickly to adapt education to technology, we must simultaneously embrace high-touch. High tech necessitates high touch in this 24/7 world.

How to do this?

- We must do better in making sure that every student knows that they count. We must do better in building affinity to FIU.
- We must ensure that our alumni – nearly 100,000 right here in South Florida – are the strongest in the state.
- We must ensure that our alumni association functions as a network to place FIU student interns and that it offers a lifelong placement for FIU grads.
- Our alums are a lifeline for a lifetime. Never before have they been so important for their institution, FIU. They – you – are our secret weapon. **Let me repeat: Our alums are a LIFELINE for a LIFETIME!**

Thus, I challenge you to work with me to keep our university accessible, develop private funding, and deploy high tech while not forgetting high touch. These are the urgent challenges before us as this new era unfolds!

III: Where do we go from here?

As Yogi Berra stated, “the future isn’t what it used to be.” But we still have promises to keep...

In this new era, entrepreneurship and innovation will be necessary. How can we run our year 2009-2010 university on a year 2000 state budget? We cannot falter – so many depend on us in this community.

Listen to this!

- We provide about 50% of the public elementary and secondary teachers for the Dade County School System;
- The new Dade County Public Schools Edison Eduplex’ Leader – or Provost – is Pablo Ortiz, a graduate of Our College of Education.
- We will graduate nearly 100,000 students in the next ten years!
- We will spend over \$10 billion in instruction and research dollars to get this done.
- We will build nearly \$500 million in new facilities during this same period.

In this new era, we must put our students at the center of who we are. For me, every student counts! We must take responsibility for ensuring that they get a 21st century curricula, expanded advising that will keep them on track, more internships, and job placement to ensure that they will fulfill every bit of their potential. We must put the student at the center of our institution. Our students must be prepared not just to take good jobs, but to create good jobs. Their future is our future. Their hope is our driver.

In this new era, we must engage our community like never before. This engagement must pivot around our state-of-the-art research – to help solve critical problems in educational attainment; in water quality; in improving health and reducing chronic disease; in alternative energy research; in learning about new markets and opportunities to expand our global business reach. But we cannot deny that state of the art creative activity is essential for the life of the mind and that aesthetic appreciation is an essential component of a meaningful life.

In this new era, we must reinforce our partnerships with key institutions in South Florida. This includes our public schools, Miami Dade College – Dr. Padron thank you for being here; the University of Miami, Dr. Shalala thank you for being here; Miami Dade County Public Schools, Mr. Carvalho thank you for being here; the U.S. Southern Command, the Youth Fair, the Public Health Trust, the Children’s Trust, South Florida Water Management, Metro Dade County, the Airport, the Seaport, Miami Dade Expressway Authority, the City of Sweetwater, the City of North Miami, The City of Hialeah, CAMACOL, the Greater Miami Chamber, the Beacon Council, United Way, the Urban League, the Jewish Federation, Fairchild Gardens, the Kiwanis of Little Havana, and dozens of other non-profits that hold our community together.

Collaboration is what our world needs; that is what our community demands. In the process, we will become the go-to transformational institution in South Florida. I salute those faculty and staff who have built partnerships, locally and globally, based in your research and creative activity, and I pledge my support to you to continue and expand this important work.

You see, our community can’t wait.

IV. In the end, this day is about what we share in common. It’s about the fact that we care! We have a hungry heart for FIU. We have the courage to help move FIU forward in this new era, even in these difficult times. We have the desire to make a difference locally and globally.

Rosalie and I are the luckiest people in the world. We are right where we want to be – with you – in Miami, Florida – at FIU!

Will you all please stand for FIU! Please rise!

I want to end this New Era Assembly with three questions. I need a one word answer to each of these questions!

1. *Will you help me to continue the Perry, Wolfe and Maidique legacy to “turn the impossible into the inevitable,” again and again and again?*
2. *Will you contribute – your time, your passion, your dollars – to this great institution to ensure that it can enhance its quality and competitiveness?*
3. *Will you have the courage to work with me to move FIU to the next level, to reach its destiny as one of America’s great public student-centered research universities?*

Your honor, my student Judge Altonaga, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chair-elect, Members of our Boards, Participants in this New Era Assembly: The torch has been passed...

We are now ready for this New Era. And may this New Era be as blessed for FIU - as was the last!