MEMORANDUM

September 2, 2014

Dear FIU family:

Just last week, we learned that our FIU was ranked among the top universities in the nation for its commitment and contributions to the community, listed 24th out of 277 higher education institutions for our work to address the most challenging issues our world faces today.

One of the leaders of our FIU community, Vice President for Engagement Irma Becerra-Fernandez, helped make this national distinction a reality. She has led the Office of Engagement since 2012, furthering our vision of FIU as a beacon of hope and a solutions center that is locally and globally engaged.

So, it is with mixed emotions that I share with you that Irma is leaving FIU to accept the position of Provost and Chief Academic Officer at St. Thomas University, effective Oct. 1. Her passion and commitment to this university will most certainly be missed.

Irma has been a part of the FIU family since she became the first woman to earn her Ph.D. from the university’s College of Engineering in 1994. Her star has been shining brightly ever since, rising from a research assistant in the College of Engineering – who struggled to connect electrical components in the lab as she likes to remind me – to leading university-wide initiatives like the Pino Family Global Entrepreneurship Center; launching the Americas Venture Capital Conference, which eventually became a part of the hugely successful eMerge Americas Conference; and serving as FIU’s Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

Irma has brought high energy, unwavering commitment and tenacity to our institution. As Vice President for Engagement, Irma channeled her leadership into coordinating and developing an extensive portfolio of partnerships for the university. She excelled at bringing multiple – sometimes competing – entities together to collaborate and innovate – always keeping the interests of our students and our community close to her heart.
The collective impact of Irma’s work on behalf of this university has been significant. She helped lead our collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the ACCESS partnership, which has raised the bar for student success in public schools. She oversaw the expansion of The Education Effect, an innovative university community school partnership that helped Miami Northwestern Senior High School earn its first A grade in state rankings and launched this fall at Booker T. Washington Senior High in Overtown. She supported our goal of aligning higher education with economic development and industry needs through the One Community One Goal Academic Leaders Council. And she coordinated the university’s work to support the life sciences industry in South Florida by bringing together universities, colleges, economic development organizations and research institutes in a spirit of cooperation rather than competition.

Irma has been a leader, a friend and a mentor to many at FIU. I am grateful to her for the role she has played in ensuring FIU’s place among the nation’s leading community engaged universities. Please join me in thanking Irma for her commitment to FIU and wishing her well in her new role at St. Thomas.

We are now in the process of identifying next steps for this incredible and successful Engagement department.

Sincerely,

Mark B. Rosenberg