Some 4,700 students earned degrees at the end of spring semester, and 3,500 of those – among them Carolina Gaceta, Dania Ortega and Yeleine Ruisanchez, each of whom graduated with a bachelor of science in nursing – crossed the stage during commencement ceremonies to receive their diplomas.

Photo by Doug Garland '10

PRESIDENT’S CORNER
Mark B. Rosenberg

FIU is committed to student success. As such, we are giving our students the tools to get ahead through our Graduation Success Initiative (GSI), which has transformed how we administer the undergraduate curriculum. Through this high-tech/high-touch effort, we aim to improve retention and help our students graduate in a timely manner.

Having their diplomas in hand will give our students the ability to launch careers where they will earn, on average, $1 million more in their lifetime than their peers who do not complete a university education.

GSI is an extensive, multi-year project, but we’re excited about the accomplishments we’ve had so far:

- Our on-time graduation has increased 6 percent in just one year.
- Ninety-five percent of our entering freshman class in the fall declared a major. This is important because we know that early identification of an appropriate major aids in timely graduation.
- As part of the admission process, students now use the online MyMajorMatch to identify their career interests and the specific FIU majors that correspond to those interests.
- All FIU students now have a professional advisor assigned to them, who will follow them through their academic careers and guide them to success.
- Our students now use the online MajorMaps, which offers a clearly defined path to graduation by stating the sequence of required courses, and My-eAdvisor, a communications tool that gives immediate feedback when a student veers from the stated best path and also alerts his or her professional advisor.

Our efforts are having an impact because we are tracking results to understand what factors affect student academic success and using that information to improve our policies and practices.

For example, we’ve discovered that college algebra, which had a high failure rate among our students, was a powerful predictor of on-time graduation. If students passed this course, they were 75 percent more likely to graduate on time, regardless of their major, than students who failed the course. This led to two grant-funded projects that allowed us to change the way we approached the teaching of the course. The Wal-Mart Grant and the Title V Grant have funded a new teaching model that involves peer-assisted and computer instructional techniques, including our Mastery Math Lab. As a result, pass rates in college algebra have jumped 20 percent and are expected to reach 70 percent!

We are working to apply our understanding of which courses and the way in which they are taught might affect the progress of students in other areas. Our next priority is to tackle the general chemistry course, which will benefit our students majoring in Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

Once our students graduate, their achievements – which attract attention for FIU and reinforce the excellence of our academic offerings – enhance the value of an FIU degree for all. Every student counts at FIU, and through GSI we are making sure that every student succeeds.

President Mark B. Rosenberg

Be WorldsAhead