Building a legacy of local and global engagement

For me, every student counts. It goes without saying, of course, that every graduate counts as well. I am particularly proud of the accomplishments of one of my students and one of our early graduates, Manny Diaz '77, who has just completed a highly successful term as mayor. Manny was one of those students who we knew would be a success. His leadership skills were evident then. His interest in public service was way above the norm for his fellow students. And he had a passion for our community that has only deepened over the years. Manny would have done well at any university—we were privileged that he was one of our students and thrilled that we can claim him as one of our graduates.

Just as impressive is the Gonzalez family—12 members from this family have graduated from FIU over three generations! Their confidence in our faculty, and in our institution is truly an inspiration. It is testimony to the power of how FIU has had a positive impact in our community by educating and preparing families for the challenges of the dynamic 21st century economy.

Our alumni are a lifeline for a lifetime. Our legacy graduates and families, like Manny Diaz and the Gonzalez family, are a vital lifeline for our institution. Thirty-seven years after we first opened our doors to students, FIU is now old enough that we have educated many parents and their children, as well as aunts, uncles, cousins and siblings and even grandparents and grandchildren! These legacy families believe in FIU, have trusted FIU with their educations and continue to trust us with the education of their newest generations. Their unwavering support is crucial as FIU builds on its accomplishments and moves forward in this new era as a more student-centered, urban public research university.

Outstanding graduates like Diaz and the Gonzalezes are testaments to FIU’s new Worlds Ahead brand. The Worlds Ahead campaign will serve as affirmation and celebration of who we are by telling the success stories of our alumni, our students and our faculty. Worlds Ahead highlights FIU’s strengths as a vibrant, entrepreneurial, community focused and accessible university with a global perspective.

Being worlds ahead means providing an environment that will help prepare our students to compete in today’s global economy. We have renewed our commitment to the “international” part of our name through our Global Learning Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), one of the pillars of the Worlds Ahead brand. We aim to give each FIU graduate the knowledge, skills and attitudes of global citizenship in the 21st century. Already many of our students and graduates are engaged in education, research, and community-enhancing endeavors around the world, while others have assumed international leadership positions in their professions. They are all shining examples of how an FIU education prepares students to succeed in the global marketplace.

But to stay worlds ahead in this competitive environment, to build the value of the FIU degree, we will need all our graduates—including Manny Diaz and the Gonzalez family—telling the story of FIU. We will need their commitment to help us place new FIU graduates in meaningful work. And, we will need greater levels of financial support from grateful FIU graduates who are now positioned to give back! This will happen—for it is our graduates who will help us to continue to turn the impossible into the inevitable!