



Address at the HWCOM Sapphire Celebration

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
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Office of the President
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

This speech was presented to the attendees of the 5th Annual Sapphire Gala honoring the 12th Year Anniversary of the FIU Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, held at the Intercontinental Miami on May 12, 2018.

Good evening! Thank you so much for being here for our Sapphire Celebration!

A very special thank you to our gala committee chairs: Mary-Lou and John Dasburg and Susan and Larry Kahn. I'd also like to thank this year's gala committee! We wouldn't be here without you!

Tonight, we come together to celebrate hope. To celebrate goodness. To celebrate collaboration. To celebrate this medical school that – like our FIU – steps up and takes responsibility for this community. That changes lives for the better and helps make this community healthier 24/7, 365.

We wouldn't be here this evening celebrating this medical school without also celebrating each and every one of you, who have been a part of this incredible, life-changing – and, indeed, *life-saving* – journey. So, thank you for joining us!

Before we begin, I would like to ask a very special member of our FIU family to come to the podium. Claudia Puig has served on our Board of Trustees for more than a decade! Time and time again, she has stood up for our FIU. Here in the community – in Tallahassee, in Washington – she's helped us grow and has worked tirelessly to bring much-needed, impactful programs into our community. Please join me in welcoming Chairwoman Puig.

Thank you, Claudia! As you said, this medical school *is* a dream come true. It's the great dream of so many who've believed deeply in our FIU – including Dr. Herbert Wertheim, who unfortunately could not join us this evening!

Recently, Dr. Wertheim came back to FIU for one of our most joyous occasions: Commencement. He reminded our College of Medicine graduates that what has happened at our FIU is an "absolute miracle", and it is.

This medical school is one of our biggest miracles; a miracle that was only possible because of those who dared to dream with us.

Every day, we reach for the stars and change our world – because of you! Because you have the passion to help us do more – and do better. You have helped us go beyond, so we can do something good for this entire community.

From day one, this has been a medical school for this community. There is no line that marks where this medical school ends and this community begins. That is why it is a dream come true for the hundreds and thousands of people who will one day desperately need our students.

Whenever our students are needed, they go. They heal. They improve lives. They constantly carry that special sense of responsibility to do good with them.

As you know, our FIU recently experienced a truly sad moment in our history. One that tested our resilience, courage, commitment and our ability to help one another in ways we never imagined. The 8th street bridge accident is a tragedy that has shaken our entire community.

As you saw, on that tragic day, many of our faculty, professional staff and students stepped outside of their offices – and saw the aftermath – rubble, pain, lives in the balance. They didn't hesitate. They didn't think twice. And although they didn't know what to expect, they immediately rushed onto the scene.

There was Dr. Becky Martinez, an OB/GYN. She came across a man in shock, and she used her background and training – and helped him stay calm with Lamaze breathing exercises.

And then there was Dr. Juana Montero. When she arrived at the scene, she encountered a victim who desperately needed her. He kept saying, "Please, stay with me", and she did. She remained by his side. Dr. Montero provided the type of treatment that he really needed in that moment: a hand to hold, and a human presence during that very difficult time.

And then there were our brave students like Kelly Hodill. She's in our Physician Assistant program. That day, she was doing her rotation with Dr. Montero. She didn't hesitate. She immediately went out to help!

Ladies and gentlemen, this is the caliber of education at this medical school. They learn from the very best! And they are so deeply entrenched in their training that they know what to do. They know what their role is; they know what their responsibility is. These stories send a strong message about the heart and soul of this university... about who we are and what we do.

We are so proud and grateful for our FIU first responders... Each one of you is a hero among us.

Now, these difficult times truly are difficult. But, they also hold important lessons on the fragility of life and the responsibility to do good in an unpredictable world. We cannot control what happens sometimes, but we can control what we do, how we act, how we respond, how we help. We are also reminded of a profound belief in the opportunities FIU gives to our community.

Our College of Medicine brings so much good! This journey hasn't been easy. But, it was possible — because you, me, and so many others came together to make it happen.

One of those people is Dr. Herbert Wertheim. His generous gift to the College of Medicine has ensured that we will be able to completely revolutionize medical education and educate doctors in our community for years to come! His longstanding vision and generosity is the kind of selflessness that makes our world a better place!

He believed in us before WE believed in us! Dr. Wertheim's generosity has made miracles happen. As I said, he couldn't be here tonight, but he still found a way to share a message with us...

Thank you, Joseph! I would now like to make a very exciting announcement. Mary-Lou and John Dasburg are very important members of our FIU family. They are long time donors and members of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine Dean's Circle. Last week, their daughter Kathryn, walked across our commencement stage to receive her Doctor of Medicine degree from our FIU! Mary-Lou and John now have living, breathing proof of the power of our medical school.

Make no mistake: Kathryn is the face of the future of medicine! To celebrate Kathryn's milestone achievement — and their devotion and dedication to FIU — Mary-Lou and John are donating \$1.5 million to our FIU. It will go toward establishing the John and Mary Lou Dasburg Chair in Medicine Endowment. I am also very happy to tell you that Dean Rock will be the first recipient!

Dean Rock has been the driving force behind the success of our College of Medicine! He has worked tirelessly to bring to fruition the dream of a public medical school in South Florida. For more than a decade, he's honored a commitment we made all those years ago: To educate a new generation of doctors and to heal our community. He has set a standard for success in medical education in this community and around the globe. We wouldn't be where we are today, there truly is no better choice!

I would now like to invite Dean Rock to the stage.

Thank you, again, Mary-Lou and John for your dedication and devotion to our FIU! You are an inspiration to us all! This gift is going to make a lasting impact on our College of Medicine. Your family name will live on forever at our FIU – and in this community!

Like Dr. Wertheim, and like the Dasburgs, each one of you has also been a part of building this medical school! Together, we reached for the stars and grabbed the moon, and we did it because of YOU! But, our work is not done; our work is never done.

We've graduated more than 380 outstanding physicians and doctors – we need to graduate thousands more! Because this is what this community needs! This is what our future depends on!

I want to end with something Dr. Wertheim said to our graduating class at commencement:

“What we all share is our time and our humanity.
And what we do with our time and our humanity
defines who we are...”

Now more than ever, I believe this is truly an important question – if not the most important question – we can ask ourselves. We need people like you, who step up and take responsibility and help us to continue to move the needle.

I know that with you behind us, we can continue to bring more hope and goodness into this world. With you, we can continue to make an impact. We can continue to train students that use their time and humanity to change the world. With you, we can continue to do the right thing – which is, after all, what we must do. I know that you will always answer the call to help and help us get to that “Next Horizon”.

So, thank you for all that you have done and all that you will do. As a reminder, bidding in the silent auction closes at 9:15 p.m.! There will also be some dessert and coffee being served. Again, thank you for being here.

Please enjoy the rest of your evening!