



Sweetwater Chamber of Commerce Business Networker

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
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This speech was presented to members of the FIU and Sweetwater Community during the Sweetwater Chamber of Commerce Business Networker on March 24, 2015.

It's great to be here in Sweetwater and the 109 Tower! I want to thank so many of you from the Chamber for your leadership.

Throughout this county, there are so many communities on the move. Especially proud of City of North Miami Beach – Mayor Vallejo there has led an incredible resurgence City of North Miami – new leadership that is focused on retaining the city's treasure – its youth by building a college-town environment! Doral is on the move – that is good for all of us!

But the city that I am most proud of – Sweetwater. You have a unique opportunity to rebuild your city. As a result of annexations and related development, your city budget has tripled! How will you manage this growth? Can you build value and enhance the value of your community? The Chamber plays an important role in this! Here's my line – Sweetwater is Rising!

As neighbors, FIU and Sweetwater share common goals. Let me thank our Miami Dade County Commissioner, Jose Pepe Diaz, for helping me to see this a decade ago. And now I have the privilege to work with you – the business and political community to build. Our Sweetwater into the world-class city and destination that is its destiny! But we all have to work better together and set some high goals. Let me tell you about our high goals:

We see our university as a solutions center for our community. Our mission is intimately linked to our geography and our demography -indeed our geography and our demography are our destiny. We see ourselves as a force for good!

So what does FIU look like today in terms of students? We enroll more than 54,000 students – about twice the population of Sweetwater. By 2020, we project we will have 65,000 students. We are the country's fourth largest public research institution in terms of enrollment. We are the country's largest majority-minority university. We are the shape of things to come for public universities in the US. We graduate nearly 12,500 students annually. In the next ten years, nearly 130,000 students will graduate from FIU. Most will stay here in Miami. Many will choose to live right here in Sweetwater. Our graduates are among the best paid in the State University System. According to the latest figures we have, most of our students who graduate with bachelor's degrees find jobs within a year of graduation. On average, they earn close to \$40,000 a year at those

jobs. Most of our master's degree graduates find jobs as well. Their earnings after graduation average \$60,000 a year.

FIU also creates jobs: With more than 11,000 faculty and staff, we are one of the top 10 employers in Miami-Dade County. You have a top ten Dade County employer right here as a neighbor. We have created 1,000 new, high-paying jobs in the last five years – including over 500 new faculty members. Well, 35 percent of Miami-Dade County public school teachers are FIU graduates. 37 percent of Miami-Dade County public school administrators are also FIU graduates. We award more than \$170 million dollars each year in scholarships and financial aid. Your schools are key!

Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting Sweetwater Elementary during the FPL Power to Care Event. On this day, volunteers were cleaning up and beautifying Sweetwater Elementary. With its prominent location on Southwest 107th Avenue, Sweetwater Elementary is one of the landmarks of this great city. Thanks to Superintendent Carvalho for his commitment to invest \$4 million in beautification for this school. Sweetwater Elementary's face lift, demonstrates that we understand the importance of great schooling for our children. It is a great example of what I like to call "Sweetwater Rising." Sweetwater is ON THE RISE, and Sweetwater Elementary is a great example.

As Sweetwater rises, so does FIU. Our destinies are intertwined. Let's take a look at Sweetwater Elementary. Of the 55 teachers at Sweetwater Elementary, 27 have degrees from FIU! The school's Assistant Principal, Morris Gil, is also an FIU grad. Recently, Sweetwater Elementary launched an after school coding class for fourth and fifth-grade girls. The class is taught by Maria C. Charters, from our School of Computing and Information Sciences, and two of her students. We know that this coding class can help these girls develop their interest in STEM fields – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Working together with our neighbors in Sweetwater, we are making a difference for our community and our world, by changing the lives of these children. This is just one way that we are engaged in win-win partnerships that are making a difference at FIU, Sweetwater and throughout our community.

Everything I just mentioned are just some of the ways FIU is having a positive impact on our community and our workforce.

Like all of us at FIU, I know everyone in this room is committed to the economic well-being of this community. At FIU, we also are committed to the well-being of our neighbors in Sweetwater. Let me tell you how we're having a positive impact right here in the city.

Close to 4,000 of our students call Sweetwater home. That's an increase of almost 60 percent since 2009!! 224 high school students who live in Sweetwater participate in dual enrollment at FIU. They are earning college credits before their high school graduation.

That's almost 4 times as many students as just 5 years ago! During the last academic year we awarded almost \$30 million in financial aid and scholarships to Sweetwater residents. During the past academic year, we also awarded bachelor's degrees to more than 500 Sweetwater residents; and graduate degrees to more than 200 Sweetwater residents. And more than 200 FIU alumni live in Sweetwater. As a university, we've spent almost a quarter million dollars over the past five years on goods and services from Sweetwater businesses. Almost 800 Sweetwater residents work at FIU as faculty and staff. They spend their hard-earned money right here in this city!

As I previously mentioned, FIU is engaged in a number of innovative, groundbreaking projects with Sweetwater. Allow me to share with you some updates on those projects.

Let's first talk about UniversityCity! This is a pioneering public-private collaboration that includes FIU, Sweetwater, the Florida Department of Transportation, the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority, and Miami-Dade Transit. It was made possible by a U.S. Department of Transportation TIGER Discretionary Grant award. TIGER stands for Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery Program. With other federal and match funding, we and our partners are now undertaking a \$16 million project. The idea is to connect our Modesto A. Maidique Campus next door to our neighbors here in Sweetwater, and to other parts of Greater Miami. In effect, UniversityCity unites us to create our future, together. We want South Floridians to get out of their cars. We want them to live, learn and play near where they work. We want them to explore other transportation options. Those options include walking in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, cities and streets. These are designed to serve the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, community transit users, homeowners, and business owners. We will be working together to improve the natural, built, and electronic environment. Our hope is that our comprehensive and innovative approach with UniversityCity will be a model for the region and the country. We are leveraging our best academic thinking and experience. All of this means improved transportation, jobs and economic development. It is a win-win-win for our community. Please stay tuned. We'll have more news about UniversityCity soon!

Our other big partnership is with our Honors College, who has been partnering with Sweetwater for years. Highlights of that relationship include: The Sweetwater Farm-Share initiative, where our Honors College students volunteer in food collection, packaging and distribution. Our students also volunteer for special events throughout the year, including during Thanksgiving and Christmas. Our students collaborated with Mayor Jose Diaz's office to help paint houses for the elderly and less fortunate. Several of our students have also held internships at the City of Sweetwater offices. Two of our alumni are even working at the mayor's office now and we hope to expand our internship pool soon. They also tutor Sweetwater Elementary students after school via a partnership with the Lil Abner Foundation. We're proud of this collaboration with

the Lil Abner Foundation, which was established by one of the Honors College community advisory board members, Raul Rodriguez.

The third and last major project I wanted to update you on, is the work with our Frost Art Museum. The first part of this project is the School Program. We know that working together with our neighbors we can make a difference. That's why we are now launching a number of programs through our Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum. We want to encourage children and adults to visit the museum regularly. Next month, we're going to host field trips for 3rd, 4th and 5th graders from Sweetwater Elementary. We'll also take museum reproductions to their classrooms. The second piece of the collaboration is the "Museum in the Community / Farmers Markets" We also join Sweetwater Mayor Jose Diaz in his efforts to elevate the cultural literacy of residents of Sweetwater. In that vein, beginning this summer, during Sweetwater's Farmers Market Saturdays, we will bring the museum to the community. And lastly, is the Senior Residents Program. We will also work with the older residents through the city's senior programs department. Starting in April, we'll roll out monthly visits with traveling or local artists and arrange for gallery tours at the museum. Because we want to reach as many of our neighbors as possible, we will be providing this as a Spanish-language or bilingual program. As you can see, by forging win-win partnerships in our community, particularly with Sweetwater, we are able to provide our graduates with a high quality education, and make a difference in our community.

Sweetwater is rising!! To rise with it, to maximize our impact, FIU must grow. Last fall, 65 percent of almost 500,000 Miami-Dade voters demonstrated their confidence in FIU and our future. They gave us a mandate to expand to the 64 acres contiguous to our Modesto Maidique Campus. This is about more and better educational and work opportunities for our community. This initiative is important for our institution and our community, especially our neighbors in Sweetwater. I hope to have more news for you in the coming months as we continue to work with the county and The Fair on a win-win-win solution for relocating the fair.

Sweetwater is rising and as your neighbors, we want to rise with you. We're excited about Sweetwater's future and FIU's future, which will impact the future of our entire community. But we won't do it alone. We need the support of the leaders in this room. We need you to support the good work FIU is doing for our students and our region. We need you to support our partnerships with Sweetwater, and help us create new joint initiatives. Help us continue to be a beacon of hope and opportunity for South Florida, one that generates good jobs for South Florida and educates the talented people who will fill those jobs. The consensus in our community is that world class cities deserve world class universities.

Help us build a world class university. Help us rise, together!!