

MEMORANDUM

September 17, 2017

Dear FIU family,

Who isn't exhausted after the last 10 days? So, it is with profound relief and happiness that we welcome you back to our FIU tomorrow morning as we resume classes.

This is not the first time that we have been adversely impacted by devastating winds and rain. One of the things that distinguishes this storm from others is the hundreds of Keys residents it has displaced, some of whom are now our on-campus guests. They have little prospect of returning home soon because of the destruction in their community. And while we house dozens of evacuees, hundreds are nearby in the Fuchs Pavilion at Tamiami Park.

We have learned important lessons personally and as a community about our humanity, our capacity to stretch and help each other, as well as some things we must do going forward to help take care of the most vulnerable among us. Hurricane Irma has brought forward our strengths and exposed our weaknesses.

The FIU community does not ask for a lighter load but for broader shoulders. Indeed, at the height of the storm, we provided safety to more than 500 Monroe County evacuees, including 139 human beings with special needs. Managed by Monroe County, the Florida Department of Health, the American Red Cross, and the U.S. Public Health Service, the shelter at our Wellness & Recreation Center – and later the Ocean Bank Convocation Center and PG6 – became their temporary home.

We have been impressed by the outpouring of compassion and support for those who have been evacuated. We have also been encouraged by the energy our students and staff directed at helping the less fortunate among us. Throughout this week, they have stepped in numerous times to lift the spirits of the evacuees. Jazz students, members of the FIU Marching Band and the Amernet String Quartet performed for them. Later in the week a group of voice students performed children's songs. These performances brought some to tears and inspired others to show immense gratitude.

"I think it was a really beautiful thing," said Dennis, one of the Monroe County evacuees who has lived in a trailer on Stock Island for 12 years, and attended the jazz performance.

A really beautiful thing... There is perhaps no better way to describe many of the heart-felt stories that have come out of the experience with Hurricane Irma. Each one is a reminder that even when we're presented with challenges in our lives, there is always room for beauty and humanity.

These last 10 days have given all of us an opportunity to reflect on what is important. Something that I have known for a long time at FIU: I am fortunate to work with a group of remarkable professionals who put aside titles and job descriptions and get to work solving problems and making life better for our students, evacuees and each other.

I am proud of the work the Residential Life and Student Affairs team did with the students we sheltered at Parkview. Our Aramark team went above and beyond to make sure everyone on campus had some comfort food during and after the storm. Our outstanding Information Technology team rode out the storm in the PC building to make sure our network didn't go down. We had custodians patiently servicing the overcrowded rec center as the evacuees poured in and maintenance and facilities staff on the ground Monday morning assessing damage and cleaning up. The External Relations team kept the community informed. Our Governmental Relations team worked with elected officials and others to secure meals and supplies for the special needs shelter. Our hardworking libraries staff was able to open the Green Library on Tuesday, giving students a place to study and access the Internet.

Parking and Transportation staff oversaw the process of parking more than 5,000 vehicles in our garages for protection from the storm and worked tirelessly to shuttle evacuees.

Hurricane Irma marked the first time we had a full activation of our Emergency Operations Center. The EOC is staffed by professionals from around the university and led by Assistant Vice President Ruben Almaguer and Director of Emergency Management Amy Aiken, who worked through the storm and subsequent days to coordinate a safe and prompt recovery at our FIU.

I have been touched by the gratitude in our community for what FIU has done in the wake of Irma. In the weeks and months to come, as we rebuild our community, that gratitude will motivate us. We have seen and felt the pain and despair of hundreds of people right here at our FIU and that should remind us that as a beacon of hope and opportunity, we cannot step back – the blessings of our talent and knowledge give us a special responsibility to be a first responder to community needs.

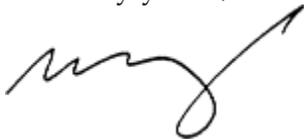
As I said to our FIU community before Irma: Staying calm is a superpower. But this entire state has another superpower – and we have seen it in full display – and that is doing good for others and working to brighten the darkest of moments. Let this be something we carry with us today, tomorrow and forever. And that drives us to always do what's right and good, so we can continue to do beautiful things for one another regardless of how exhausting it might be.

Tomorrow – Monday – *together we rise* – wiser, smarter and better for having united over the past 10 days in pursuit of safeguarding students, faculty and staff and protecting our FIU and helping our neighbors. You are part of a unique community that takes responsibility, helps others and is committed to impact. That is who we are – and over the past 10 days, you have seen what we can do, and you know what we must continue to do.

I leave you with some [images](#) from the last few days.

Welcome back!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark B. Rosenberg', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Mark B. Rosenberg
President