



**Address at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Torch Awards**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on November 17, 2018.**



*This speech was presented to the FIU Alumni and guests of the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Torch Awards held at the FIU Ocean Bank Convocation Center on November 17, 2018.*

Good evening. Welcome Home!

Congratulations to our Torch Awardees! Tonight's awardees all have in common their commitment to excellence. They all are willing to take responsibility for family and community. They inspire. They give confidence.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is true – the bridge collapse has been a major challenge. It has rattled our soul. May I please have a moment of silence in memory of those who passed away or were injured in the 8<sup>th</sup> street bridge collapse.

Universities are communities of memory and hope. We have pride in everything we do. We want to make things better. We are a source of opportunity. We are guided by the goodness that can be found in the hearts of each and everyone in this convocation tonight.

Let me tell you that I have never ever been more honored than tonight.

The privilege to recognize outstanding graduates; the privilege to represent all of you locally and globally before countless audiences who also believe in our boards, our faculty, our staff, our students, our alumni. So, I want to thank you all for giving me this unique platform!

We are in Miami Florida. Just two days ago, I was in Washington, D. C. with our energizing students at our humble center on 440 First St, NW. What an amazing group of thoughtful determined young learners. They and 57,000 other students enrolled this semester inspire us to do right by them.

And what a difference geography makes: it was 31 degrees. Rainy, snowy, nasty, cold. Undershirt. Overcoat. It wasn't enough. On the return flight home, the pilot announces it is 80 degrees warm in the 305. Warmth in our community – what a blessing. So here we are in our Miami. Our FIU.

When the U.S. Secretary of Transportation visited Miami last year, she made two stops: Miami International Airport and our FIU Engineering Center.

At MIA – she met with Mayor of the County, Congressman Mario Diaz Balart, Chair of Board of County Commissioners, the Head of MDX, the Head of Airport, the Head of

Seaport, the Head of Metro Dade Transit, the Head of Transportation Planning Authority, and the Mayor of the City of Miami.

All, with exception of the County Mayor and the Congressman, have a degree from FIU! Isn't that amazing?

Our teachers, our bankers, our engineers, our nurses, our athletic trainers, our hospitality leaders, our tech and systems computer scientists, the President of the Youth Fair, former Mayor of Ft. Lauderdale, many county and city commissioners, many state legislators, including the incoming LT. Governor of the State of Florida – All FIU graduates!

Remove FIU from Miami? Enormous gaps in the talent that leads and runs this community.

The better we get, the better our community gets. Our way of life in our community is increasingly subject to how well we do as a university.

Our 15,000 graduates this year – they will be welcomed, and they are needed if we are to survive and thrive here. They will be some of the highest paid public university graduates in the state.

Several years ago, a visiting member of the National Academy of Sciences said that our FIU was “unstoppable.” I would like to think that we are indeed “unstoppable.” But make no mistake, this is an era where people need to attach to something larger than themselves that gives added purpose. That is one of the reasons that universities across this country have such strong alumni and community support. Place matters. Affinity. Identity. Identification. We are the Panthers. We seek the next horizon. We never give up.

So, as we gather this evening, let us remember that we are now a top 100 public university. Let us remember that we were ranked as second-best public university in Florida last year. Let us remember that Forbes Magazine ranked us as the second-best large employer in the State. Let us remember that 18 of our programs are ranked in top 100 in the US. Let us remember that we are a leading producer of Hispanic and African American talent for this country. Let us remember that we are a part of something very special!

We are turning the impossible into the inevitable – every day. And you are a part of this. But we are not done.

This celebration is a priceless opportunity to recommit; to become even better; to raise our hopes even higher!

And here is what I need from you to do that:

Our Next Horizon Campaign officially kicks off on January 26. Save the date! The top universities in this country enable their impact and good deeds through the generosity of alumni who find a way to give back financially. It is time to recommit – we gotta not just hit our goal of \$750 M. We gotta exceed it. We gotta get to that Next Horizon!

Outside of this room are thousands of FIU graduates who can help – they *and you* can do better than the 4.3% of alumni who give back to FIU every year (as reported by US News and World Report)!

I would like to believe that up to forty percent of our graduates can and should be making donations to their favorite scholarship program or academic department. We gotta get to this level if we are to move into the top 50 of public universities.

Over a decade ago, our alumni – you – you asked us to start football, and now we have a World Class Coach in Butch Davis. I would like to ask you and thousands of your fellow alums to get reengaged with our football and athletic teams.

Marshall comes to FIU one week from today at noon. Nationally televised. Can we fill the stadium with the blue and gold – you? Can we send a national message that our alumni take deep pride in the competitiveness of our student athletes? Can we send a reassuring message to Coach Davis that you appreciate his commitment to excellence? And that you are willing, like alumni around the country, to show up and cheer for FIU?!

So, let's use this gathering to recommit to our FIU. Let's send a resolute message that every day we believe in FIU and will help it, and our community, to get better.

And let us ultimately understand that our success as an institution will give us added meaning – and will send a message to all that our FIU is a moral institution that takes responsibility and leaves people and our community better.

Universities are communities of memory and hope. Leave here tonight committed to hope. Leave here tonight rejoicing that you are part of a larger community that is hope to countless future generations. That FIU will be here for them, just like our FIU has been here for all of us... and just like our FIU has been here for you, because YOU make it FIU!

THANK YOU!