

MEMORANDUM

May 23, 2013

Dear members of the FIU community:

Although we have two years remaining in our current World's Ahead Strategic Plan 2010-2015, I would like to initiate a robust discussion and the development of the 2015-2020 strategic plan to be conducted over the next fifteen months. The 2010-2015 strategic plan, built around the concept paper "Hit the Ground Running" and subsequent working papers written by faculty and staff under Provost Wartzok's direction, has proved to be a worthy guide for academic planning and implementation at FIU. This approach has served us well in guiding decision-making and program development. By most indicators, we are on, or ahead of, our targets.

While we continue to implement our Worlds Ahead Plan, the time has come to take the first steps in the development of a new plan, one that both builds on our significant accomplishments and prepares FIU for a future in higher education that is still technologically and pedagogically evolving. This new strategic plan will be completed by Fall 2014 to ensure full involvement of the FIU community.

The first steps in the development of a new strategic plan should result in a concept paper that addresses many of the questions we discussed this past year during my visits to each of the colleges/schools. It became clear to me that many faculty colleagues share a sense of concern about the changes facing us and our ability not only to survive, but to thrive, in the rapidly changing educational environment.

To begin responding to these changes, I am appointing the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Dr. Kenneth G. Furton, to head a commission that will be called *FIU - integrating Research, Engagement, Assessment and Learning* (FIU iREAL).

This commission will consist of ten members of our community, including students, faculty, professional staff, alumni, and community leaders. The commission will be asked to help us answer the essential question that I posed during our conversations this past year: can we continue at FIU to do what we have always done and expect that we will be able to sustain ourselves well into the future?

The pace of change in knowledge creation and information distribution presents challenges and opportunities for FIU. Multiple movements are emerging, and, for FIU, business as usual is no longer an option. For instance, a movement toward flexible learning, open courseware, and social media is opening new approaches that we must understand and embrace where appropriate. The do-it-yourself education that can be fully credentialed is right around the corner.

While it is still early in terms of understanding the implications of these movements, what is clear is that significant change is coming. FIU has an opportunity to move forward given our relative youth and entrepreneurial bent. It is essential that alumni, community leaders, faculty, professional staff, and students engage in soul-searching and a robust dialogue about options, and actively participate in the work of this commission.

Accordingly, I am asking the commission to present a white paper by early Fall 2013 that identifies the external and internal issues that we must address if we are to prosper in the midst of the rapid changes that are impacting our operating environment.

Specifically, the paper should address the following questions:

1. What are the major drivers of change, now and in the foreseeable future, in the delivery of educational services, and how will they likely impact FIU and our predominantly minority and non-traditional (working) students who have been shown to have a greater need for high-touch educational experiences?
2. What are the major drivers of change in the assessment of learning (i.e., prior learning and competency-based assessment) at the university level, and how will they impact FIU? For instance, the recently passed [HB7029](#) requires the Board of Governors to develop rules to enable students to obtain university credit for online courses, including MOOCs, taken before they enroll in a SUS institution.
3. How will new modalities of education impact the six-year graduation rate of our first-time-in-college students, the primary performance funding indicator used by the Board of Governors?
4. The American public research university is built upon instructional revenues providing the salary support for faculty to pursue their research. How can the research university survive if the focus is on providing validation of individual learning in ways that are “less expensive than ever before”?
5. What alternative scenarios of institutional change should we consider, and what are the pros and cons as well as the costs of the initiatives proposed?
6. How can faculty, staff, students, and the community be thoroughly engaged with changes that are proposed?
7. How will FIU respond to, and benefit from, the changes in the global educational market?
8. How do we balance the pressure to deliver inexpensive degrees with the need to maintain a high quality product that represents excellent value to our students and maintains FIU’s trusted brand status?
9. How can we best harness the innate entrepreneurial spirit of our students, staff, faculty, and alumni?

10. How can we get maximum benefit from FIU's growing health related initiatives that include building on existing FIU expertise and demonstrating value to our university, South Florida, and global constituencies?

I expect broad-based consultation in the development of this white paper. This whitepaper will serve as a base-line document for the new strategic plan that we must soon develop – much in the same way that working papers informed our most recent plan.

To begin the process, I ask members of our community to write short (1-2 pages) concept papers that answer any and/or all of the questions posed above and/or to pose questions and solutions to other pertinent areas that bear on our future. These papers and other relevant materials will be shared on the project web site and will guide the formation of the commission and any working groups and their subsequent deliberations. We expect several public discussions during the Fall semester to ensure broad-based participation. To submit concept papers and to get updates on the progress of this commission please go to (<http://commission.fiu.edu>).

I am very excited that we can initiate this important conversation on the shape of things to come for our FIU. Let me thank Dean Furton for his willingness to lead and guide our efforts in this most important enterprise!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Rosenberg
President