



**Address at the Herbert Wertheim  
College of Medicine's White Coat Ceremony**

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg  
on August 7, 2009**



*This speech was presented to faculty, students and special guests at the White Coat Ceremony for the inaugural class of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine at FIU on August 7, 2009.*

Ladies and gentleman, distinguished guests, valued students ! I represent not just this university today. I represent the literally thousands of people who turned this dream into a reality, who made it possible to turn the impossible into the inevitable – a medical school and academic health center at FIU!

I had the privilege to be part of the team that crafted this initiative... that moved this initiative from concept to reality. Serving first as dean when we began to enhance health education services and research at FIU, to provost, when we gave full body, educated the key decision makers, built the incredible political coalition in our community and then with the University of Central Florida and then as Chancellor when we developed a funding strategy and a guiding statewide political coalition and the necessary approvals – it has been a work that has touched thousands of people who believed in our medical education initiative and academic health center, who wanted to be a part of it, who sacrificed to make it happen, and who now are thrilled like me-- to see it happen.

We knew what we wanted – to have a new approach to medical education that would depart from time-honored and outdated approaches to getting it right! In this sense, I also represent, and proudly, someone who 100 years ago, helped to change the face of medical education. His name – Abraham Flexner.

It was his report to the nation, working for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, that helped to alter our country's approach to medical education. The report was path-breaking; it was critical of the nature of medical education, the profit motive of many medical schools and teachers, and the inadequate preparation of medical students starting with curriculum and facilities. Flexner understood that medical education needed to reflect the challenges of its times.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**, we have created here with our new academic health center, a medical education that will be second to none:

- in its commitment to primary care,
- to the needs of those who have been left at the margins of basic access to medical and health services.

We will educate a culturally competent physician who knows how to work more collaboratively with the other equally dedicated health care professionals who care and want to make a difference. What a novel idea – working more collaboratively based on shared responsibility and mutual respect!

None of this would have happened without a university faculty and staff – who were solidly behind this new initiative – so I must thank them for their confidence and hope. I also want to thank our new medical school and academic health center faculty: you have joined a university that just forty years ago did not really exist! You have joined a university that will graduate nearly 100,000 new students in the next ten years. You are part of a great enterprise that is making a huge impact locally and internationally. We are making yet another statement today, with this White Coat Ceremony – about how important it is to do the right thing. What’s right is right. Public access medical education in South Florida was the right thing. And this university and its faculty must always do the right thing!

Our 43 extraordinary students will do so much good in this extreme world. So, on behalf of the 1000s of dreamers who made this medical school a reality, who made it possible for this new incredible journey to begin right here with this White Coat Ceremony, I want to say – thank you and **Congratulations to the class of 2013!** This is one of FIU’s proudest moments!