



Office of the  
President

**PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAM**

**COHORT 1 (2016-2017)**



*President's Leadership Program – Sponsor & Facilitator*

**Dr. Mark B. Rosenberg** is president of Florida International University. A public institution of higher education, FIU is the face of the country's future in higher education demographics: it is a majority-minority institution that leads the country in the production of minority degrees in the sciences and engineering.

Dr. Rosenberg has served as the fifth president of FIU since August 2009. A political scientist specializing in Latin America, Dr. Rosenberg is the first FIU faculty member to ascend to the university's presidency.

Under his leadership as president, FIU has increased enrollment to almost 56,000 students, improved graduation rates by nearly 13% and hired over 500 new faculty. As President, Dr. Rosenberg has provided leadership to grow the institution's budget, improve student graduation and retention rates, expand internships for enrolled students, and coordinate FIU's emergence as a leading producer of graduates in priority national and state areas focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The university has been named as a Carnegie "Highest Research" as well as an "Engaged" institution, and has developed path-breaking partnerships with the Miami Dade County Public Schools, JP Morgan Chase, Florida Power & Light and Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. Research expenditures have grown by nearly 30% to nearly \$160 million, and over sixty new student advisers and counselors have been hired for a restructured and expanded student graduation initiative.

From 2005 to 2008, Dr. Rosenberg served as the Founding Chancellor for the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida, which includes all of Florida's public universities – over 325,000 students and an all-accounts budget of nearly \$9 billion. As chancellor, Dr. Rosenberg led the system's strategic development and financial planning and policy initiatives, working closely with Gov. Jeb Bush and Gov. Charlie Crist and the state legislature to secure support for SUS priorities. During this era, major new strides were made in research support for the system, over \$1 billion was provided for new facility construction, and a new SUS strategic plan was developed and approved.

Prior to becoming chancellor, Dr. Rosenberg was integrally involved in the expansion and development of FIU into a major public research university. As Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs from 1998 to 2005, Dr. Rosenberg spearheaded the establishment of a law school in 2002 and a medical school in 2006. Under his leadership, FIU increased enrollment, implemented major campus construction projects, and was invited to join the select national honor society Phi Beta

Kappa. Dr. Rosenberg was also instrumental in moving FIU into the top tier of Carnegie Foundation research universities.

Dr. Rosenberg's academic career began at FIU in 1976 as an assistant professor of political science. In 1979, he founded the FIU Latin American and Caribbean Center, which today is one of the nation's premier federally-supported research and teaching centers focusing on the region. Dr. Rosenberg subsequently served as the Founding Dean of the College of Urban and Public Affairs and Vice Provost for International Studies. He has also been a Visiting Distinguished Research Professor at The Peabody College of Vanderbilt University, and a Visiting Professor at the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM) in Mexico.

Dr. Rosenberg earned a B.A. in 1971 from Miami University of Ohio and a Ph.D. in Political Science with a graduate certificate in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Pittsburgh in 1976. He has written or co-edited seven books and numerous scholarly articles in leading journals. His latest book, *The United States and Central America: Geopolitical Realities and Regional Fragility* (2007), is a Harvard University project co-authored with Luis Guillermo Solís of Costa Rica. Governmental and media organizations have frequently sought Dr. Rosenberg's expertise on Latin America. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, has testified before Congress numerous times, and has served as a consultant to the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Firmly committed to service with national and local educational impact, Dr. Rosenberg serves as Chair of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine's Committee on Developing Indicators for Undergraduate STEM Education; is Co-Chair of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' (HACU) STEM Task Force; and serves on the Board of Directors of the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU) where he is Co-Chair of the Student Performance Strand.

Within Miami-Dade County, Dr. Rosenberg is the Chair of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (GMCC), one of Florida's leading business associations. He also chairs the Academic Leaders Council (ALC) for the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade County's official economic development organization; and serves on the Board of Directors of City National Bank of Florida. Dr. Rosenberg has been active in a variety of other civic organizations, including the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, Florida Council of 100, and United Way.

Dr. Rosenberg is a first-generation college graduate whose two children, Ben and Ginelle, are both graduates of FIU. He and his wife of over 40 years, Rosalie, are members of Temple Menorah in Miami Beach.



**President's Leadership Program - Program Director & Co-Facilitator**

**Dr. Brenezza "Breny" DaParre Garcia** is the Assistant Vice President of Institutional Relations for Florida International University (FIU). In this role, she leads select institutional and presidential initiatives pertaining to key university donors and prospects, community partners, academic organizations, and student initiatives. This includes the management and coordination of the president's involvement with external organizations such as the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the National Academies, Urban Serving Universities, National Action Council of Minorities in

Engineering, Florida Board of Governors, among others. She also represents the Office of the President on student-centered matters such as to Homecoming, Freshman Convocation, Greek life, as well as projects like Founders Park, FIUinDC, and Student Health Services. Lastly, she manages all constituent relations on behalf of the president and serves as the Executive Director for the president's Executive Committee.

Prior to this role, Dr. Garcia served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for the Office of the President for five years. Her responsibilities included overseeing the day-to-day operations of the office, strategic development of President Mark B. Rosenberg's annual schedule, coordination of all special events for the president, and management of all constituent issues. She also served as the Human Resources Liaison for her division, assisted Dr. Rosenberg manage all action items for his boards (internal and external), and served as one of the university's protocol officers. In her role, she served on the Presidential Transition Committee in 2009 and on the Football Bowl Committee as the travel coordinator for FIU Football's bowl appearances in 2010 and 2011. From 2010-2013, Dr. Garcia also served as Chair to the University-Wide Homecoming Task Force. Her leadership culminated with the task force winning FIU's 2013 Presidential Excellence Award.

Working in the Office of the President since 2004, Dr. Garcia also served under FIU's 4<sup>th</sup> President, Dr. Modesto A. Maidique. Her past positions under his term included Executive Assistant to the President, Office Manager, Executive Area Budget Manager, and Program Assistant. Her experience within university administration has provided Dr. Garcia a unique perspective to the complexities and challenges higher education faces.

Believing that "a woman who serves is a woman who leads," Dr. Garcia is highly involved within the community. She holds active memberships with NASPA, Omicron Delta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Delta Epsilon Iota, Golden Key, Order of the Torch and Order of Omega. At FIU, she currently serves as a member of the Young Alumni

Council and as an advisor to Order of the Torch. An active alumna member of her sorority, Phi Sigma Sigma, Dr. Garcia currently serves as a Director on their international governing board.

Her greatest honor, though, comes from her service on the Board of Directors for Janelle's Wishing Well Foundation – an organization formed in memory of a dear friend, Janelle Bertot, who lost her life due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Each year the Board works closely with FIU and Phi Sigma Sigma to host awareness and fundraising events in the community.

An Honors College alumna, Dr. Garcia earned a B.A. in Political Science from FIU in 2005. She also earned an M.S. in Higher Education with a specialty in leadership management in 2007, and an Ed.D. in Higher Education with a research concentration in crisis leadership in 2015.



**Amanda Louise Niguidula**  
**Director**  
**Disability Resource Center**

Amanda Niguidula serves as the Director of Florida International University's Disability Resource Center. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from FIU in International Relations and Political Science, while accomplishing the milestone of being the first college graduate in her family. She then earned her Master's Degree in Public Administration, where she simultaneously worked in the FIU Victim Advocacy Center, managed various grant projects and led a task force examining violence and victimization on college campuses. Upon completion of additional graduate studies in Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building, Amanda joined the DRC team. She is actively engaged in providing consultation to the university community, promoting a vision of disability services as a university-wide responsibility to support accessibility while facilitating awareness through partnerships, training, and information sharing. In addition to her duties as Director of the Disability Resource Center, Amanda is presently appointed as the Interim Director of FIU Veteran and Military Affairs. Also, Amanda provides stewardship and management for the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan. In fulfilling the university's mission within this context, she strives to ensure that the Division of Student Affairs Strategic Plan is advancing the university plan, whilst focusing on student success, engagement, quality, and growth. Amanda is a Doctoral Candidate in Higher Education Administration with research interests in invisible disabilities and academic persistence.



**Antoinette L. Smith**  
**Associate Professor**  
**School of Accounting**

Professor Antoinette Smith, PhD, CPA is an Associate Professor at Florida International University (FIU), one of the highest-ranking business schools in the United States and the 2nd largest universities in Florida. In 2017, she was appointed to the board of the Federation of Schools of Accountancy. Smith was also named one of Miami's Top Black Educators 2017 by Legacy Miami magazine, published July 17, 2017. She was also inducted into President Rosenberg's Inaugural Leadership Program. She was also a 2017-2018 faculty fellow in the Office of Advance Women, Equity & Diversity (AWED), assuming leadership in various FIU ADVANCE project initiatives. Additionally, in 2018, she became the faculty advisor for the National Association of Black Accountants (NABA) student chapter at FIU.

Every year for more than a decade, Professor Smith has had the opportunity to impact over 200 students, who go on to become global leaders of finance and accounting in its endless number of facets, from international public and private firms to government entities and beyond. Furthermore, she works closely with PhD candidates to help them make crucial life decisions, prepare for presentations, and polish their ideal professional image.

Continuously striving to create innovative ways to educate and inspire, this seasoned educator uses a hands-on, ever-developing, dynamic, and interactive approach with a particular focus on the constant evolution of accounting technologies. She is responsible for initiating FIU's first Accounting Bridge Program, and regularly attends faculty development consortiums sponsored by the Big 4 accounting firms to stay up-to-date and pass on the most relevant information and methods to her students and peers.

An FIU Worlds Ahead faculty member, winner of the PhD Pipeline Faculty Associate Award from Duke University, an inspirational presence for minority students, a community activist, and a deeply passionate educator feverishly seeking the most effective and long-lasting development techniques, Professor Smith has turned her expertise as an educator into a personal responsibility.



**Antonio "Tony" Delgado (*NO LONGER AT FIU*)**  
**Ombudsman and Associate Dean of Students**  
**Student Affairs**

Dr. Antonio Delgado is Florida International University's Ombudsman and Assistant Dean of Students. He earned two degrees from FIU, including a bachelor's in psychology and a doctorate in adult education and human resource development, where he also serves as an adjunct faculty member. In addition, he holds a master's in college student affairs administration from University of Georgia and a master's in human performance systems from Marymount University. Delgado's scholarly activity includes numerous publications and conference presentations. With over 19 years of Higher Education experience, Delgado delved into his new role as Ombudsman in 2013 and is engaged in various committee work, such as the Admissions Merit Scholarship Committee, the Behavioral Intervention Team, *It's On Us* Sexual Assault Awareness Committee, Title IX Taskforce, and CAADS.



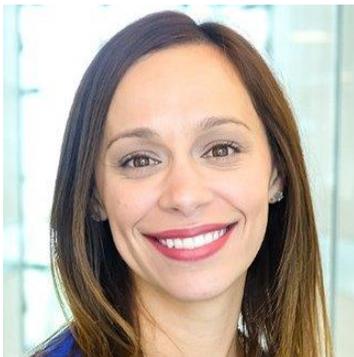
**Birgitta "Gitta" Raush-Montoto**  
**Director**  
**Office of the Provost (Faculty & Global Affairs)**

Birgitta Raush-Montoto serves as Director of the Office of Faculty and Global Affairs. As Director of the Office her primary focus is on facilitating the development of international and intercultural bridges between internal and external partners. She earned both her Bachelors in International Business and Masters in International and Intercultural Education from FIU. Gitta served as Executive Assistant to the 4th President, Dr. Modesto Maidique in 2004. In 2006 she was appointed Chief of Staff in the Office of the Provost leading the office staff, coordinating the Provost's standing Deans Advisory Council and Operations Committee meetings, managing Board of Trustees Academic Policy & Student Affairs committee agendas and meetings as well as senior level appointment searches. Between 2009 and 2015 she also served as Chair of the Commencement Committee. Gitta is fluent in German, English and Spanish.



**Cecile Houry** (*NO LONGER AT FIU*)  
**Grant, Research and Planning Manager**  
**City of Miami Beach, Police Department**

Dr. Cecile Houry works for the Miami Beach Police Department, responsible for grant-related activities and matters needing City Commission discussion or approval. While at FIU, Dr. Houry was Assistant Dean for the External Affairs at the Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work, Assistant Vice President in the Office of Engagement, and prior to that Director of Student Programs for the Honors College, overseeing community partnerships, internships, student groups, study abroad programs, and weekly educational programs for students. As a Faculty Fellow in the Honors College, Dr. Houry also taught leadership courses, developed a service-research course focusing on the City of Sweetwater, and traveled with students to Italy and Southeast Asia. Dr. Houry obtained a BA and MA in English from the University of Orleans, France and a MA and Ph.D. in History from the University of Miami, Florida. She specialized in gender and sport history, focusing specifically on the socio-cultural obstacles American women encountered, and still encounter, in their struggle for participation and equality in the local, national and global sporting world.



**Gabriela "Gaby" Alvarez**  
**Program Manager**  
**FIU Online**

Gabriela is the Program Manager of FIU Online where she is responsible for the development and implementation of all short and long-range plans and strategies for online continuing education. Gaby earned her Bachelors in English and Masters in Human Resource Development and Adult Education from Florida International University as well as a graduate certificate in Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building. She previously served as the Assistant Director of Operations in FIU's Disability Resource Center where she successfully launched a grant funded career program. Gaby has been a guest speaker at various conferences where she has presented on topics related to e-learning and technology's role in disability services.



**Garth Donovan Headley**  
**Director of Business Development**  
**FIU Online**

Garth D. Headley is Director of Business Development for FIU Online at Florida International University, Miami, FL. In this capacity, he stewards existing, and develops new, corporate relationships for the university, leveraging FIU's vast online capabilities and resources. Garth was a founding staff member of the FIU Center for Leadership, joining in September 2007, with operational responsibility for all Center research, budget, human resources, marketing, and the development and delivery of The Center's executive leadership programs. He was instrumental in the development of The Center's current flagship programs: The Senior Executive Leaders Program, offered annually for company Presidents and CEOs; The High-Potential Leaders Program, for director level executives; and the highly successful Women Leaders Program. Garth is an alumnus of FIU where he completed his graduate degree in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. He earned his Bachelors from the University of the West Indies, Mona, with a concentration in Management Studies and Psychology and also leverages professional development received from leading academic institutions such as Harvard Business School, Wharton, and Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. He is a graduate of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Miami project (Class of 2010) and an honored member of the Cambridge Who's Who, a member of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists and the Academy of Management.



**Geoffrey "Geoff" Potvin**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Physics**

Geoff Potvin completed his doctorate in theoretical physics at the University of Toronto before taking up a science education postdoctorate in the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia. Prior to coming to FIU in January 2014, he spent five years as a faculty member in the Department of Engineering & Science Education at Clemson University. He is a member of the APS Forum on Education's Executive Committee and the American Association of Physics Teachers' Committee on Diversity. His research is focused on understanding diversity issues in the physical sciences and engineering at the undergraduate and graduate levels. He is working with the APS Bridge Program to understand how departmental admissions and retention practices can help to grow a more diverse body of future physicists, and the factors that affect student success in graduate physics



**Harold Clayton**  
**Associate Director**  
**Career Services Office**

Harold Clayton currently serves as the Associate Director for Career Services at Florida International University in the Biscayne Bay Campus where he is in charge of the supervision of the office's strategic planning, budgeting and staffing. Harold graduated with his Master of Science in Human Resource Development from FIU in 2008 and is currently a Doctoral Student studying Adult Education and Human Resource Development. In 2014, he won the Division of Student Affairs Supervisor of the Year Award, and was the FIU Director of Campus Life Committee Chair in 2015. Harold has participated in multiple professional panels and has contributed to scholarly publications as well.



**Helen Gonzalez**  
**Applications Business Analyst**  
**Academic and Career Success**

Helen Gonzalez serves as an Applications Business Analyst for Academic and Career Success. She works closely with the Associate Provost in helping to coordinate technology efforts to help achieve student success at Florida International University (FIU). She earned her Bachelors in Religious Studies from FIU and started working in Higher Education in 2002. Helen Chairs the Technology Subcommittee for FIU's Council for Undergraduate Academic Advising (CUAA). She is also a member of numerous other committees that work on making an impact on the community. Helen has been a regional and national conference presenter for the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) on multiple occasions. Helen is a graduate of the inaugural PLP cohort and is also part of the Educational Leadership Enhancement Program (ELEP) 2017-2018 cohort.



**Isabel “Isa” Angelica Gamarra**  
**Public Relations and Marketing Manager**  
**Academic Affairs, Regional Academic Locations & Institutional**  
**Development**

Isabel is an award-winning strategist with more than 9 years’ experience in the corporate and public sector. As the Account Manager for the FIU’s Office of Engagement she leads all marketing and public relations efforts for the office which includes developing strategic marketing and communications plans for several Engagement initiatives, such as the Talent Development Network and Life Sciences South Florida. Isabel has volunteered on various community-based organizations including the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and currently serves on the board of the Miami Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. Previously, Isabel was a member FIU public relations team where she developed strategic and full circle PR strategies, assisted in issues management, drafted and edited speeches, press releases, media advisories, campus-wide communications and lead the offices’ social media efforts. Prior to joining FIU, she worked at Newlink Communications managing crisis and developing public affairs campaigns for banks, ports, mining companies and oil giants. Isabel has led and contributed to public relations campaigns that have won a PRSA Silver Anvil, a CASE national award and PRSA Sunshine District’s Radiance Award. Isabel has a bachelor’s in political science and a master’s in public administration from FIU.



**James Knapp**  
**Director of Community Relations**  
**Office of Community Relations, Protocol & Special Events**

James Knapp is the Executive Director of Strategic Partnerships at Florida International University's Office of Engagement. In this role, Knapp serves as the lead relationship builder for the university to assist in strategically connecting FIU with partners in the community.

James manages and oversees some of FIU's most important initiatives, including Life Sciences South Florida, the Talent Development Network, the FIU Veterans Initiative, the Engagement Advisory Council, the Puerto Rico Task Force and FIU's municipal partnerships. In addition, James is the university lead on identifying and establishing new relationships, initiatives, and partnerships in key areas.

James serves as the vice chair of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (GMCC) Disruption Taskforce overseeing the Technology and Entrepreneurship Committees. and also serves on the GMCC Sports and Education Committees. In addition, James is a Board Member for the Miramar Pembroke Pines Regional Chamber of Commerce. Recently, James was as Chair of the FIU Puerto Rico Task Force and has been charged with overseeing the university's relief efforts and developing strategies to help hundreds of displaced Puerto Rican students and faculty.

James has been named one of South Florida Business Journal's 40 under 40 for 2018, was recognized as a part of the Winners Circle for the Top Leader in the Under 35 for the HR.com LEAD initiative and was a finalist for the FIU Center of Leadership Emerging Leader Award. James is also part of the 37th class of Leadership Broward. James earned both his Bachelors in Sports Management and a Masters in Higher Education from FIU.



**Jose Toscano**  
**Director**  
**Campus Life**

Jose Toscano has over 15 years of experience working in the Higher Education setting and over 13 years of relationship building and experience within Florida International University. Jose Toscano currently services as the Campus Life Director for FIU where he is responsible for the overall function of the office, including creating co-curricular programs between campus life and academic units. Jose graduated with his Masters in Education Technology from Barry University in 2004. He has conducted workshops for students in areas of Chapter Management, Alumni Relations, Risk Management, Robert Rules, Recruitment and Retention, Resume Writing and Interviewing Skills. He has given multiple presentations on Greek Life, leadership skills, Academia, and Career Services. He has also published articles on Social Networking and First Generation Hispanic Students.



**Kevin B. Coughlin**  
**Vice President**  
**Enrollment Management & Services**

Dr. Kevin B. Coughlin serves as Florida International University's Interim Vice President for Enrollment Management & Services where he is in charge of ensuring transparency and regulatory compliance in all facets of Registrar operations including academic, student, course and registration records. Kevin earned his Bachelors Degree in History and Psychology from Ohio University, and later went on to pursue his Masters in Teaching, Adult and Community Education from Alaska Pacific University. In 2013, he graduated with his Doctoral Degree in Philosophy from University of South Florida. With over 24 years of Higher Education experience, he has also contributed to numerous publications that have been featured at multiple national conferences.



**Leanne M. Wells**  
**Director, Mastery Math Program**  
**School of Integrated Science and Humanity**

Leanne is the Director of the Mastery Math Program for the School of Integrated Science and Humanity at Florida International University. She graduated with her Bachelors in Physics and Mathematics from Salisbury University and then earned her Masters in Mathematics from Clemson University. Post-graduation, Leanne was a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana, Africa, where she taught mathematics, electronics, and physics. After returning to the U.S., Leanne went on to teach for Miami-Dade County Public Schools/FIU math and science Partnership in Academic Communities (PAC) program for at-risk kids, where her collaboration with FIU lead to her employment within the university. Leanne is a FIU Doctoral Candidate pursuing her PhD in Mathematics, Science and Learning Technologies. She has co-authored on numerous scholarly publications.



**Melissa Ward-Peterson, PhD, MPH**  
**Postdoctoral Associate**  
**Department of Epidemiology**  
**Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work**

Melissa Ward-Peterson is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Epidemiology, where she manages the Research Infrastructure Core for FIU's Research Center in Minority Institutions (FIU-RCMI).

A proud double-Alumna, she earned her BA in English from FIU in 2008 and her PhD in Public Health/Epidemiology in 2017. She has worked at FIU since 2013; her prior positions include Research Analyst in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOC) Department of Medical and Population Health Sciences Research, as well as Research and Operations Manager for HWCOC's Tano Medical Simulation Center.

Before working for FIU, Melissa completed her MPH in Global Health Policy at George Washington University (GW) in 2010. From 2011-2013, Melissa worked in the Department of Health Policy at GW coordinating monitoring and evaluation for the Medical Education Partnership Initiative, a \$130 million international health program in 12 African countries administered by the Department of State, HRSA, and NIH. In 2010, she completed a GW Global Health Service Fellowship in the Public Health Information and GIS Unit at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. In several other research positions at GW, she provided support for projects funded by the World Bank and UNAIDS as well as multiple global health and data analysis courses.

She has published several peer-reviewed papers, is currently teaching in the Honors College (IDH 3034 & 3035: Bridging the Distance Between Us- A Practical, Multidisciplinary Introduction to the Social Determinants of Health), and is actively involved in service activities. She currently volunteers as a trainer for the Voter Participation Project, a non-profit which aims to improve political discourse and remove barriers to voting. From 2015-2018, she co-chaired HWCOC's Empower to Lead Committee, which sought to create innovative leadership development sessions and forums for dialogue between HWCOC staff and faculty. Between 2009 and 2013, Melissa volunteered in the Executive Office of the President in The White House, where she analyzed health reform and foreign policy correspondence written to the President.



**Miguel Angel Cano**  
**Assistant Professor**  
**Epidemiology**

Dr. Miguel Ángel Cano is an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology. He has received extensive training in public health, psychology, and sociology. He was funded by the National Institutes of Health to receive specialized training on research methods to work with Hispanic populations and conduct research on health disparities and cancer prevention. Dr. Cano's research program focuses on health disparities among racial/ethnic groups with an emphasis on Hispanic populations. He has been funded multiple times by the National Cancer Institute to examine ethnocultural factors associated with smoking cessation among Hispanics. Dr. Cano's expertise in this field of study has been recognized by the American Society of Hispanic Psychiatry and the National Hispanic Science Network on Drug Abuse.



**Miguel Asencio**  
**Program Director**  
**FIU Libraries**

Miguel Asencio is the Director of the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) at Florida International University (FIU). He oversees the premier digital library of Caribbean content in the world, a cooperative of more than fifty international partners. DLOC contains content relating to the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean, and provides users with access to Caribbean cultural, historical and research materials held in archives, libraries, and private collections which have garnered over 160 million views since 2006 (<http://www.dloc.com>). He proposed, planned, and helped design the creation of a collaborative mass digitization lab at FIU, which has been supported by grants and institutional awards in excess of \$2 million in funding. He has an MS in Curriculum and Instruction: Learning Technologies from Florida International University and is currently pursuing a PhD in Learning Technologies with an interest in digital resources and accessibility for education research using information and communications technology at FIU. Miguel is a frequent speaker on topics related to international collaborative projects, communities of practice, digitization of archival and research materials, digital projects, workflow management, classroom technology implementation, collaborative digital resources platforms, and digital imaging quality control assessments, blockchain, and standards implementations.



**Mihaela Plugarasu**  
**Visiting Faculty at CARTA**  
**College of Communication + Journalism**

Mihaela Plugarasu, M.S., PLP '16 , has started teaching full-time as a *Visiting Faculty* for the College of Communication / CARTA in August 2017.

Mihaela's core values are education, contribution, and self-development. Her personal vehicle of making a contribution to the world is communication; therefore, as she grows, expands and advances her consciousness, she feels compelled and inspired to share her lessons with students, peers, and the community at large with the goal of creating safe environments for continuous learning and development of human potential.

In her previous role as Director, Strategic Initiatives & Communications at FIU's Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management, she was responsible for overseeing all communications and office operations including marketing, promotions, advertising, web and social media, public relations and analytics. In addition, Mihaela served as a member of the senior leadership team, providing direct support to the dean and the executive team by ensuring the implementation and management of key initiatives across the school related to the dean's vision and mission. Under her leadership, the Chaplin School's brand messaging and positioning improved significantly through successful accomplishment of massive projects such as *e-merge* Americas Technology Conference, international campus visits, industry conferences, media campaigns, new website launch, and institutional events. As a result of her strategic thinking abilities, Ms. Plugarasu was appointed to serve as one of only ten I-REAL commissioners, charged with making recommendations for FIU's 2020 Strategic Plan.

Mihaela earned a Master of Science in Global Strategic Communications from Florida International University, and a Bachelor of Arts in Teaching from Iasi State University, Romania.



**Rachelle Metcalfe**  
**Associate Director**  
**Office of Admissions**

Rachelle Metcalfe graduated with her Bachelors Degree in Psychology in 2008 and a Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling in 2012 from Florida International University. She currently serves as the Associate Director at FIU's Office of Admissions. Before that, Ms. Metcalfe worked as a program assistant, and academic advisor, and later, an admissions advisor for the Honors College. She has earned numerous professional certificates/awards, and she has presented at various conferences, such as: Florida Collegiate Honors Council, Student Research and Artistic Initiatives, and the National Collegiate Honors Conference. Ms. Metcalfe is currently in FIU's Educational Leadership Enhancement Program, and is also an active participant of multiple committees, such as the FIU Commencement Committee, FIU Scholarship Centralization Task Force, Bias Education and Intervention Task Force, and the FIU University Awards and Recognition Task Force.



**Rocio Benabentos**  
**Associate Director**  
**STEM Transformation Institute**

Dr. Rocio Benabentos serves as the Associate Director of the STEM Transformation Institute at Florida International University. In her role, she is responsible for overseeing the institute's operations and coordinating multiple initiatives that impact STEM Education on campus and nationally. Previously, she managed the HHMI Program within the STEM Transformation Institute and provided support to HHMI Faculty Scholars undergoing reform of their STEM courses. Dr. Benabentos graduated with her Bachelor Degree in Biology from the University of Houston, and later completed her Doctoral Degree in Cell and Molecular Biology in 2011 from Baylor College of Medicine. Between 2011 and 2013, she was a Postdoctoral Research Associate for the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research. Dr. Benabentos has been selected for various Fellowship awards and Academic Honors, including the AAAS Science & Technology Policy Fellowship. She has also co-authored in numerous peer reviewed publications.



**Scarlett Franzblau**  
**Student Financials Account Manager**  
**Student Financials Services - Office of the Controller**

Scarlett Franzblau is the student accounts manager at Student Financials Services at MMC. In this capacity, Scarlett is in charge of the department's customer service operations. She has successfully managed implementations of CRM systems and a line management software system in order to improve the student experience. She has participated in numerous committees and collaborated with other departments on initiatives to enhance and facilitate students' self-service options. She has proposed, managed and monitored projects with a focus on improving customer service for FIU students and across the university community.

She began working at FIU as OPS in the financial aid office on Halloween 2011. She then joined the full-time staff as a coordinator in the financial aid office and later became a member of the newly created One Stop.

Scarlett and her family emigrated to the US from Nicaragua 25 years ago. When Scarlett graduated from FIU in 2013, she became the first member of her family to earn a degree in the US.



**Sharan Ramaswamy**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Biomedical Engineering**

Dr. Sharan Ramaswamy earned a PhD in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Iowa in 2003. He currently is a tenured Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Florida International University. He has numerous scientific works published in his discipline in leading journals, proceedings and book chapters. His work has been funded by the American Heart Association (AHA) the National Science Foundation, private industry and academia. He is a Fellow of the AHA. Dr. Ramaswamy holds a patent in the area of Tissue Engineering Bioreactors and a provisional patent in the alloying and surface treatment of Nitinol. He is an advisor to several graduate and undergraduate students and participates in significant outreach mentorship efforts to schools in the Miami-Dade County Public School System (MDCPS).



**Stephany Alvarez-Ventura**  
**Senior Development Officer**  
**College of Arts, Sciences & Education**

Stephany Alvarez-Ventura is the Senior Development Officer at FIU's College of Arts, Sciences & Education. Ms. Alvarez-Ventura received both her BS ('09) and Master's Degree ('11) in Environmental Studies, along with a certificate in Agroecology and Conservation Biology, from FIU. Prior to her current position, she managed the Agroecology Program for more than six years, mentoring students and facilitating program functions. She has presented on experiential learning in Agroecology in multiple conferences, and has appeared in various local newspaper and news channel interviews discussing the importance of sustainable agriculture and honey bee management. In 2015, she chaired the Career Preparation Institute, American Association for Hispanics in Higher Education, and continues to help expand internship and career training opportunities for other minority students in agriculture and environmental sciences.



**Travis Lee Stokes**  
**Manager**  
**Parking and Transportation**

Travis Lee Stokes serves as the Marketing and Events Coordinator for FIU's Parking and Transportation department, where he has coordinated logistics for major events, such as: 2013 Florida Board of Governors meeting, 2015 Miss Universe Pageant, POTUS 2014-2015 visits. He also earned the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce 2014 "Most Valuable Graduate Award" and was a member of the American Society for Public Administration. Travis graduated with his Bachelors of Public Administration from Florida International University in 2009 and has since then earned his Masters of Public Administration and is currently pursuing his Doctoral Degree in Education. He holds over 4 years of fundraising experience and 6 years of Event Management. Prior to working with Parking and Transportation, Travis was a Coaching Coordinator for FIU's Cheerleading team.



**Vishodana "Visho" Thamocharan**  
**Associate Director, FIU Teach**  
**STEM Transformation Institute**

Dr. Vishodana Thamocharan is currently the Associate Director for Florida International University's FIU Teach program where she teaches various courses within the program and supervises students in the field. She graduated in 2004 from University of California with a Bachelor of Science in Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology. She later earned her Masters in Education from Stanford University. In 2011, she earned her Doctoral Degree from University of Southern California in Educational Leadership. Dr. Thamocharan has given numerous presentations, her most recent being at the 2016 UTeach Conference. With over 12 years working with students in a Higher Education level, her goal is to have STEM educators view the nature of science as effectively taught through a constructivist approach mediated by sociocultural decisions, thereby creating access points to STEM for underrepresented minorities.



**Wendy Kutchner** *(NO LONGER AT FIU)*  
**Director**  
**OneStop**

Wendy Kutchner currently serves as the Director of FIU's OneStop Enrollment Services Office where she is responsible for being the leader in building a state of the art customer service environment for all enrollment service functions including admissions, financial aid, registration, student financials, and veteran affairs. Wendy earned her Master of Education from Temple University and then went on to earn her Doctor of Education in 2012. With over 27 years of experience working in Higher Education, Wendy has earned numerous leadership awards and recognition for her work. She is presently a member of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers and Strategic Enrollment Management. She has spoken at various conferences around the country on her line of work.



**Wesley "Wes" Maas**  
**Director**  
**SAAC**

Wesley Mass is the Director of the Student-Athlete Academic Center for Florida International University where he is responsible for planning, budgeting, staffing and administering all student-athlete services associated with the Student-Athlete Academic Center- a Division of the Office of Academic Affairs. Wesley earned his Bachelor in Physical Education from Newberry College in 2000, and later earned his Masters in Physical Education Sports Administration from Florida State University in 2001. He is a member of the N4A Finance Committee, and was the N4A nominee for President-Elect in 2015. Wesley has given multiple presentations at N4A conventions since 2012 and sat in on a Leadership Panel in 2016.