

MEMORANDUM

December 31, 2019

Dear FIU Family,

Can you believe it? A new year and a new decade! We are just hours away from a new beginning.



I, for one, am very excited about what's ahead. We have significant momentum. We have hard-working students who understand the value of what we provide – who want to be here at our university. We have dedicated professional staff –

they have done some amazing things this past year. And we have a superb, cutting edge and learner-centered faculty who every day gains more respect among peers nationally and internationally. Special thanks as well to our visionary and unified Board of Trustees, and to our Foundation Board that is fully committed to eclipsing \$750 million for our [Next Horizon](#) campaign.

And oh yes... we have Miami – there is no better place to learn, work and live than right here in the 305!

These days it is important to reflect on and build on all our blessings. The 21st century challenges us to be lifelong learners. That means the journey ahead at our FIU must remain focused on setting an even higher bar – reaching new heights – in academic excellence, groundbreaking and life-changing research, cultural, artistic and human-centered appreciation and so much more.

As a top 50 public research institution, with 45 top-ranked programs nationwide among public universities, our FIU is passionate about student success, solutions for our community and making a difference every day. But we can and should do more for our learners and our community.

So, we must embrace all that 2020 has to offer. We have a lot to build upon from this last year. There is so much to be proud of at our FIU and we finished strong largely because of you!

In 2019, we benefited from the generosity of some of our institution's biggest champions, with philanthropic donations to our School of Music, the Metropolitan Center and for degree completion, among other things. And our Ignite program reached new heights with over 80 percent of FIU employees donating to worthy FIU programs.

We're still celebrating the successes of our fall graduates. We hosted inspiring commencement ceremonies that genuinely encapsulated what it means to be Panther proud! This was the largest graduation in FIU history, with more than 5,700 graduates!

At commencement, we paused to recognize Worlds Ahead graduates who already personify excellence and perseverance. Individuals such as [Linda Armstrong](#), an unemployed single mom of a son with autism who beat the odds and graduated with a bachelor's in social work; and [Aditya Sundararajan](#), who received a Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering and has now authored and co-authored 42 technical papers as well as a U.S. patent to maximize renewable energy production in a cost-efficient manner.

There's also [Bianca Maderal](#), who despite a brain cancer diagnosis, created the non-profit Fight Like A Kid to send care packages to hospitals with pediatric

cancer units while organizing fundraisers for research and clinical trials. She graduated this fall with a degree in psychology. And there's [Ariel Huguet](#), who even after suffering a stroke and struggling at the start of his academic journey, developed a plan to convert gas-and-propane dependent food trucks to sustainable electric technology. This helps the environment and lowers entry barriers for food entrepreneurs. Ariel graduated with a bachelor's in business administration.

Linda, Aditya, Bianca, Ariel and the thousands of graduates at this fall's 10 commencement ceremonies show how at FIU we turn the impossible into the inevitable, and that's only possible because of your hard work and commitment.

It's so inspiring to witness time and time again all the wonderful people who study, work and gather around our university because they believe in FIU's mission. And did I tell you – this year, we achieved an athletics milestone with our 30-24 victory over the University of Miami football team on November 23, 2019! For me and so many other Panthers, this long-awaited victory signals a coming of age of our FIU in the world of intercollegiate sports.

As we welcome a new decade, our drive is stronger than ever to continue raising our expectations for what can and should be done to achieve and exceed our goals at FIU. And I know that 2020 will only bring with it more opportunities for growth and achievement. Remember that you have a unique opportunity at our institution, not just to offer and receive an excellent education but also to meet inspiring individuals who, like you, want to make the world a better place.

I wish you a Happy New Year. We will face the challenges ahead with the same courage, optimism and commitment that we have demonstrated so frequently in the past few years. Even better days are around the corner. See you there – bring it on 2020!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark B. Rosenberg', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark B. Rosenberg
President