



**Office of the  
President**

**PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP  
PROGRAM**

**COHORT 1 (2016 - 2017)**



### *Presidential Leadership Program – Sponsor & Facilitator*

**Dr. Mark B. Rosenberg** is fifth president of Florida International University (FIU). 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 retention and graduation 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 \$171 million, and over seventy new student advisers and counselors have been hired for a restructured and expanded student graduation initiative.

From 2005 to 2009, Dr. Rosenberg served as the second Chancellor (he was the first that was formally selected by the Board of Governors) for 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 Governors Jeb Bush and 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, approved and launched.

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 Solis 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 Association of Public Land-Grant University's (APLU) Coalition of Urban Serving Universities (USU); Chair of APLU's Commission on Access, Diversity, and Excellence (CADE); and Co-Chair of the Board on Science Education's (BOSE) Roundtable on Systemic Change in Undergraduate STEM Education. He also recently concluded his term as Chair of the National Academies' Committee on Developing Indicators for Undergraduate STEM Education, as well as a member of the national Task Force of Apprenticeship Expansion.

Within Miami-Dade County, Dr. Rosenberg was the 109th Chair of the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce (GMCC), one of Florida's leading business associations; and also served a 5-year term as Chair of the Academic Leaders Council (ALC) for the Beacon Council, Miami-Dade County's official economic development organization. He serves on the Board of Directors of City National Bank of Florida, and is active in a variety of other civic organizations, including the Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, Florida Council of 100, and the United Way of Miami-Dade County.

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.



**Presidential Leadership Program - Program Director & Co-Facilitator**

**Valeria Espina Stevenson** serves as Executive Director and Head of Strategic Initiatives and Projects at the Office of the President at Florida International University (FIU). In her role, she manages Presidential initiatives, serves as Program Director for the Presidential Leadership Program, is a member of the President's Executive Committee and serves as liaison with university partners such as Royal Caribbean and Florida Power and Light. Additionally, Valeria represents the Office of the President on several university-wide committees. Valeria Espina Stevenson is a two-time graduate of FIU, earning her bachelor's and master's degrees in Accounting ('13) ('14).



**Presidential Leadership Program - Founding Program Director**

**Dr. Breny DaParre Garcia** is the Associate Vice President for Student Health & Wellness. In this role, Dr. Garcia provides leadership over key areas of Dean of Students, Counseling & Psychological Services, Health Promotion Services, Victim Empowerment Program, and Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution. She works across academic and student affairs, and collaboratively with units across campus, to support the university's strategic goals related to building and supporting a culture of healthy living, promoting mental health initiatives across the university, and representing the university at the state level on such matters. Dr. Garcia brings with her 14 years of experience from FIU's Office of the President, previously serving as the Associate Vice President for Institutional Relations. She holds three degrees with FIU: a B.A. in Political Science, an M.S. in Higher Education, and Ed.D. in Higher Education with research focus in crisis leadership.



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

Amanda Niguidula is a Higher Education Administrator within the Division of Academic & Student Affairs and Director of the FIU Disability Resource Center which supports students with disabilities who are striving to reach their postsecondary educational goals. After spending nearly two decades in Higher Education and over a decade working with students with disabilities, Amanda believes that in order to successfully achieve equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities, we must shift our efforts beyond ADA compliance and focus on the day-to-day experiences and voices of students with disabilities. From 2018-2020, Amanda served as Interim Director of the FIU Veteran and Military Affairs Department and institutionalized a graduation program and award ceremony for student Veterans. Amanda has been recognized for her contributions and has established a scholarship endowment for students who are blind and a scholarship for students with disabilities who aim to study abroad. Amanda has been the recipient of the FIU “Presidents Employee Opportunity Award”, as well as the President’s Access and Equity Award. Amanda holds a BA in international relations and a Master’s degree in public administration (MPA) from Florida International University. Amanda is a PhD candidate in higher education administration at FIU.



**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)**



**Birgitta "Gitta" Raush-Montoto**  
**Director of Global Strategy and Faculty Success**  
**FIU Global**

Birgitta "Gitta" Rausch-Montoto serves as Director of Global Strategy and Faculty Success. Her primary focus is on developing international and intercultural bridges between internal and external partners, implementing operational policies and procedures, and aligning the university's strategic global efforts with institutional priorities. She serves on the International Travel Committee and administers the Global Business Travel Insurance coverage for employees. In her role as Fulbright Program Campus Liaison, she has supported dozens of faculty with successful award applications, boosting FIU's overall participation in the program. Since 2014, she has been chairing the university-wide Textbook Affordability Task Force which implements initiatives to ensure college affordability and meet the State's compliance requirements. Gitta joined FIU in 2004 as Executive Assistant to the 4th President, Dr. Modesto Maidique. In 2006 she was appointed Chief of Staff in the Office of the Provost, leading the office staff, coordinating the Provost's standing Deans and Chairs Advisory Councils and Operations Committee meetings, and managing Board of Trustees Academic Policy & Student Affairs committee agendas as well as senior level appointment searches. Between 2009-2015 she assumed the role of Chair of the Commencement Committee and successfully conducted over 80 grand graduation ceremonies. FIU is Gitta's two-time alma mater: she earned a Bachelor of Administration with a focus on International Business and a Master of Science in International and Intercultural Education. Before permanently moving to the United States, she was a banker (Bankkauffrau) by training in her native Germany. She is fluent in German, English and Spanish.



**Cecile Houry** *(NO LONGER AT FIU)*





**Gabriela "Gaby" Alvarez**  
**Director of Learning Design and Innovation**  
**FIU Online**

Gabriela Alvarez is the Director of Learning Design and Innovation at Florida International University, where she leads a team of over 80 learning design professionals who partner with faculty and industry subject matter experts to create meaningful learning experiences. Gaby also professionally consults on projects for industries ranging from education, human services, and technology. Gaby holds a Master of Science in Adult Education and Human Resource Development from Florida International University, where she also earned her Bachelor of Arts in English and a Graduate Certificate in Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building. Prior to working at Florida International University, Gaby served in the private sector as an organizational development consultant and marketing director. Her interests include leadership, instructional design and technology, human resource development, critical pedagogy, and the intersection of ethics, conflict, and innovation.



**Garth Donovan Headley**  
**Director, Marketing and Business Development**  
**FIU Online**

Garth D. Headley is Director of Marketing and 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**  
**Associate 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 & Talent Development**

Harold Clayton currently serves as the Associate Director for Career and Talent Development 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 C. Gonzalez**  
**Information Technology Manager**  
**Academic and Career Success**

Helen C. Gonzalez serves as an Information Technology Manager for the Division of Academic and Career Success. She works closely with the Associate Provost and various units across campus in helping to coordinate technology efforts to help achieve student success at Florida International University (FIU). She has over 20 years of experience working in Information Technology and digital media. In her 14 years at FIU, she has helped serve FIU's community in various roles from Enrollment Services to leading critical projects such as an electronic process that helped determine Student-Athlete eligibility and certification for the NCAA. She earned her Bachelor's Degree in Religious Studies from FIU. Helen serves as Vice Chair for FIU's Council for Undergraduate Academic Advising (CUAA) as well as cochairs the Technology Subcommittee. She is a graduate of the inaugural Presidential Leadership Program cohort and is also part of the Educational Leadership Enhancement Program (ELEP) 2017-2018 cohort. She is also a member of numerous other FIU committees that work on making an impact on the community. Helen has been a state, regional and national conference presenter for conferences such as National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), HEUG Alliance and Florida Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (FACRAO) on multiple occasions. Helen has also served as the Chair for the Florida Academic Advising Association (FLACADA) and currently serves as the Vice President of Information Technology for Florida Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (FACRAO).



**Isabel "Isa" Gamarra** *(NO LONGER AT FIU)*

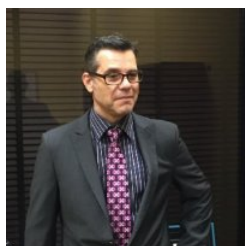


**James Knapp** *(NO LONGER AT FIU)*



**Jose Toscano**  
**Senior Director**  
**Student Life and Development**

Jose Toscano has over 19 years of experience working in the Higher Education setting and over 17 years of relationship building and experience within Florida International University. Jose Toscano currently services as the Senior Director for Student Life and Development, where he is responsible for the supervision of six departments that are focus on student engagement. These departments include, Campus Life, Center for Leadership, Center for Student Engagement, Student Creative and Media, Fraternity and Sorority Life and Student Government. Homecoming, SummerFest, Club Fair, Greek Recruitment and Bayfest are just of the few program that fall under Student Life and Development. Jose graduated with his Bachelors Degree in History from FIU and Masters in Education Technology from Barry University in 2004. He has given multiple presentations on Greek Life, leadership skills, Academia, and Career Development. 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 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**  
**Senior Director**  
**Center for the Advancement of Teaching**

Leanne Wells is the Senior Director of the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) and is the project lead for the Evaluation and Rewarding Teaching Initiative. She works closely with stakeholders across the institution to cultivate engaging and safe environments where faculty and students are agents of their own success. Leanne graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics and Mathematics from Salisbury University and a Master of Science degree in Mathematics from Clemson University. Post-graduation, Leanne was a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana where she taught mathematics, electronics, and physics. After returning to the U.S., Leanne moved to South Florida to serve as lead teacher for Miami-Dade County Public Schools/FIU's Partnership in Academic Communities (PAC). A math and science program for middle and high school students typically underserved in the STEM disciplines, PAC, and her Peace Corps experience led to her ongoing and strongly held belief that ensuring access to and equity in education, particularly mathematics education, is a social and civic responsibility.



**Melissa Ward**  
**Postdoctoral Associate**  
**Community-Based Research Institute**

Melissa Ward, PhD, MPH, is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Community-Based Research Institute. A proud double-Alumna, she earned her BA in English from FIU in 2008 and her PhD in Public Health/Epidemiology in 2017. A social epidemiologist by training, her research interests include disparities in access to substance abuse treatment and women's health. She has extensive experience in health equity research and program management, and has provided technical support for numerous projects sponsored by federal and international agencies. Currently, she coordinates and manages the Research Infrastructure Core for FIU's Research Center in Minority Institutions (FIU-RCMI). In 2019, Melissa was awarded an FIU-RCMI pilot grant for a mixed-methods research project examining barriers to treatment for women with opioid use disorder. She has worked at FIU since 2013; prior to joining the FIU-RCMI team in 2018, she worked as a Research Analyst and Medical Simulation Manager in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. Prior to coming to FIU, Melissa worked in the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University (GW) coordinating monitoring and evaluating the Medical Education Partnership Initiative, a \$130 million international health program in 12 African countries administered by the Department of State, HRSA, and NIH. She also completed a GW Global Health Service Fellowship in the Public Health Information and GIS Unit at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.



**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**  
**Digital Library of the Caribbean**

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. 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**  
**Instructor**  
**College of Communication + Journalism**

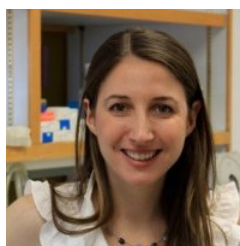
Ms. Plugarasu is a dynamic facilitator, moderator and presenter on empowering topics related to Personal Branding & The Power of Social Media, Strategic Communication, Communication and Leadership, Conscious Living , Conscious Parenting, and Personal Development. She facilitated workshops and courses for college students in USA and Europe, not-for-profit organizations and women's empowerment groups. In her 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. In 2016, she was selected to participate in FIU's first cohort of the President's Leadership Program, under the sponsorship of Dr. Mark B. Rosenberg. Currently, she teaches full-time in the School of Communication + Journalism, and serves as a Teaching Fellow for the Center for the Advancement of Teaching at FIU. In 2020, Ms. Plugarasu published her first book to help parents with tools for connection and optimal early childhood development.





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

Rachelle Metcalfe was part of the Presidential Leadership Program's Inaugural cohort in 2016. She 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, focusing on the recruitment of high ability students, including National Merit and National Hispanic scholars. Prior to this position, Mrs. Metcalfe worked for ten years at the Honors College in several positions, from program assistant, academic advisor, recruiter, and later, as the Assistant Director of Enrollment Services. She has earned numerous professional certificates/awards, such as: the 2015 Jovenes Give back award, and was named an FIU Ignite Torchbearer in 2016. She has presented at various conferences including the Florida Collegiate Honors Council, Student Research and Artistic Initiatives, and the National Collegiate Honors Conference. Mrs. Metcalfe completed FIU's Educational Leadership Enhancement Program, FIU's Leadership Education Advancement program, and has served on multiple committees, such as the FIU Commencement Committee, FIU's Strategic Enrollment Planning Taskforce, 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's 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**

Scarlett Franzblau is the student accounts manager at Student Financials Services at MMC. In this capacity, Scarlett oversees 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 OneStop where she was promoted to supervisor before accepting her current position at student financials. After graduating from the inaugural cohort of the President's Leadership Program, Scarlett participated in the Leadership Education Advancement Program (LEAP) graduating in April 2018. Scarlett and her family emigrated to the US from Nicaragua 26 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, the Miami Heart Research Institute, 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 “Steph” 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, Sustainability and Transportation**

Travis Lee Stokes serves as the Marketing and Events Coordinator for FIU’s Parking, Sustainability 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 earned both his Bachelors and Masters of Public Administration from Florida International University (‘09) (‘12). He then earned his Doctoral degree in Education from Nova Southeastern University. He holds over 4 years of fundraising experience and 6 years of Event Management. Prior to working with Parking, Sustainability and Transportation, Travis was a Coaching Coordinator for FIU’s Cheerleading team.



**Vishodana “Visho” Thamocharan (NO LONGER AT FIU)**



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



**Wesley "Wes" Maas**  
**Assistant Vice President, Undergraduate Education**  
**Student Athlete Academic Center**

Wesley Mass is the Assistant Vice President of Undergraduate Education and Director for 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 within the Division of Academic and Student 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.