

Fall 2004

# Florida International University Magazine Fall 2004

Florida International University Division of University Relations

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# *The* Future of Medicine in South Florida

An impressive group of aspiring physicians enters the Honors College Medical Education Program as FIU initiates its historic bid to create South Florida's first public medical school.



## Also in this issue:

University pursues medical school to meet local needs, address doctor shortage

FIU researchers pursue treatments for stroke, cystic fibrosis

Alumni in health care share their views and experiences

Basketball teams look to return to winning ways in 2004-'05

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or call us toll-free at 1-800-FIU-ALUM.

In the next issue



**FIU Biomedical Engineering**

Researchers in FIU's Biomedical Engineering Department are forging exciting breakthroughs in medical technology. We will tell you about the department's focus on applied research in areas such as cardiovascular medicine, among others. Plus we will highlight the work of FIU researcher Malek Adjouadi in applied information processing and assistive technology research.

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**On the Cover: The Future of Medicine in South Florida**

FIU will nurture and encourage students to pursue medical education with its new Honors College Medical Education Program.

Featured on the cover is the inaugural class of the Honors College Medical Education Program: Back row from left: Ron Mathew, Claudia Whittwell, Melissa Ward, Christopher Chong. Maria E. Garcia and Fiona Ogunkoya. Center, left to right, are Annemarie Marrou, Atena Yunus.

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**A Medical School for the Community**

FIU's proposed School of Medicine will raise standards of care, provide community access and meet the region's health needs.

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**Public Health at FIU**

Research coming out of the School of Public Health has the potential to influence the well being of citizens in South Florida and beyond.

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**from the AVP, Alumni Relations**



Dear Alumni,

I am excited to bring you this issue of FIU Magazine, which is devoted to the University's health initiatives. Across a variety of disciplines, faculty and students are making great strides in scientific research that hold the promise of improving and saving lives.

I particularly want to draw your attention to the story that outlines FIU's proposed School of Medicine. The University's carefully considered plan to establish a medical-education center has been presented to the Florida Board of Governors and will require the approval of the Florida Legislature to become reality. When that important day comes, the resulting academic program will immeasurably enhance the quality of life in our community in a number of ways. First, the FIU School of Medicine will address the shortage of local physicians by educating and training a new pool of 21st century doctors who are bilingual and culturally sensitive. Second, future generations will have access to a first-class, affordable medical education in their own backyard. Finally, the research that emanates from and attracts new grant dollars to the School of Medicine will contribute to South Florida's burgeoning health and biomedical industries.

All of us have a critical role to play in the process of establishing Miami's first public medical school. Our staff is committed to keeping you informed of new developments through our monthly newsletter, NOW@FIU, and through FIU Magazine. At the same time, I encourage you to spread the word about FIU's plan by talking with your coworkers, friends and even medical care professionals about the University's efforts to help meet the urgent needs of our community. While the leaders of several prominent local hospitals and health systems have already expressed their support through pledges of collaboration and eventual partnership, greater awareness of FIU's proposal among all South Floridians will further help prepare the way for the long-hoped for medical school.

In the spirit of Blue and Gold,

Bill Draughon  
Associate Vice President  
Alumni Relations

**from the Provost**



Dear Alumni and Friends of FIU,

As the chief academic officer of Florida International University, I am pleased to share with you this special issue of FIU Magazine.

As many of you know, the University has undertaken a timely, serious and well-planned approach to gaining legislative approval for the region's first public medical school. This initiative takes into account the needs of South Florida and the entire state to attract and generate greater numbers of qualified physicians to meet a projected shortage. In this issue, you will read in detail about FIU's efforts, as well as the rationale that has guided our commitment to educating future generations of medical doctors.

It is important to recognize that the medical school plan has been developed as part of a comprehensive health initiative at Florida International University. Throughout this issue, we bring you the stories of FIU faculty leading a variety of health-related studies, many of them in collaboration with leading research institutes, health officials, not-for-profit organizations, community groups and health care organizations. In the Stempel School of Public Health, FIU researchers are finding solutions to serious health concerns such as AIDS, lead poisoning and foodborne illness. In the Chemistry Department, a new drug in development by Professor David Becker holds the promise of revolutionizing stroke treatment. Teams of scientists specializing in environmental health issues are examining toxins in Florida's waters that cause human illness. The work of these FIU researchers and many others—laudable in its own right—lays a solid foundation in the sciences for the anticipated FIU School of Medicine and gives immediate legitimacy to the University's proposal to offer high-quality, affordable medical education.

Equally impressive are the accomplishments of our FIU alumni who are already making a difference in health professions. Inside, we highlight the work of some of these doctors, nurses, educators, administrators and businesspeople who have utilized their FIU degrees to serve the public good. With great admiration and sincere gratitude, we salute them even as we look forward to FIU's growing presence in the health and medical arenas.

Sincerely,

Mark Rosenberg, Ph.D.  
Provost and Executive Vice President

**Write To Us:** Send your letters via fax to 305-348-3247 or mail to PC 515, Miami, FL 33199. Letters should refer to content in the magazine, and may be edited for publication. All letters must include writer's full name and address. Alumni, please include degree and year of graduation.

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# in brief.



◀ FIU President Modesto Maidique with longtime FIU benefactors Nicole and Herbert Wertheim.

recently spoke with FIU Magazine about the Wertheim Challenge and the proposed FIU School of Medicine.

### Why do you support FIU's medical school initiative?

The main reason is that I think that we need more doctors. Being in the health care profession, I've watched health care become diluted. Physicians are called on to do more and more things; people are being stressed. But we also need a different type of health care. We need to be more involved in prevention of diseases, not just treating diseases. We should be looking at how to keep people healthy.

## The FIU School of Medicine: A Conversation with Dr. Herbert Wertheim

Herbert Wertheim, a South Florida businessman and trained optometrist, who is also a member of FIU's Board of Trustees, has been one of the most vocal and prominent supporters of FIU's proposed School of Medicine. In July, when FIU unveiled its proposal for the medical school, Wertheim pledged \$10 million toward the initiative. "The Wertheim Challenge" invites others to step forward to collectively match his promised contribution. The resulting \$20 million would be eligible for an equal share of state matching funds, and the total \$40 million would be used to construct a facility for the medical school at University Park.

Wertheim, who with his wife Nicole, has given significant capital gifts to the University,

### So you're advocating that our medical school work in tandem with the School of Public Health?

I see the two as almost inseparable because our School of Public Health has so much information that will be used by the medical community. I think that we need to emphasize to our medical school students not only the normal medical curriculum but to augment that with a philosophy of prevention.

### How will a medical school directly benefit our community?

Many South Florida students go outside of the area to get their medical educations, and as a result they do their internships and residencies in other places. Consequently, we in South Florida are not the beneficiaries of our ethnic diversity. We don't get to benefit from the raw knowledge and talent of the people who have migrated into our community. So if FIU is able to offer a fine

medical school program along with our School of Public Health, and if we're able to have good internship and residency programs with the local hospitals, we're going to give the people of South Florida the opportunity to stay here and add to our health care capacities.

### What do you believe should be the community's role in advocating for the FIU medical school?

I believe that our community should embrace what we're trying to do at FIU and look at it as a long-term benefit. The community needs to get behind FIU in a financial way because, initially, we're going to need some assistance. The dividend for the community is going to be good health care.

### Speaking of finances, why did you decide to make your \$10 million pledge to the proposed school in the form of a challenge to the community?

We believe this is a community endeavor. By making it a challenge, we hope that the whole community would get involved. That involvement might take the form of volunteering at the health clinics that we will establish or of helping to raise finances for us. The form of involvement is not material. What is material, I think, is that everyone is going to feel that this is their facility.

### How would you encourage individuals to voice support for FIU's proposed school?

I think our politicians can see that there's a need, and I think it's just a matter of time before the medical school becomes a reality. I hope the time will be sooner rather than later. It's not my suggestion that we bring any pressure to bear. My suggestion is that we let the normal things happen and see where we go. If we're not able to make headway over the next three to six months, then we'll have to reevaluate. But I think until that time, we ought to plan as if we're going to have a medical school. ■



## American Bar Association Accredits College of Law

In a critical step forward in its development, FIU's College of Law (COL) was awarded provisional accreditation from the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association (ABA).

The move now enables COL graduates who were enrolled during the College's term of provisional accreditation to sit for bar examinations and be admitted to the legal profession in all states and in the District of Columbia, according to COL Dean Leonard Strickman.

Accreditation is the result of a year-long process of review that takes into account a variety of factors such as the quality of the student body, the faculty and the facilities of the College. Strickman said he was pleased with the news and satisfied that the hard work of the past few years had been recognized by the profession.

Full accreditation is granted only after COL has graduated its first class and successfully completed additional reviews. The inaugural class of the FIU College of Law is scheduled to graduate in May 2005. ■

◀ Two years after the College of Law graduates its inaugural class of approximately 50 full-time students in 2005, the College will become eligible for full accreditation. Ground breaking for the College's permanent home, a building designed by renowned architect Robert Stern, will be soon.

## Wall Street Journal Reports: School of Accounting is Nation's Largest

Universities across the country are experiencing record enrollments in their accountancy programs, but FIU's School of Accounting occupies the top ranking as the nation's largest, according to an article in the *Wall Street Journal*. The College of Business Administration's program registered a 43 percent hike in enrollment between 2000 and 2003, prevailing as the premier producer of accountants in the U.S.

The statistics were provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the national professional organization for all CPAs.

In the School of Accounting's relatively short 30-year history, it has produced alumni who have won two Gold Medals, which denote the top score in the nation; a Silver Medal, for second-highest score in the nation; and four Florida Top-10 awards, including one for the highest marks in the state.

Marteda Turner, the school's academic advisor, said that a quarter of the program's new graduate students are FIU alumni, the majority holding bachelor's degrees in engineering, pre-med, psychology or education. Almost one-third of the current accounting majors are aiming for dual degrees, most commonly in finance. ■

## Alumna Wins LPGA Tour

With a clap of thunder, FIU alumna Moira Dunn '94 won her first Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tournament last July, the Giant Eagle LPGA Classic in Ohio.

"It's been a long time," said Dunn, who has been on tour for a decade and won on her 245th try. "I always believed it would come. That's what got me here."

She collected \$150,000 for the victory, shooting a final-round 65 to finish at 12-under 204—two strokes ahead of runner-up Young-A Yang—at Squaw Creek Country Club.



The Golden Panther won under difficult conditions. The final round was suspended for 2 hours and 40 minutes because of lightning and rain. The second round of the 54-hole tournament was also held up for more than two hours because of heavy rain and lightning.

The New York native's best finishes prior to her victory had been two second-place finishes in 2001. ■

## Rehabilitation Clinic to Train Students, Provide Community Services

By Deborah O'Neil

The community will soon have access to a state-of-the-art, comprehensive rehabilitation clinic with speech pathology, physical therapy and occupational therapy at the University Park campus.

The new FIU Rehabilitation Clinic is both a teaching clinic for graduate health sciences students and a public treatment facility, making it another innovation in the University's effort to respond to community needs and offer unique educational opportunities.

School of Health Sciences Dean Noma Anderson said the new clinic reflects FIU's vision to provide holistic health education and community services. Undergraduate programs in health sciences and the Honors College Medical Education Program will

◀ FIU speech-language pathologist Mark Witkind and his assistant Vanessa Valdes work with 3-year-old Nicolas Pitelli at the FIU Rehabilitation Clinic.



## International Business Program Ranks in Top 10

Florida International University is ranked among the top 10 schools for international business at the undergraduate and graduate levels, according to *U.S. News & World Report's America's Best Colleges 2005*.



The magazine, which ranks colleges and universities annually, also listed Florida International University in its National Universities category.

"Being ranked number nine for international business is an important feather in the cap of the R. Kirk Landon Undergraduate School of Business," said College of Business Administration Executive Dean Joyce Elam. "Changes in technology, cultural diversity in the work place and globalization of business practices now require a new set of skills for top-level managers, and we are committed to preparing our graduates to meet those challenges."

Last year, the magazine ranked the College 14th in the same category. Earlier this year, it also ranked the University's graduate international business programs among the country's top 25.

The accolades are nothing new. In 2002, *Business Week* ranked it among the best in the U.S., placing it in the group with American,

Fordham, George Washington, South Carolina, Syracuse, Rutgers, Tulane and others. And last year, *America Economia*, a premier pan-regional business journal, rated it among the top 50 international MBA schools for Latin American students. Earlier this year, *Hispanic Business* ranked the College of Business Administration among the top 25 business schools for Hispanics. ■

## New Dean Brings National Experience to SJMC



Dean Lillian Lodge Kopenhagen with her 2000 Torch Award

Nationally renowned student press expert Lillian Lodge Kopenhagen is the new dean for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC).

In making the announcement, Provost and Executive Vice President Mark Rosenberg cited Kopenhagen's

"distinguished contributions to her profession and the University."

The new dean joined FIU in 1973 and became a full professor in 1991. For 30 years, she has led significant advancements in professional and academic journalism.

One of the first women inducted into the Society of Professional Journalists, Kopenhagen

was honored with the Wells Key, the society's highest distinction, for her work for professional journalists. She is the author of the Code of Ethics and Standards for the National Association of College Media Advisers, and her book, "College Media Advising: Ethics and Responsibilities," with J.W. Click, is in its fourth edition. Kopenhagen was also the recipient of the 2000 outstanding faculty Torch Award from the Alumni Association.

SJMC has 2,000 students majoring in four areas: advertising, journalism, public relations and television. The graduate program offers master's degrees with tracks in integrated communications: advertising and public relations, Spanish-language journalism and student advising.

Among Kopenhagen's goals is to expand the graduate program by adding tracks. She is also looking at growing the school's international program by creating more faculty and student-exchange opportunities. ■

## Fulbright Scholarships Awarded to Two Students

Two environmental studies students won highly competitive Fulbright Scholarships for the 2004-'05 academic year.

Stephanie Cohan is in Mexico attending the Autonomous University of Mexico and taking graduate courses related to regional

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prepare students for graduate health and medical education. A medical school will train physicians to provide acute care.

"Our programs and the new clinic will provide the sustained quality of life, rehabilitation after the acute disability," she said. "FIU will be able to provide the entire breadth of health care from primary to rehabilitative."

The FIU Rehabilitation Clinic is opening in phases and will be fully operational by year's end. The Clinic's Speech and Hearing Center opened last year and is treating clients with speech-language pathology and hearing needs. Physical therapy services began this fall and occupational therapy will be available by the end of the

year. The concept of an interdisciplinary clinic was developed by Lemmietta McNeilly, chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders, who also did the initial planning for the speech and hearing clinic.

Eventually, the clinic will offer Saturday appointments and accept health insurance payments. Services now are offered on a sliding-scale fee basis. Anderson foresees the clinic being a vital resource for individuals such as stroke victims seeking multiple services.

"It's one-stop shopping for rehabilitation needs," Anderson said. "One of the main benefits is we are truly client centered and

student centered. When you come to a university clinic, students are being supervised by professionals who have the most current knowledge available. Clients can be assured they are getting the most state-of-the-art therapy."

The Speech and Hearing Center offers clients of all ages a variety of services: developmental speech and language intervention; stuttering modification therapy; communication therapy for developmental disabilities; hearing screenings and English enhancement for speakers of other languages. For an appointment call 305-348-0359.

"One of my goals is to be a quality and accessible resource for students, faculty, staff and

community members who have any kind of speech or communications problem," said Center Director Mark Witkind. "Since the first week we opened, we have been serving the community. Clients have found our services very personalized."

The clinic also enhances FIU's health sciences academic curricula. The highly competitive graduate programs in speech-language pathology, physical and occupational therapy each admit fewer than 40 students per year.

"The clinic gives them a dynamic space to learn their discipline," Anderson said. "The classes and labs are being taught in the clinic. It gives students the most direct opportunity to work with clients in a supervised experience." ■



## in brief

continued

planning, sustainable ecotourism and community development.

Robin Currey is working in Kyrgyzstan, a former Soviet republic in Central Asia, studying the ecological, social and cultural factors that contribute to the biodiversity and management strategies of home gardens.

"The prestige of these scholarships is considerable," says Christine Jarchow Sjoblom, director of FIU's Office of International Studies. "Beyond that, the type of experiences that a Fulbright award opens for students such as Stephanie and Robin is incredible. Former Fulbright alumni are those who took on leadership roles in areas as diverse as economics, diplomacy, music, business and science."

Recipients of Fulbright awards are selected on the basis of academic or professional achievement, as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields. Part of the application process includes the submission of a project proposal that either explains a research project or a course of studies.

The Fulbright Program, America's flagship international educational exchange program, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. ■

## Golden Panthers Added to All-Star Roster

Former FIU men's soccer All-Americans Robin Fraser '89 and Steve Ralston '88 were members of the East roster for the 2004 Major League Soccer (MLS) All-Star game last July.

Fraser, a stand-out defender for FIU from 1984-'88, was making his fifth MLS All-Star appearance. Playing for the Columbus Crew this season, Fraser has been instrumental in a defense that has allowed just 17 goals in 16 games.

Fraser ranks seventh on the all-time MLS games-played list and has also seen action as a member of the U.S. national team. At FIU he was a two-time All American.



Robin Fraser '89

Steve Ralston '88

## Florida International University Around the Globe



FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, second from left, met with project and civic leaders last summer in Tianjin, China, at the groundbreaking for the new School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM) campus, a joint venture between FIU and the Chinese government. The new facility will educate hospitality professionals in anticipation of a tourism boom in that country. Also making the trip were SHTM Dean Joseph West and others from FIU. ■

Ralston, the fourth leading scorer in FIU men's soccer history, was playing in his fourth All-Star game. A versatile player for the New England Revolution, Fraser is the league's all-time leader in games played (248), games started (246) and minutes played (21,928). Additionally, he was the league's first Rookie of the Year in 1996.

A mid-fielder for the Golden Panthers from 1993-'95, Ralston was a two-time All American and the 1994 NCAA leader in scoring (19 goals/18 assists).

Fraser and Ralston are among 36 Golden Panthers to advance to the professional ranks under head coach Karl Kremser, who is entering his 25th year at the helm of FIU's men's soccer program. ■

## University Promotes Engineering Education in Latin America

FIU was one of four Florida universities to co-host members of the Latin American and Caribbean Consortium of Engineering Institutions (LACCEI) at the organization's second general conference, "Challenges and Opportunities for Engineering Education, Research and Development," this summer in Miami.

Just two years after being founded, the consortium is already meeting its mission to bring innovation to engineering education and research. By sharing resources, member institutions address concerns and their vision for the future. These efforts bring the U.S. engineering industry into Latin America.

FIU is an active member of LACCEI and participates in a program that allows faculty

from member institutions to obtain a doctorate from FIU's College of Engineering. FIU provides financial support for participating students during the year-long program. Participants then return to their home institution and finish their dissertation. Upon completion of the program, students receive a Ph.D. from FIU, thus allowing fellow engineering institutions to increase their number of faculty with doctoral degrees.

The organization currently has members from engineering institutions located in Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Peru and Puerto Rico. ■

## Miami Herald Offers New Internships

*The Miami Herald* and the School of Journalism & Mass Communication (SJMC) have collaborated to offer a significant number of paid internships annually to FIU journalism students.

The \$2,500 internships are being awarded on a competitive basis to print and broadcast journalism majors.

"The mission of our school is to produce serious journalists, and classroom work can only go so far in developing the kind of thoughtfulness, writing talent and reporting skills that can carry students well beyond worker-bee journalism to the highest levels of the craft," says Kevin Hall, SJMC editor-in-residence. "These internships are an exceptional tool for us."

SJMC has an established record of graduating top-notch journalists. The school counts eight Pulitzer Prizes among six of its alumni. ■



# A MEDICAL SCHOOL

for the Community

FIU's plan to establish South Florida's only public medical school addresses doctor shortages, meets local health needs and provides educational opportunity

By Deborah O'Neil

**PROVIDE** Miami's best and brightest minority students a chance to become doctors.

**ENGAGE** the best physicians to teach them.

**BUILD** partnerships with community hospitals to train students and residents. **LEAD** the way in eliminating the statewide physician shortage, particularly South Florida's deficit of culturally sensitive, minority doctors.

**INVIGORATE** standards of medical excellence.

**RECRUIT** top scientists to propel Miami into a world-class laboratory for medical advancement.

**ATTRACT** research dollars that

will flow back to the community in new jobs, scientific breakthroughs and national prestige.

Opening a public medical school at Florida International University is a big, bold idea. And like the establishment of the university itself, this effort is driven by urgent community needs and a healthy dose of visionary optimism.

Today, greater Miami is one of the largest urban centers in the United States without a public medical school. If approved, the FIU School of Medicine will transform the future of public health and educational opportunity in South Florida.

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## THE CASE FOR THE FIU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**FACT:** There will be national shortage of 200,000 doctors by 2025.

**FACT:** The Florida doctor deficit will be among the worst because of the state's rapidly growing and aging population.

**FACT:** With 42% of the state's doctors over age 55, retirements will exacerbate the Florida physician shortage in the coming decade.

**FACT:** Florida imports 80% of its doctors from outside the state.

**FACT:** Half of Floridians currently enrolled in medical school are enrolled outside the state.

**FACT:** Existing Florida medical schools cannot expand to meet the needs. They could graduate no more than 100 more doctors each year.

**FACT:** Less than 4% of South Florida's physicians graduated from the state's existing medical schools.

**FACT:** Florida has only nine medical school seats per 100,000 residents; the national average is 22 seats per 100,000.

"This is a milestone in the history of our university," said FIU President Modesto Maidique. "There is no greater programmatic priority for this institution than a medical school."

A diverse coalition is supporting the FIU proposal: health care and business leaders, physicians representing the spectrum of medical specialties, advocates for the poor and medically underserved, educators from across South Florida's public schools, local and state politicians, students, alumni and friends of the University.

A public medical school can address social, educational and health inequities: the struggle of minorities to afford and find seats in medical school, the difficulty of meeting the needs of those with limited access to primary care, the challenge of tackling health issues in a diverse community when there are too few doctors.

The FIU proposal for a school of medicine echoes the concerns of the community and offers viable, innovative solutions. It will do so in tandem with the region's top hospitals, public clinics and non-profit service organizations.

"The School of Medicine will play a critical role in improving community health and providing access for Floridians to graduate medical education," said FIU Provost and Executive Vice President Mark Rosenberg, the University's chief academic officer.

The FIU medical school proposal will also provide a significant boost to the South Florida economy. The School of Medicine will create new jobs and attract research dollars to expand

intellectual knowledge and spur growth in the local biomedical and bio-engineering industry. Experts have estimated that the FIU School of Medicine will eventually have a \$784 million annual impact in South Florida.

On July 8, Florida International University submitted its proposal for a School of Medicine to the Florida Board of Governors, culminating nine years of careful consideration and planning.

That day, FIU held a public event to release the School of Medicine plan. More than 200 community supporters, students and faculty packed the room and greeted the announcement with cheers and applause. Mt. Sinai Hospital's Chief of Anesthesiology Howard Wittels, M.D., said of FIU's plans: "I just want to know, 'What took us so long?'"

### A new generation of doctors

For 25 years, the medical industry issued dire predictions about a physician surplus. Construction of new medical schools came to a virtual halt. It turns out, the industry went in exactly the opposite direction. A shortage of 200,000 doctors is projected in the U.S. by the year



"I am really interested in seeing a medical school at FIU because of the shortage of medical schools that give access to young minorities."

—  
Laurinus Pierre,  
M.D.

2025, according to a study by Richard Cooper, M.D., a national expert on the physician workforce.

Around the country, the market is showing signs of an increasing shortfall. Recruitment of doctors has become more difficult. Doctors are being offered signing bonuses and starting salaries are increasing.

In Florida, four out of five doctors are imported from out of state. And with nearly half of South Florida's doctors older than age 55, a wave of retirements in the coming years will worsen the need.

"The shortage is already here," said John Matuska, chief executive officer of Mercy Hospital. "It is not only here, it is only going to get worse."

Mercy Hospital's Jeffrey Horstmyer, M.D., has witnessed the looming crisis in physician supply firsthand as he has tried to find a partner for his practice. At the Center for Haitian Studies in Little Haiti, which provides health and social services, Executive Director Laurinus Pierre, M.D., sees a troubling paucity of minority doctors sensitized to the cultural diversity in greater Miami.

Florida will require 3,000 more doctors per year in the next decade,

"The School of Medicine will play a critical role in improving community health and providing access for Floridians to graduate medical education."

— FIU Provost and Executive Vice President Mark Rosenberg



according to a detailed study prepared in 1999 for state education officials. The shortfall is magnified by a number of factors in the state and region.

First, there is a deficit of medical school seats and hospital residency spots. The state's three existing public medical schools – at the University of Florida, University of South Florida and Florida State University – can accommodate only about 100 more students total. Just one of every six physicians practicing in South Florida graduated from a Florida medical school.

Horstmyer worries about the long-term implications of the physician shortage for the community. The burden will be greatest on the poor and medically underserved, he says.

“There is a large underserved population in the city,” Horstmyer said. “That alone is a challenge. How do you take care of these people? How do you set up a health system so they have access? As the physician shortage develops and there are even fewer physicians available, access to medical care is going to become an even greater challenge.”

The need in greater Miami for culturally sensitive doctors makes the shortage even more acute, Pierre said. The American Medical Association has found that African-Americans represent only 3.6 percent of the physician workforce and Hispanics only 4.9 percent. Studies have shown minority physicians are more likely to serve minority and poor populations.

“People from different ethnic groups require a different

approach in health care,” said Pierre, a psychiatrist. “The need for cultural sensitivity is very important. We think that is best provided by physicians from the same ethnic groups. Already, there are not enough doctors to cover the needs of the Haitian community in Miami.”

Leaders throughout the region's medical industry are applauding the drive to establish a public medical school at FIU, where two-thirds of students are minorities and 80 percent of graduates remain in the community. The FIU School of Medicine will provide unparalleled access to affordable medical education for qualified minorities.

“I am really interested in seeing a medical school at FIU because of the shortage of medical schools that give access to young minorities,” Pierre said. “A lot of minorities are kept out of medical school. Medical school is very expensive.”

Since 1984, the cost of medical education has almost tripled in private schools and nearly quadrupled in public medical schools, according to a recent report by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), a non-profit association of the country's 125 accredited allopathic (M.D.) medical schools.

In a presentation to FIU faculty in September, AAMC President Jordan Cohen, M.D. said already, more than 60 percent of medical students in the U.S. come from families in the upper 20 percent of America's socioeconomic spectrum. “Unless we can find ways to offset the financial millstone we are placing on our students, the medical

profession will become the exclusive province of the rich,” he said.

Tuition for medical education at Florida International University will be approximately \$15,000 annually. In addition, the University plans to award \$500,000 per year in scholarships and fellowships to medical students. Admission requirements at the School of Medicine will mirror rigorous standards around the country.

“Our best students are as good as the best students anywhere,” said Chemistry Professor John Landrum. “We need to see to it that they get the advisement and guidance they require so they can get a 30 on the MCAT.”

Professor Barbra Roller, the pre-health professions adviser, says students in Miami possess a wealth of academic potential and interest in medicine. They also want to study, live and work near home, she said. University officials expect that many FIU doctors will build their practices here, replenishing the region's pool of physicians.

“I think it would be a great thing,” Roller said. “Our students want to stay in South Florida. They don't want to leave.”

### A modern medical education

The School of Medicine will build on FIU's foundation in the basic sciences, health professions programs and biomedical engineering. Together, the programs will comprise a dynamic new academic and research center for South Florida that covers the continuum of medical education from basic undergraduate sciences to graduate medical residencies.

FIU's vision for the School of Medicine breaks away from the traditional medical school mold—sovereign, independent from the rest of the university, narrowly focused on diagnoses and treatment and disconnected from the community. In 2003, the Institute of Medicine, a respected national health and science think tank, warned that existing

Just one of every six physicians practicing in South Florida graduated from a Florida medical school.



continued



medical schools must reform the old ways of training doctors. The institute called for more attention to “the social, behavioral and other factors that contribute to healing and are part of creating healthy populations.”

The FIU School of Medicine will be a 21st century model of health care and medical education. By its very design, the school will be an integral part of the University, capitalizing on and enhancing existing science programs and engaging in the community.

“We are talking about something revolutionary here,” said Bruce Dunlap, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. “Most medical schools develop separately from the institution, physically and mentally. What we are talking about with the FIU School of Medicine is something quite different.”

Four respected South Florida health care groups will be affiliated with the FIU School of Medicine: Baptist Health South Florida, Mt. Sinai Medical Center, Miami Children’s Hospital and Mercy Hospital. The hospitals will provide students with clinical experience, house the University’s clinical departments and work with FIU to establish residency programs. The University also has entered into serious discussions for an educational



“If faculty and students from the medical school get involved with community education, they can make a major impact on how people view their own health.”

—  
Eleni Sfakianaki,  
M.D., Medical  
Executive  
Director,  
Miami Dade  
Health  
Department

partnership with Health Choice Network, a community-based, non-profit organization representing a group of community health centers and organizations that provides primary and preventive care for underserved populations.

Baptist Health’s Chief of Administration Javier Hernandez-Lichtl foresees a unique alliance between FIU’s School of Medicine and the new 80-bed hospital Baptist is opening in four years in West Kendall.

“There is so much synergy between the community, hospital and medical school,” Hernandez-Lichtl said. “It just makes perfect sense.”

Horstmyer, president-elect of the medical staff for Mercy Hospital, looks forward to the increased vigor in medical practices with the addition of a public medical school.

“If we have an academic presence at the hospitals, we are going to have a significant improvement in the level of care being practiced,” Horstmyer said. “If we have a public medical school here in Miami we also now have a means of attracting additional funding to address social problems such as HIV.”

Medical education at FIU will actually begin at the undergraduate level with the Honors College Medical Education Program, where students will be groomed for medical school with a rigorous curriculum of high-level science and mathematics.

From day one, students in the four-year medical school will work with patients. Communication skills and cultural sensitivity will be fundamental dimensions of the program. School of Medicine faculty members also will be expected to focus their research on health issues and disease disparities found in greater Miami.

“We are going to build the curricula based on analysis and understanding of the problems people in this area have...what diseases they have, what beliefs they have, what issues are important to them,” said Carlos Martini, M.D., an epidemiologist and a medical educator directing the FIU medical school planning effort. “Very few medical schools have been able to do this.”

Positive change can result from the community-oriented philosophy of the FIU School of Medicine, says Eleni Sfakianaki, M.D., the medical executive director of the Miami-Dade Health Department and participant in a community task force for the formation of the medical school.

“I can foresee many types of collaborations between the medical school and health department,” Sfakianaki said. “If faculty and students from the medical school get involved with community education, they can make a major impact on how people view their own health.”

Members of the Miami-Dade legislative delegation are rallying behind the FIU medical school proposal. State Rep. David Rivera said he looks forward to educating other legislators around the state about the importance of establishing the FIU School of Medicine. Given the issues of minority access and the physician shortage, said State Rep. Ralph Arza, “I don’t think anyone can argue it is not a legitimate request.

“At the end of the day, it is about helping the people in the community fulfill their dreams and goals and at the same time meeting the health needs of the community,” said Arza. “What greater contribution can we leave to our community for years to come than to establish a public medical school?” ■

## FIU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE: BY THE NUMBERS

TARGET OPENING DATE: 2006, FIRST STUDENTS ADMITTED: 2007, CONSTRUCTION COSTS: \$40 MILLION,  
NEW FULL-TIME FACULTY HIRES: 116, NEW CLINICAL ADJUNCT HIRES: 500, LIBRARY COLLECTION COSTS: \$700,000,  
ADMISSION GPA REQUIREMENT: 3.5, STUDENT TUITION: \$15,000, FIRST GRADUATING CLASS: 2011, MAXIMUM ENROLLMENT: 277,  
ANNUAL OPERATING COST: \$35 MILLION, PRIVATE DOLLARS PLEDGED: \$10 MILLION, LOCAL ECONOMIC IMPACT: \$784 MILLION

profile

# David Becker

## Chemist Creates Novel Therapeutic as Potential Stroke Treatment

By Deborah O'Neil

Chemistry Professor David Becker often has wondered why we get old. It sounds like a simple question, but in the mind of this scientist, the mystery of aging raises endless inquiries.

As a graduate student, he looked at a poetically named class of compounds that helps make chamomile oil a soothing balm. Azulenes, with their deep-blue color, fascinated Becker. In his post-doctoral work, the young chemist pored over man-made molecules called nitrones that have the rare ability to capture and neutralize dangerous "free radicals" that destroy healthy human cells and contribute to a variety of aging diseases. Still, for all their healing potential, nitrones reacted so slowly with most free radicals that they were inefficient at treating diseases.

Years later, after Becker joined the FIU faculty in 1993, he reflected on decades of work by organic chemists on both azulenes and nitrones. In 1995, he posed the most important of scientific inquiries: What if?

What if azulenes were combined with nitrones? So the chemist, who as a teen accidentally ignited a ping-pong table during one of his experiments, synthesized a new class of compounds in FIU's Chemistry and Physics Building: azulenyl nitrones. Nothing exploded — except a

global buzz over the unprecedented potency of Becker's new creation, known as STAZN.

Becker's hunch was right on: The colorful azulenes gave nitrones just the kick they needed to effectively combat those free radicals that contribute to aging and health problems. The combination of the two yielded a new compound (STAZN) that reaches the brain more easily and quickly. He had formulated a novel antioxidant — an agent that counteracts deterioration of tissue — that in animal testing is showing hundreds of times the potency of other drugs in its class.

"Surprisingly, no one had ever taken a nitrone and coupled it with an azulene," Becker said. "Turns out, there was good reason to do so."

Today, STAZN has undergone extensive research and could represent the most exciting breakthrough in generations for victims of stroke and head trauma. The National Institutes of Health has awarded \$2.4 million to Becker and his research partner, Myron Ginsberg, M.D., of the University of Miami, to advance STAZN to human clinical testing. And FIU is currently in negotiations with a prominent pharmaceutical company interested in licensing the patents on STAZN to bring the new stroke therapy to the market.

In animals, STAZN has shown

"There is a great worldwide need for this kind of compound."

—  
George Dambach Ph.D.  
FIU Vice President of Research

remarkable success at stopping the deterioration of brain cells that occurs for hours after the onset of a stroke, the third leading cause of death in the U.S. Brain cell deterioration can be devastating for the 700,000 Americans each year who suffer strokes. Many are left with disabilities ranging from paralysis and loss of vision to the inability to speak and memory loss.

The next hurdle for STAZN after preclinical studies are complete is human testing. If those are tests are successful, the compound will be presented to the Food and Drug Administration for approval.

"I'm very pleased with the progress we have made," Becker said. "It will be absolutely incredible to get the molecule into human beings and even more incredible to see it get into hospitals saving lives and improving the quality of life for stroke victims."

Other researchers are exploring STAZN as a treatment for Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, heart disease and brain injuries. FIU's Vice President of Research George Dambach said Becker's licensing agreement will be a medical research milestone for the university.

"David's research has great potential," said Dambach, who holds a Ph.D. in pharmacology. "There is a great worldwide need for this kind of compound." ■



Miami Children's Hospital

Mt. Sinai Medical Center



Thomas Breslin

Carlos Martini

# On the road with BRESLIN & MARTINI

By Deborah O'Neil

Carlos Martini, M.D., is holding court before a smart, busy and hungry audience. Luckily, there is plenty of food at this 5:30 p.m. meeting with physicians and administrators at Palms West Hospital in Palm Beach County, FL.

He has come to talk about Florida International University's proposal to open a medical school. With him is FIU Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Thomas Breslin, the other half of FIU's public outreach team crisscrossing the state to build support for the proposed FIU School of Medicine.

Martini knows his audience. Please, he urges, let's all finish

dinner as I give my presentation. He tells them the history of the growing physician shortage nationwide, a familiar reality for these doctors in Florida. He tells them FIU intends to collaborate with the region's health care institutions to address that shortage with a dynamic, 21st-century medical school that responds to the community.

"We are looking very carefully at the needs of the community's population," Martini says. "The community includes this county as well."

"So, it is not a traditional school," one doctor observes. "It is engaged in the community."

Martini smiles. He's been given entrée into the most exciting aspect of the FIU plan: its community-oriented curriculum. "Yes," Martini says. "It is not going to be a conventional medical



Highlighted here are four of the hospitals that have expressed strong interest in partnering with FIU's proposed medical school.

school. At FIU, we are doing something more courageous.

"We will bring patients in from the first year," Martini explains. "We will teach in an integrated way all the different disciplines of medicine. We are calling it a "health initiative." It is not just a medical school. We want to begin in high school, all the way through continuing education for physicians. What we want to do is take students by the hand and say, 'Ok, you want to go to medical school? We're going to teach you, prepare you.'"

Martini and Breslin are ambassadors for the FIU School of Medicine, each with a unique approach to this critical phase of FIU's initiative. Martini, an exuberant epidemiologist and medical educator, joined FIU in 2001 after spending 11 years as the vice president of medical education at the American Medical Association where he accredited dozens of medical schools. He speaks the doc-talk and easily steps in to the spotlight.

Breslin, the erudite international relations scholar now completing his

- They listen.
- They educate.
- They answer questions.
- They build alliances.
- They alleviate concerns.
- They rally support.

fifth book, is often called on to address faculty and others in the education arena. In his 28-year FIU career, Breslin has served as the vice president for research and led FIU's successful drive to become a Research I-Extensive University, the most prestigious research classification given to the country's top universities.

Much of their time is spent meeting with health care and non-profit organizations, leaders in higher education and business, minority advocates and civic leaders, physician organizations, faculty and state education planning groups.

They listen. They educate. They answer questions. They build alliances. They alleviate concerns. They rally support.

"Florida International University is committed to creating a medical school whose core mission is to meet the health and educational needs of South Florida," said FIU President Modesto A. Maidique. "Dr. Martini and Dr. Breslin have been instrumental

in forging the community partnerships essential to the success of the School of Medicine."

Few people comprehend the magnitude of FIU's initiative as do Martini and Breslin, who wrote the original feasibility report for the medical school. (Conclusion: Not only is it feasible, the medical school is urgently needed.) For two-and-a-half years, they have strategized and pored over reports on issues ranging from laws regulating foreign physicians to trends in medical education.

"This is the most ambitious project undertaken by FIU since it opened its doors," Breslin said.

Along the way, they have forged a genuine friendship based on mutual respect and passion for the medical school project.

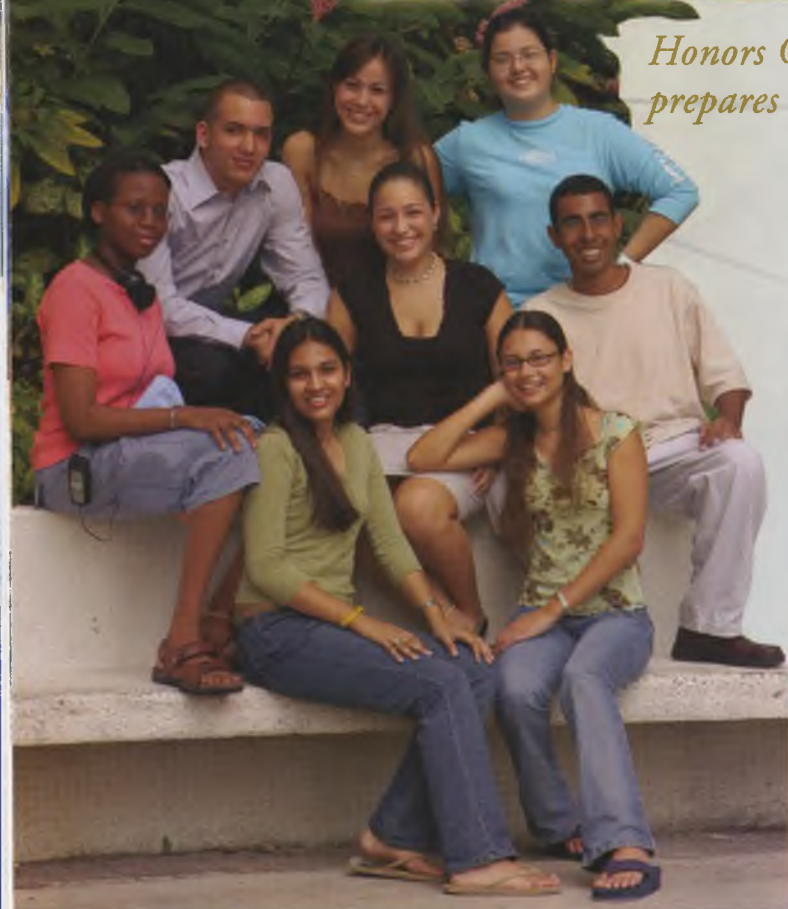
"We spend a lot of time together," Martini said. "We're like brothers."

Breslin added, "We're both focused on a major project that should have been a long time ago part of the University and region." ■



# *In Pursuit of* EXCELLENCE

*Honors College Medical Education Program  
prepares next generation of physicians*



Front row, left to right: Atena Yunus, Melissa Ward. Middle row, left to right: Fiona Ogunkoya, Annemarie Marou, Ron Mathew. Top row, left to right: Christopher Chong, Claudia Whittwell, Maria E. Garcia.

By Karen Cochrane

As part of an Honors College Pre-Medicine Summer Institute, freshman Ron Mathew spent six weeks in Chemistry Professor John Landrum's lab analyzing lutein samples in ongoing research that seeks to establish whether or not higher levels of carotenoids in the eye (natural dietary components that influence the human eye's level of macular pigmentation) can help prevent macular degeneration.

The research has yielded tantalizing results thus far—in a 2001 research paper, Landrum's group published data indicating that individuals who had the highest levels of macular pigment had a 75 percent lower risk of age-related macular degeneration than individuals who had the lowest levels. Mathew's efforts will contribute to documenting the accumulation of carotenoids in the young eye.

Equally exciting, however, is what Mathew's research experience and that of the seven other students who comprise the inaugural class of the University's Medical Education Program in The Honors College represents—an entrée for these future physicians

to become meaningful participants in one of the most energizing aspects of University life, according to Zaida Morales-Martinez, pre-medical advisor to the students.

"These students are now ready to take off and begin to do some real research," she says. The former long-standing member of the Chemistry Department and member since 1978 of the University's Premedical Advising & Evaluation Committee was coaxed out of retirement last year by Honors College Dean Ivelaw Griffith to participate in the program that was created in partnership with the University of South Florida (USF) College of Medicine.

In addition to the summer institute, which the students attended on full scholarship, the program will provide intensive preparation for the medical school entrance exam—the MCAT—and will establish an Honors Medical Education Resource Center to facilitate intellectual and social exchange.

The Accelerated Medical Education Program is part of a larger strategy to "nurture and encourage local talent to pursue a medical education," according to FIU President Modesto A. Maidique. (FIU has long provided students interested in medicine with educational preparation and continues to do so for students outside of the Honors College program.)

The program is available in two formats: an accelerated three-year track and a traditional four-year track.

The three-year track requires that the first three years of study be completed at FIU, with the fourth year to be completed in residence at USF as part of the first year of medical school. The traditional four-year track prepares students to begin medical school upon graduation from FIU with a baccalaureate degree.

There is much riding on the success of this program—for the students and the University—and Honors College officials hand-picked the eight students who make up the inaugural class: Christopher Chong, 17; Maria E. Garcia, 18; Annemarie Marrou, 18; Mathew, 19; Fiona Ogunkoya, 16; Melissa Ward, 17; Claudia Whittwell, 18; and Atena Yunus, 18.

The group's profile is reflected in a median GPA of nearly 4.0. Most of the students have SAT scores well above the program's minimum requirement of 1300.

"This program is a milestone in Honors curriculum development, and it's our signature contribution to the University's well-placed strategic investment in health and medical education," says Griffith. ■



# Marie-Luise Friedemann

## Nursing Professor Marie-Luise Friedemann leads the nation's first study of culture and family dynamics in elder care

By Deborah O'Neil

Nearly 20 percent of the nation's elderly call Florida home, making long-term care for those 65 and older one of the state's most pressing public policy issues.

Many studies have explored long-term care, yet researchers have not focused on cultural and family dynamics that are believed to play an important role in the long-term care decisions of minority families. FIU Nursing Professor Marie-Luise Friedemann, renowned for her family theory and research, recently was awarded a nearly \$1 million grant from the National Institutes of General Medical Science to launch the nation's first such study.

The four-year study, Culture, Family Patterns and Caregiver Resource Use, examines the role of culture and family dynamics in influencing how different ethnic groups utilize long-term care resources. The study grew out of Friedemann's observation that a great number of families do not take advantage of community services such as adult day care, support groups, in-home assisted living workers or meal programs.

"Many minority families underestimate the amount of help they need or can receive in the care of their elderly family member," she said. "Others refuse outside care entirely. It is obvious that cultural and family factors play a significant role in providing long-term care for the elderly."

Friedemann's grant is the latest success

for the FIU School of Nursing, which saw its research and grant funding more than double in 2003-2004 to \$3.5 million. In recent months, the School has captured a \$1 million federal grant for its new nursing Ph.D. program as well as a \$1.4 million grant from the Department of Labor to support the School's foreign doctors to nurses program, New Americans in Nursing.

School of Nursing Dean Divina Grossman says Friedemann's caregiver study has particular relevance in the South Florida community.

"We have a large and growing population of the elderly in our diverse cultural and ethnic communities in South Florida," Grossman said. "The findings will potentially lead to interventions that will improve resource use and have a positive impact on the health of the elderly in South Florida."

Family functioning and family caregiving have been the focus of Friedemann's research throughout her career. While working in Detroit, she realized conventional approaches to family therapy were ineffective for inner-city, minority families with many problems. She developed the "Framework of Systematic Organization," which provides practitioners and researchers working with those families with a comprehensive therapy approach.

"Nurses look at providing care in a broader sense, how people respond to

"I would like to make policy makers aware of what I find so we can work toward services that will help."

— Marie-Luise Friedemann  
Professor,  
School of  
Nursing

disease and illness, how family dynamics are disrupted if someone is ill," Friedemann said. "We use all kinds of theories, not just medical, it's social theory, psychological theory, coping theory."

Friedemann's research in nursing homes cultivated an interest in home caregiving for the elderly among minority families. The study, which began this fall, looks at 850 Hispanic, African-American and white non-Hispanic families in Miami-Dade County, where 14 percent of the population is over age 65. She is working with the homecare agencies of Baptist Health and Mercy Hospital and a private agency, Genesis Home Care, to identify families for the study. Co-investigators for the study are FIU Health Services Administration Professor Fred Newman and Berton Dunlop, director of research at the FIU Center on Aging.

With Hispanics dominating U.S. population growth and accounting for 47 percent of the U.S. elderly population, Friedemann's study will have significance across the nation. The results will benefit not only homecare agencies and nurses, but also guide those who set public policy, create programming and allocate public resources for long-term care.

"A lot of those services have been set up for white, middle-class families," Friedemann said. "Very little has been done with ethnic care givers. I would like to make policy makers aware of what I find so we can work toward services that will help." ■

# PUBLIC HEALTH AT FIU

## A Leader in South Florida's Charge for Disease Prevention

The Dr. Robert R. Stempel School of Public Health brings together researchers with the potential to influence the well being of citizens around the globe. The work of these expert faculty touches on a variety of critical health issues—AIDS, food safety, childhood lead poisoning and nutrition for seniors, to name a few currently under study—and positions FIU as a vital resource in the community and beyond.

Headed by Dean Dev Pathak, the school is one of two in the state and the only in South Florida dedicated to public health's twin goals of disease prevention and health promotion. To those ends, Pathak has established relationships with the four county health departments serving South Florida and encourages collaborations that allow

faculty and students to make positive contributions.

"If we're going to be in public health, we have to be with the public. Our living laboratory exists in the field," says Pathak, who, impressed by what he saw, came to FIU in January following his directorship of the Center for Health Outcomes, Policy and Evaluation Studies at Ohio State University, where he also served as interim dean of the School of Public Health and taught public health, pharmacy and business courses. Pathak sees a natural fit between his area and a possible FIU medical school, calling the Stempel School of Public Health a potential "research and teaching arm" and "research support."

The work of those in public health—epidemiologists, environmental-health experts, health-policy administrators and

others that Pathak's faculty train in the classroom—complements the work of physicians, he explains. Their efforts diverge, however, in practice.

Whereas doctors focus on the diagnosis and treatment of disease, often in relation to biological factors, public health professionals effect change across populations. The latter emphasize preventive measures and promote health maintenance in the context of environmental, social and behavioral factors, often targeting undeserved groups.

The Stempel School of Public Health comprises the departments of Public Health, Dietetics and Nutrition, and Health Services Administration. Highlighted here is a small sample of the innovative projects spearheaded by its faculty. ■

Dean Dev Pathak

## Fighting AIDS in South Florida, the Caribbean & Points Beyond

Two research professors, both trained as psychologists, have taken a targeted approach to stemming the spread of AIDS.

Robert Malow and Jessy Dévieux have together created FIU's AIDS Prevention Program, the umbrella for several federally funded studies that focus on establishing effective interventions for high-risk, underserved groups living in South Florida, among them Caribbean and Latin American immigrants, the mentally ill and incarcerated youth. The program aims to ensure that promising research in HIV/AIDS prevention gets turned into practice.

Indicative of their concern that findings have a real impact on the community, Malow and Dévieux, along with another FIU researcher, conducted a needs assessment among 34 organizations in Miami-Dade County that serve minority populations disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and substance abuse (the latter a contributing factor to the spread of disease).

To develop an intervention that successfully reaches its intended population requires a tailored line of attack, Malow says. He advocates taking into account specific cultural factors. "What we need is cultural sensitivity," he emphasizes. "That's what really has to come forward."

For example, for their project directed at local Haitian-American adolescents, the researchers explored the importance of social networks—relationships with parents, peers and other kin—



Robert Malow & Jessy Dévieux

Georges Metellus, M.D., left, program director for the Center for Haitian Studies, with Jessy Dévieux and Robert Malow, who head FIU's AIDS Prevention Program. Metellus's organization is one of dozens locally that interact with the program in efforts to help stem the spread of the disease among at-risk groups.

as well the youths' general level of acculturation into mainstream society. These issues were then assessed to determine their likely impact on behaviors associated with the risk of contracting HIV.

With \$20 million in funding from the National Institutes of Health and a staff of 29 highly trained evaluators, outreach workers, analysts, statisticians, writers and others, the program has set its sights high: to serve in the near future as a resource and training center for the Caribbean region, an area with the world's second highest incidence of HIV/AIDS. The program is

By Alexandra Pecharich

currently collaborating with community sites in Haiti and Trinidad and has plans to do the same in South Africa.

Haitian-born Dévieux has traveled to the sites and been instrumental in identifying foreign collaborators and maintaining communications throughout the studies. Projects are modeled after those deemed successful in other settings.

“We’re taking interventions that have been found to be efficacious with one population and adapting and translating and making them culturally relevant to another population,” Dévieux explains. “It’s a very labor-intensive kind of work.”

More than just translating words, the work involves consideration of local customs, prohibitions and mores. A lack of understanding in these areas, Malow and Dévieux explain, has doomed past prevention efforts led by English-speaking organizations.

Making the AIDS Prevention Program’s efforts back at home all the more critical: Despite the intensity of efforts nationwide to stem the spread of HIV/AIDS, the growing trend of some infected individuals to engage in unprotected intercourse is particularly troubling.

With better medications, Dévieux says, many are living longer and, essentially, managing their illness. Young people especially, who don’t have the experience of attending once-commonplace AIDS funerals, she goes on to say, don’t recall the years when “HIV was like a death sentence. They don’t take it seriously.”

Adds Malow, who cites the migratory nature of South Florida’s population as one impediment to stemming transmission of the disease locally, “We’re in a very challenging time. The epidemic is not getting any better.” ■



Mary Joe Trepka, M.D.

## Using Modern Technology to Solve an Age-Old Problem

director of epidemiology and disease control for the Miami-Dade County Health Department, where she oversaw a staff of 43 responsible for dealing with public-health concerns from animal bites to anthrax scares, as well as running public programs to prevent childhood lead poisoning and the transmission of hepatitis.

One of the problems that Trepka recognized as critical—the high number of infants and small children suffering from illnesses suspected to be foodborne-related—has grown into a major research project for her at FIU. With \$600,000 over three years from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Trepka and her fellow researchers recently began working to develop an interactive, computer-based food-safety education program geared to the low-income women served by the federally funded Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, which provides supplemental food.

The information that needs communicating is very basic, Trepka says—proper food storage, handling and preparation practices, among them more-frequent hand and work-surface washing—but currently no materials targeted to WIC clients exist, and pamphlets on other topics have not proven effective in educating this population.

With infants, pregnant women and those with immune-suppression disorders among

the populations at highest risk for infection from salmonella and other bacteria that cause food poisoning, Trepka and her team chose as their testing site a local WIC clinic that serves a large percentage of African-American women, a group with a higher incidence of HIV and AIDS as compared to other women. While most people might suffer from diarrhea and related discomfort as a result of eating tainted food, Trepka explains, someone in the high-risk categories might require hospitalization or, rarely, even die. (Some 76 million cases of foodborne illnesses are recorded annually.)

Trepka and the others are delivering their message through interactive outlets—similar in appearance to ATMs—that prompt user response and can incorporate graphics, animation and video. Ideally, WIC clients would be required to view the program and pass a quiz. Before that can happen, Trepka and the team, which includes FIU graduate students, will spend thousands of hours conducting focus groups, working with a software company and, finally, testing for desired outcomes.

Positive results, Trepka adds, could open the door to a variety of similar projects.

“This education method, which does not require hiring extra staff,” she says, “can be used for delivering other important prevention messages for this and potentially other populations.” ■

In a federally funded research and education project aimed at low-income families, Mary Jo Trepka, a professor of Public Health, encourages proper food storage as one step to preventing foodborne illness.

During her internship in internal medicine at the University of Minnesota medical school, Mary Jo Trepka, M.D., remembers experiencing a career-impacting revelation.

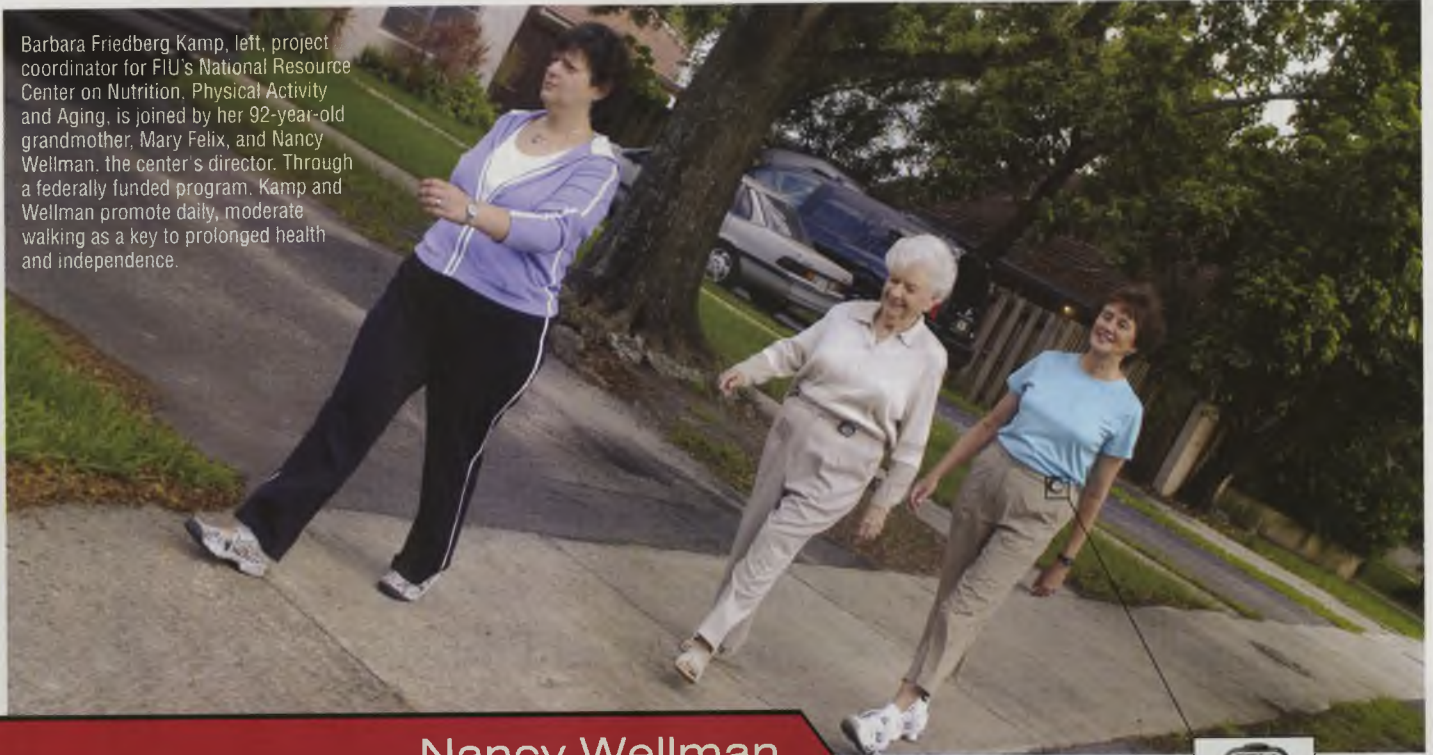
“I was struck by how many people suffered from preventable diseases,” says the associate professor. Another thing she learned: “How limited our treatments really are.” By the time most people receive diagnoses of emphysema or lung cancer or cirrhosis of the liver, she says, it is usually too late to do much.

These facts led Trepka into the arena of public health. She began by training with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to learn how to investigate epidemics and stem the spread of communicable diseases such as meningitis. Then from 1998 to 2003 she was the

continues

continued

Barbara Friedberg Kamp, left, project coordinator for FIU's National Resource Center on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Aging, is joined by her 92-year-old grandmother, Mary Felix, and Nancy Wellman, the center's director. Through a federally funded program, Kamp and Wellman promote daily, moderate walking as a key to prolonged health and independence.



Nancy Wellman

This step counter records how far an individual walks in a given period.



## Encouraging Improved Diet and More Exercise for the 65+ Crowd

With the baby-boom generation set to fully double the ranks of the nation's 65-and-older population within the next 25 years and the struggle against obesity a challenge for people of all ages, those running FIU's federally funded National Resource Center on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Aging have a formidable task ahead: to promote active and healthy aging through improved nutrition and fitness.

To that end, the center, funded with some \$1.4 million, primarily from the U.S. Administration on Aging, is reaching out across the country to assist those who work with a variety of federally supported site-based and home-delivery nutrition programs, often referred to collectively as "meals on wheels." The ultimate goal is to help older people maintain their health and prolong their independence.

Research coming out of the center shows that making relatively simple changes in lifestyle can have a significant impact on the health of today's oldest generations.

In the Eating Better & Moving More project, researchers developed a 12-week

program of facilitator-led group discussions that touts eating more vegetables, fiber and calcium-rich foods along with the wearing of an easy-to-use step counter that records how far an individual walks in a given period. The positive results of preliminary studies prompted a national pilot study at 10 facilities that cater to seniors (chosen from the more than 100 that applied to be involved), currently underway.

"[The participants] are now talking about their 'steps' and good food choices more than their aches and pains," says Nancy Wellman, originator of the project and the center's director and a professor of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Calling the rise in fitness activities available at senior-serving centers a bigger draw than even once-popular bingo games, Wellman stresses that most older adults do not fit the picture of retirees content to knit or play dominos all day. "They do want to stay more active," she says. "It seems that fitness programs and nutritious meals in the centers are helping to attract more people."

The research team—professors in the

Department of Dietetics and Nutrition as well as one in the Department of Physical Therapy and graduate students in both—found that participants, on average, increased by more than half how far they walked in a day and saw significant improvement in flexibility and balance. Likewise, study subjects increased the frequency of their grocery shopping and preparing meals at home, as well as reported eating more of the target foods. Aiding the effort is a comprehensive guidebook, first published by the center and now being reissued through the federal government. It includes discussion topics for leaders—portion size, correct walking posture—as well as worksheets for copying and distribution to participants.

Integrating a health-promoting diet with moderate exercise appears a promising approach for ensuring that older adults remain in their own homes as long as possible, Wellman says. And, even as Americans across the age spectrum continue to fight what often seems a losing battle with obesity, she is encouraged by the eagerness of many of today's older individuals to embrace a healthier future.

"It's no longer enough to live longer," Wellman says. "We all want to live long with a good quality of life." ■

profile

# Kalai Mathee

A desire to save and improve lives  
motivates microbiologist's research

by Deborah O'Neil

Molecular microbiologist Kalai Mathee had spent years in laboratories studying the bacterium that causes lethal lung infections in cystic fibrosis patients. But she had never met a patient.

Then in 1999, she visited cystic fibrosis patients for the first time in a Denmark clinic. Their suffering—the way they struggled to breath, transforming even the simplest movements into laborious ordeals—infused her with a profound sense of purpose.

"Everything I did from then on had to be clinically relevant," said Mathee, an assistant professor in Biological Sciences. "I always ask, what does it mean to the patient? It's not research for research's sake. It's research for the ultimate goal to improve the quality of life and the life span of cystic fibrosis patients."

The Malaysia-born scientist, whose Tamil name means "arts and intelligence," has made her mark at FIU and in the science community with significant discoveries, publications and involvement in international research efforts. At FIU, Mathee has built a state-of-the-art laboratory where she conducts her research and trains graduate and undergraduate biologists. One of her recent graduates, Alian Aguila, was awarded a fellowship by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for cancer research.

The bacteria Mathee researches—it's called *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, but we will call it PA bacteria—lives all around us, on plants, in water and dirt and even on animals. PA bacteria are harmless for most

of us. But when this opportunistic pathogen sneaks into the lungs of a cystic fibrosis patient, the results are devastating.

Cardio-respiratory infection caused by PA bacteria is the No. 1 killer of cystic fibrosis patients, most of whom die by age 30. Mathee knows all the statistics about cystic fibrosis. In the U.S., 30,000 children and adults have the genetic disease. They are the reason for her continually evolving research.

Mathee made her biggest discovery in 1995. Until then, scientists had many arguments but could not explain what causes a mutation in the PA bacteria that allows it to shield itself from antibiotics and human immune cells. The shield makes the bacteria impossible to kill once in the lungs.

At a conference, a Danish scientist showed a photo of the PA bacteria surrounded by human immune cells, which the body naturally produces to attack the unwanted invader. It occurred to her that the bacteria might be mutating as a response to the immune system.

It was a bold proposition, upending decades of conventional wisdom. But the theory held up once she put it through a series of tests. Her discovery did not cure the disease, but it opened up a new world of possible treatment options using anti-oxidants to regulate the immune system and fight the bacteria. She has followed up with years of well-regarded work.

"She's young and she's hungry," FIU's Associate Vice President of Research Kelsey Downum said. "She is going to be

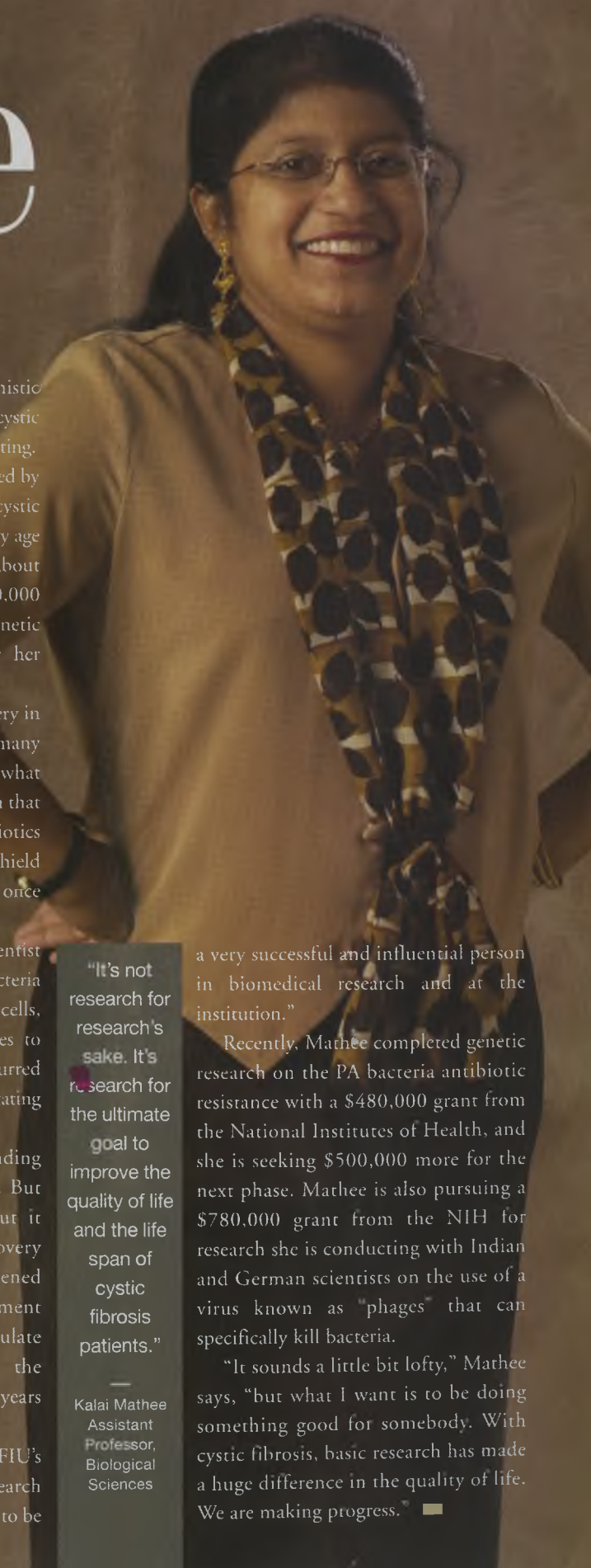
"It's not research for research's sake. It's research for the ultimate goal to improve the quality of life and the life span of cystic fibrosis patients."

Kalai Mathee  
Assistant  
Professor,  
Biological  
Sciences

a very successful and influential person in biomedical research and at the institution."

Recently, Mathee completed genetic research on the PA bacteria antibiotic resistance with a \$480,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health, and she is seeking \$500,000 more for the next phase. Mathee is also pursuing a \$780,000 grant from the NIH for research she is conducting with Indian and German scientists on the use of a virus known as "phages" that can specifically kill bacteria.

"It sounds a little bit lofty," Mathee says, "but what I want is to be doing something good for somebody. With cystic fibrosis, basic research has made a huge difference in the quality of life. We are making progress." ■



# FIU Research SCIENCE

Florida International University conducts cutting-edge research that impacts the way we live and offers the promise of healthier, safer lives for all in the future. In its capacity as a Research I-Extensive university, the highest research classification possible in higher

education, FIU this year captured more than \$60 million in sponsored research.

Faculty members are increasingly winning competitive research grants from such institutions as the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation and

the Department of Defense. The most significant growth has been in health research, where funding this year exceeded last year's by \$3 million.


Across the disciplines, FIU scientists are conducting numerous community health-

## PLANTS, ANIMALS & HUMAN HEALTH



**Immunity:** Professor Sylvia Smith with consultants at Oxford University, the University of Maryland School of Medicine and the University of Tokyo. **Research:** The human complement system is a part of the immune system that uses proteins in the blood to defend the human system against foreign invaders. This study is completing a molecular characterization of the complement genes and proteins of the nurse shark to determine their functional compatibility with the human complement system. **Funding:** \$1 million National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** Shark proteins may be useful to control human hypersensitive reactions such as asthma.

**Pollen Allergies:** Professor Suzanne Koptur in collaboration with area allergists. **Research:** This research has documented the flowering activity of native and exotic plants in urban, suburban and natural areas and created a reference collection of local pollen that can be used to identify the triggers of allergy flare-ups. **Funding:** FIU research grant. **Benefits:** The establishment of a pollen reference website and book will be valuable to the medical community in treating allergy sufferers. Also, the research is identifying potential problem species that can be tested for allergenic properties so proper treatments can be developed.

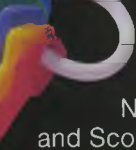


**“What I find exceptional about what we are talking about is building a medical school on this science foundation, tying people hired in the medical school to faculty in the sciences.”**

—Kelsey Downum, Associate VP for Research

**Plant-based Antibiotics:** Associate Professor Bradley Bennett and Associate Vice President for Research Kelsey Downum with Professors Martin Quirke in Chemistry and Kalai Mathee and Sylvia Smith in Biology in collaboration with Miami Children's Hospital and the University of Miami School of Medicine. **Research:** FIU's Center for Ethnobiology and Natural Products is conducting research on the use of natural products in traditional and modern health care. A key focus of current research is the screening of Florida invasive and native plants for biologically effective compounds that can be applied as antibiotics or can either suppress or enhance the human immunity system. **Funding:** \$350,000 National Institutes of Health Minority Biomedical Research Support Program, \$450,000 Department of Defense and \$1.1 million National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** This research will enable the development of new antibiotics and immune system regulators that can be used for treatment in many diseases.

## CHILDREN & INFANTS



**Child Asthma:** Nursing Professors Dorothy Brooten, Joanne Youngblut, Sandy Lobar; Nursing Instructor Laura Hernandez; and Scott Royal, senior epidemiologist at RTI Inc. **Project:** The numbers of children with asthma is growing, particularly among Hispanic children in urban areas. This is an educational and training project in four Catholic schools in Hialeah and Miami that have large Hispanic populations. The project will measure community awareness about asthma, train parents and/or church parish members about asthma prevention and promote asthma awareness through the media and an Asthma Day event. **Funding:** \$287,000 SC Johnson. **Benefits:** The project will develop a model for national distribution to reduce asthma episodes in children.

**Childhood Anxiety:** Professors Wendy Silverman and William Kurtines. **Research:** This pioneering research is analyzing how to effectively treat child anxiety disorders in children and also determine why specific treatments are effective. **Funding:** \$1 million National Institute of Mental Health. **Benefits:** Knowing what works to reduce anxiety problems in children and knowing why the treatment works will improve the lives of children and families by increasing the likelihood of effective treatment.

**Infant Development:** Professor Lorraine Bahrick, director Infant Development Research Center and Professor Robert Lickliter, co-director IDRC. **Research:** This research aims to learn more about the normal developmental course of perception, attention, learning and memory during infancy and early childhood. The studies use both human and animal infants to investigate the biological and psychological factors that contribute to the coordination of the senses, including how infants determine that sights and sounds go together, how and when they learn the meaning of speech, what they remember from audiovisual events, and how and when they learn to understand the emotions of others. **Funding:** \$1.7-million National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** This research will provide the basis for theories of perceptual, cognitive and social development, provide norms for development patterns in infants and children and insight into the perceptual and cognitive challenges faced by high-risk infants.

# FOR A HEALTHY FUTURE

based research projects and probing medical areas such as coronary artery disease, child asthma and macular degeneration. One team of University scientists is testing Florida plants for new sources of antibiotics while another team is researching cognitive and

social development in infants.

As the medical school initiative moves forward, the University is continuing to enhance and expand the infrastructure needed to support high-end scientific research. At the same time, FIU will be striving to recruit

experienced and talented scientists in a variety of disciplines. And as with the medical school, the focus of scientific research will be driven by the community's needs.

Here is a sampling of some of the work being conducted by FIU researchers in health areas.

## PUBLIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

**Food Safety:** Public Health professors Zisca Dixon and Fatma Huffman. **Project:** This project has developed educational materials on food-borne disease that will be used to teach hard-to-reach people such as illegal immigrants or the unemployed. The goal is to find out how best to educate these individuals, who often take jobs picking or preparing food that is susceptible to disease in Miami's heat and humidity.

**Funding:** \$500,000, U.S. Department of Agriculture. **Benefits:** Educating these individuals will reduce illness and death due to food contamination, particularly among the young and elderly.



**Lead Paint:** Janvier Gasana, M.D., chair of the Florida Children's Environmental Health Alliance, and Assistant Professor Wayway Hlaing. **Research:** This project promotes collaborations between agencies and health delivery systems to eradicate lead poisoning among children in Little Haiti, Liberty City, Overtown and Little Havana where dilapidated housing with peeling lead-based paint puts children at high risk for poisoning.

**Funding:** \$562,000 Department of Health and Human Services HRSA Maternal and Child Health Bureau. **Benefits:** The project is creating healthy environments that protect children from environmental hazards and is establishing a model that will be implemented in other communities in South Florida.

**Prostate Cancer:** Associate Professor Marcia Magnus.

**Project:** Black men in America have the highest death rates from prostate cancer in the U.S. In this pilot project, a team of nutrition educators visited barbershops frequented by primarily black clientele in Miami and Fort Lauderdale and invited men to participate in a nutrition education session about prostate cancer. **Benefits:** More than 500 men have participated and learned which foods improve prostate health and which blood tests can help reduce the risk of prostate cancer risk. The expectation is that this information will be passed on to family members and friends, promoting greater health awareness.

**Forensic Technology:** Alberto Sabucedo, lecturer and director of the forensic certificate program and Associate Dean and Professor Kenneth Furton. **Research:** This research is establishing a time-of-death marker using the cardiac protein, troponin I, which is extracted from the cardiac muscle tissue, isolated and examined. **Benefits:** The researchers have a patent pending on this forensic technology, which will assist medical examiners in law enforcement in accurately assessing time since death, an area of forensic medicine that has lacked major advances in technology.

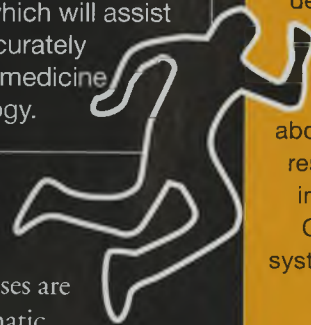
"With a public medical school in Miami, we would attract additional funding to address health and social problems. We would double or triple the amount of sponsored research coming in."

—Jeffrey Horstmyer, M.D.  
President-elect  
Mercy Hospital  
medical staff



**Mosquito-borne Disease:** Assistant Professor Fernando Gabriel Noriega.

**Research:** Mosquito-transmitted parasitic diseases are among the major causes of death in the world. Recent dramatic increases in mosquito-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever and the widespread resistance of mosquitoes to insecticides underscore the need for new approaches to insect control. This research is examining the physiological significance of peptides in the regulation of reproduction and the survival of mosquitoes. **Funding:** \$600,000 National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** An understanding of the biology of mosquitoes will facilitate the development of mosquito-specific control agents to curb the spread of mosquito-borne diseases.



**Asthma:** Mary Jo Trepka, M.D., and collaborative researchers at the Centers for Disease Control, Miami Children's Hospital and Miami-Dade County Health Department.

**Project:** The number of individuals developing asthma each year is not currently monitored systematically in the U.S. but can provide important information about risk factors for developing this respiratory illness. This pilot project in the southern half of Miami-Dade County is developing a monitoring system to track new cases of asthma and describe the epidemiology of asthma in the area. **Funding:** \$187,000 Centers for Disease Control. **Benefits:** The project will assist health care providers and the Miami-Dade County Health Department in understanding the problem of asthma, which allows for the development of interventions, educational programs and improved medical practices.





## THE HUMAN EYE

### Macular Degeneration:

Professor Richard Bone and consultation with

Chemistry Professor John Landrum.

**Research:** There is evidence that a low level of macular pigment in a person's retina increases the risk of acquiring age-related macular degeneration, the number one cause of blindness. There is a commonly used method for measuring macular pigment density; however, it is unsuitable for many patients, particularly those whose vision has been impaired. This research aims to develop a simple method of measuring macular pigment density based on a retinal camera that will be modified with special optical filters. **Funding:** \$195,000 National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** The instrument being developed will aid physicians in the assessment of patient macular-pigment levels.

**Diet and Nutrition:** Associate Professor Victoria Castellanos, Stempel School of Public Health and director of the Long Term Care Institute of the National Policy and Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging, collaborating with researchers at Vanderbilt University and the Joseph L. Morse Geriatric Center in West Palm Beach. **Funding:** \$213,000 Retirement Research Foundation. **Research:** The diets of many older adults are inadequate in protein, vitamins, calcium and minerals, which affect independence, physical and cognitive performance, infections, wound healing, hospitalization and quality of life. This is the first systematic investigation of whether nutritional enhancement of menu items results in increased total nutrient intake in older adults in the home, adult day care and long-term care. **Benefits:** The results will be critical for determining whether menus that emphasize foods high in energy density in elder meal programs provide a practical strategy for increasing nutrient intake for older adults. Also, the results will show which meals and which food items should be targeted for enhancement and will analyze the impact on food costs.

**Macular Pigment:** Professor John Landrum. **Research:** Macular pigment serves a protective role in the aging retina of the eyes and reduces the risk of macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness. This research is using macaque monkeys to determine when macular pigment reaches maturity in the developing eye and to understand the relationship of this retinal feature to other developmental stages. **Funding:** \$25,000 per year, Wyeth Nutrition. **Benefits:** This research will provide important information about the maturation of the retina in the neonatal eye. In addition, the research will allow for the development of treatments to delay or stop macular degeneration, giving millions of older adults increased visual function.

**Retina Surgery:** Professor Bernard Gerstman. **Research:** This project is developing a theoretical and computational model that will allow for the prediction of the effects of laser energy absorbed in the retina during surgery. **Funding:** \$1.2 million Air Force Office of Scientific Research. **Benefits:** This research will allow for the determination of which types of laser pulses in surgical techniques most effectively minimize potential dangers and maximize beneficial outcomes.

## ELDER HEALTH

**Elder Safety:** Pamela Elfenbein, Ph.D., director of education and training, FIU Center on Aging; Associate Professor Helen Cornely, chairwoman of Physical Therapy. **Research:** This project is a direct response to a request by Fort Lauderdale Airport Fire and Rescue officials for an analysis of the cause of a high number of falls occurring among the elderly and children under age 6 at the Fort-Lauderdale Airport. **Funding:** In cooperation with the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department, grants have been submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and the Environmental Protection Agency to support the project. **Benefits:** The assessment is painting a picture of the fall that will be used to design safety systems to prevent and reduce falls and injuries in the airport terminals.

- **Elder Health:** Professor Nancy Wellman, director of the National Policy and Resource Center on Nutrition and Aging at FIU, Associate Professor and Co-Director Dian Weddle. Co-investigator Neva Kirk Sanchez, assistant professor of physical therapy. **Project:** The Older Americans Act and its programs are the cornerstone of home- and community-based services that promote good nutrition and active lifestyles for older Americans. This research project is expanding and strengthening the capability of the aging network and its nutrition programs to provide community-based nutrition and physical activity programs for older adults. **Funding:** \$1.3 million U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging. **Benefits:** These efforts will improve the quality of life for older Americans and help them remain in home and community settings longer, thereby reducing high costs of hospital and nursing home care.

## STD/HIV PREVENTION

**STD Education for Women:** Assistant Professor Sande Gracia Jones with Assistant Professor Margaret Hamilton, Instructor Mary Louise Jorda, Public Health Professor Robert Malow, and Paula Delpach, School of Nursing assistant director for Admissions and Student Services. **Project:** "SENIORITAS" or Student Education Needed In Order To Reduce Infection and Transmission of AIDS/HIV and STDs is an HIV-prevention program targeting Hispanic and Caribbean female FIU students. Nursing students acting as Peer Educators teach a class they helped develop on HIV and STD prevention. **Funding:** \$66,000 Office of Women's Health, Department of Health and Human Services. **Benefits:** This project has demonstrated the feasibility of using a peer curriculum to increase knowledge, promote prevention and reduce the risk HIV among college women. The class has been taught to more than 100 FIU students who have given the program high evaluations. In addition, serving as peer educators has significantly increased the nursing students' comfort in addressing HIV prevention.

**HIV/AIDS:** Professor William Darrow. **Project:** Called REACH 2010, this is an education and outreach initiative to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in Broward County's minority communities. The project aims to empower the community to take action and stop HIV by eliminating risky behavior. **Funding:** \$1 million Centers for Disease Control, REACH 2010 program. **Benefits:** Already the project has yielded a 28 percent increase in HIV awareness in the community. The CDC plans to use the project as a model for other communities around the nation.



## HUMAN DISEASE

**Coronary Artery Disease:** Associate Professor Stanislaw Wnuk. **Project:** Elevated levels of homocysteine in humans have been shown to be a risk factor for coronary artery disease. This research is designing and synthesizing compounds to control homocysteine in the bloodstream.

**Funding:** \$120,000 American Heart Association. **Benefits:** The compound has the potential to lower levels of homocysteine and lower the risk of developing coronary artery disease.

**Diabetes and Heart Disease:** Professor Fatma Huffman. **Research:** This study is investigating Type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease risk among Cuban Americans with and without diabetes. **Funding:** \$15,000 NIH Faculty Research Enhancement Award and private foundation grants. \$500,000 grant pending from National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** The research will outline the clinical, social and dietary risk factors that lead to the development of Type 2 diabetes among Cuban Americans.

**Cerebral Palsy:** Associate Professor Leonard Elbaum and Assistant Clinical Professor Joyce Maring. **Research:** This pilot project supports the delivery of computer-assisted gait analysis for children with cerebral palsy and will allow FIU to pioneer use of this technology. **Funding:** \$4,000 National Institutes of Health. **Benefits:** This project will optimize the quality of computer-assisted gait analysis, an important tool for orthopedic and physical therapists in the treatment of children with cerebral palsy.

**Skin Disorders:** Assistant Professor Lidia Kos.

**Research:** This study is examining a gene that controls pigment cell development and digestive contractions. The research aims to understand how this gene regulates the differentiation of pigment cells. **Funding:** \$280,000 National Institutes of Health, \$1 million grant pending.

**Benefits:** Study of this gene aids in understanding Hirschsprung's Disease and in developing therapies for skin disorders.

**Stroke Treatment:** Professor George Dulikravich, collaborating with researchers in Dallas and Tokyo and Medtronic Physio Controls Corp. **Funding:** \$46,400 Medtronic Physio Controls Corp. **Research:** Rapid cooling of the brain in the first few minutes of the onset of a stroke can preserve brain function. This research involves computer modeling to examine brain response to various brain cooling methods and protocols. **Benefits:** This research will guide the development of potentially life saving brain-cooling technology for stroke victims.

## HUMAN BIOLOGY

**Proteins:** Professor Bernard Gerstman. **Research:** This research is developing a computation model to allow for the prediction of the shape a protein will take if the sequence of amino acids is specified. **Benefits:** An understanding of the dynamics of protein folding will allow for the creation of designer proteins that can be applied to a variety of medical uses: delivery of drugs to a specific area, cellular repair and correcting chemical imbalances.

**Circadian Rhythms:** Associate Professor Philip Stoddard and Research Associate Michael Markham. **Research:** Body functions are regulated by an internal clock on 24-hour "circadian" rhythms. They are often disrupted with advancing age or with conditions of stress, causing health problems with such functions as sleep and digestion. This research project has established a model to explore the behavioral conditions that regulate circadian rhythms, to elucidate the roles of sex and stress hormones on circadian rhythms and to identify which hormones are in direct control of circadian outputs. **Funding:** National Institutes of Health, National Institute of General Medical Sciences, Minority Biomedical Research Support Program. **Benefits:** Understanding how negative changes in our social environment alter our circadian rhythms will enable the development of treatment and prevention of these common health problems.

## HEALTH CARE SYSTEM & SUPPORT

**High-Risk Pregnancy:** Professors Dorothy Brooten and JoAnne Youngblut, Margaret Hamilton, DNS, RN. **Research:** This study is identifying health problems and advanced practice nurse interventions for women during and following high-risk pregnancy. It will assess the different health and cost outcomes between two groups, one in which women receive advance practice nurse care added to physician care and one in which half of physician care is substituted by advanced practice nurse prenatal care delivered in the women's homes. **Funding:** \$507,411 National Institutes of Health, National Institute of General Medical Sciences. **Benefits:** The data from this study will be important for those who provide and pay for health care in the nation and for the education of health care providers.



**Family Support:** Professor JoAnne Youngblut and Professor Dorothy Brooten. **Research:** This study is examining the mental-health effects on parents when their preschool child suffers a traumatic head injury, which often leads to impairment including seizures, speech and gait problems, hearing or vision change. **Funding:** \$2.4 million National Institute of Nursing Research of the National Institutes of Health.

**Benefits:** This research will allow clinicians to successfully guide families through the early recovery period in a way that promotes optimal child health, parent mental health and family function.

# SCIENTISTS EXPLORE HEALTH DANGERS, BENE

By Deborah O'Neil

Through a microscope, a dinoflagellate is kind of cute – a teeny, supercharged bug maniacally spiraling hither and yon. It's a type of algae, whose body is made up of only one cell and two whip-like propellers.

Yet, despite their microscopic size, these organisms are a formidable force of nature. The toxins they generate can contaminate shellfish, permanently damage the human nervous system and kill off fish, birds, manatees and even whales. "It is the original chemical warfare," says FIU chemist Kathleen Rein.

With a \$2.5-million National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant, a team of biology and chemistry researchers at FIU is carving out a specialization in environmental and



aquatic toxins that can have serious implications for public health – negative and positive. The very same organisms that do harm, might also be used for human health benefits. Many toxins are finding new uses in pharmaceuticals, said Chris Sinigalliano, a microbiologist in SERC, the FIU Southeast Environmental Research Center.

"You can take something that is harmful and find a positive application for it," Sinigalliano said. "The more organisms we know about, the more potential there is for some of them to be useful in ways you might not now see. So far, science has only characterized a small fraction of the toxic microorganisms in the envi-

ronment. You might have the next cure to cancer out there."

Eight major environmental health projects are under way in collaboration with the University of Miami through the NIH grant, known as ARCH (Advanced Research Cooperation in Environmental Health). Three more projects began in August. The research focuses on environmental toxins found in South Florida and the microorganisms that produce them. ARCH researchers are also studying arsenic and its impact on the environment.

The toxin research has an important potential economic impact in South Florida, says Rein, the ARCH program director, whose research seeks to identify new

## PROROCENTRUM LIMA, A DINOFLAGELLATE.

Stained with two dyes DAPI and SytoBC viewed under phase contrast at 400X magnification

DAPI and Syto 9. UV 1000X

DAPI and Syto BC 800X phase contrast and UV

DAPI and Syto BC UV 400X

# FITS OF AQUATIC TOXINS

toxins from marine and freshwater algae. For instance, dinoflagellate blooms – an explosive reproduction of the organism and its toxin – cause Red Tide and contaminate shellfish, which, when eaten by humans, can cause food poisoning.

“These kinds of algae blooms shut down shell fishing and encourage many tourists and other beachgoers to just go home because they don’t want to be on the beach with Red Tide,” Rein said.

Researchers want to know, What triggers the blooms? Whether blooms occur naturally or in response to human impacts, Rein said, they appear to be happening more often and lasting longer. There are other lingering questions about the toxins themselves.

“Exactly why, where and how they generate these toxins, we don’t know yet,” Sinigalliano said. “If we did, we might have a better idea of how to prevent them or avoid them. The better we understand this organism and its environment, the better we understand how to reduce the health threat.”

Since 2001, FIU has operated a repository of toxin cultures that are available to other scientists around the country doing toxin research. The culture laboratory has teamed up with SERC’s state-of-the-art facility for high-speed cell sorting and has made FIU a hub for toxin related research.

“The core culture facility has raised our visibility and credibility within the state,” Rein said. “It

“The better we understand this organism and its environment, the better we understand how to reduce the health threat.”

—  
Chris Sinigalliano, Microbiologist, FIU Southeast Environmental Research Center

makes people want to come and work with us.”

The research projects have brought scientists together across the disciplines, and between institutions. In addition to working with UM, FIU is also participating in environmental health research with Florida Atlantic University. Rein and Sinigalliano see FIU as a natural center for environmental health studies, with its easy access to marine and aquatic habitats, its strong foundation in the basic sciences and its support of interactions between environmental and biomedical research.

“It becomes synergistic,” Sinigalliano said. “We are at the point at FIU where this whole group of disciplines is about to take off.” ■



Nancy Humbert '93



Scott Cihak '91 '97



Lisa Granville, M.D. '83



Carline Jean-Gilles '83

# Alumni at the **FOREFRONT OF Health Care**

FIU graduates have long played important roles in the fields of medicine and health care. Alumni serve as doctors, nurses, administrators and business leaders with a commitment to improving patients' physical and mental well being. They understand firsthand the tests facing the health and medical industries throughout the United States and where the future leads. Profiled here are a few of the many who are making a difference.

By Alexandra Pecharich

## **A Nurse-Turned-Health Official Leads State Efforts**

Nancy Humbert's dual appointment as the deputy secretary for health and the public health nursing director for the Florida Department of Health puts her in a unique position to promote critical issues throughout the state. New to the job this summer, she oversees offices responsible for coordinating preparations for natural disasters and bioterrorism attacks, women's health initiatives, tobacco-use prevention programs and brain and spinal-cord injury research, among others.

A 1993 graduate of FIU's School of Nursing master's program, Humbert is the recipient of the 2004-'05 Distinguished Alumna Torch Award for the College of Health and Urban Affairs. She has 25 years of service in the health field to her credit. Following an initial career in hospital critical care, she joined the Miami-Dade Health Department, where she made a mark early on working with schools in the area hardest hit by 1992's Hurricane Andrew. The disaster's physical and emotional toll on children and adults alike convinced her even more of the need for well-coordinated public health efforts.

"It was a growing realization that school-health nursing and public health were critical components to strong communities," says Humbert, who also headed South Florida's Healthy Start program for pregnant women and young children.

As the state's public health nursing

director, Humbert is keenly aware of the impending national nursing shortage and its potential impact on Florida with its older-than-average population. She has already met with FIU School of Nursing Dean Divina Grossman and will be talking with others to explore ways to increase the numbers graduating in the field.

She likewise plans to travel throughout the state to discuss with local health officials both the needs of those they serve and the ongoing efforts to meet those needs.

"I plan to visit all 67 [Florida] counties over time and certainly be out there as much as possible," Humbert says. "The work that's being done to drive the mission and the vision of the department is being done in the field. It'll be essential for me to be out in the community."

## **Helping Steer a Hospital's Course**

As chief operating officer for the 140-bed Palms West Hospital in Palm Beach County, Scott Cihak '91 '97 has his hand on the pulse of the dynamic hospital industry. The challenges his facility faces are indicative of many across the country.

Serving a booming suburban area, Palms West has had to position itself for growth, says Cihak, who is involved with strategic planning for the hospital. Since coming on board four years ago, he has overseen enlargement of the emergency room and the opening of two new units. Additional expansion coincides with plans to nearly double the total number of beds by 2010.

Retaining staff—through such incentives as tuition-reimbursement for those wishing

to further their educations—and cultivating the next generation of employees also remain areas of prime focus. To do the latter, the hospital serves as a clinical site for a growing number of nearby universities, technical schools and community colleges that run programs in health fields.

In Florida, recruiting new doctors—and even keeping existing ones—continues to prove challenging due to the rising cost of malpractice insurance, says Cihak, who calls the highly litigious state one of the three or four most difficult in which to purchase affordable malpractice coverage. Soaring costs keep new doctors from moving to Florida to work and, increasingly, discourage those already practicing in the state, where even physicians who have never had a claim against them find their rates skyrocketing.

Regularly in contact with the hospital's board members, physicians and employees, and keeping track of community interests through focus-group feedback, Cihak, who holds a BA in Health Services Administration and an MBA, both from FIU, works to influence the big picture.

"Everyone in the hospital plays an important role," Cihak says. "Fortunately, I am in a position where I can foster the suggestions of our stakeholders to improve the facility and patient care."

## **An Educator Specializing in Elder Care**

Lisa Granville, M.D., '83 is committed to teaching. The board-certified internist, previously the director of geriatrics education at the University of Miami



Bruce Ricke, M.D. '79



Marisel Losa '03



Justo Pozo '80



Joseph L. Caruncho '81

School of Medicine, in January began as a professor and the associate chair of geriatrics at the three-year-old Florida State University College of Medicine. Her expertise in health care for older individuals dovetails perfectly with the medical school's stated mission to train doctors devoted to the needs of the elderly. (The mission additionally targets rural, underserved and minority populations.)

With the first of the baby boomers set to turn 65 at the end of the decade, the special health concerns associated with an aging population will come to the forefront throughout the country. Recognizing that doctors in most fields will have to further develop their skills and knowledge of this specific population, Granville has worked for years with a variety of organizations to produce educational materials and training modules, including those that cover such subjects as dementia, depression and falls.

Founder of the Acute Care of the Elderly units at Miami's Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Jackson Memorial Hospital, Granville views the physician's role in elder care as highly collaborative with the patient. "You really have to become a partner for care," she says, "an advocate for them to take care of themselves."

For doctors not used to treating the elderly, Granville explains, that approach will require them to learn to understand what they should expect to encounter and how to actively pursue improvement.

"A big issue for me," Granville says, "is the distinction between normal and abnormal." While age contributes to certain common conditions and makes them more prevalent in the elderly, problems such as confusion, for example, should not be left untreated as an accepted part of aging, she explains.

Granville adds that a variety of factors can contribute to a patient's decline in well being, and that a doctor may have to look carefully at each to determine an overall course of action. Despite the challenges,

Granville remains optimistic about a physician's ability to help.

"If there are a number of things contributing to the problem," she says. "I have many ways, approaches to solve it."

### Organizing AIDS Education for Medical Personnel

Some three decades after AIDS was first identified as a communicable disease, the education of health care providers who deal with AIDS and HIV remains critically important. While many outside of the medical field might expect caregivers' treating of infected individuals to be a routine occurrence by now, that is far from true, clarifies Carline Jean-Gilles '83, site director for the Virginia Local Performance Site of the Pennsylvania/Mid-Atlantic AIDS Education Training Center.

"Unfortunately, providers are not receiving the training they need to prepare them because, in some cases, HIV is being taken care of by specialists," says the School of Nursing graduate, who organizes sessions for physicians, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists and dental professionals. "But HIV can be handled by general practitioners."

In rural environments, including parts of Virginia, the need for education is especially great, she says, because few specialists practice in non-urban areas.

Making matters worse for HIV and AIDS sufferers who live outside of large population centers, caregivers in towns and smaller cities sometimes are reticent to serve as primary providers due to concerns about a possible backlash, Jean-Gilles says. Some fear that catering to certain patients will give the impression that they support homosexual lifestyles or particular behaviors that their other clients, rightly or wrongly, might blame for the disease's spread.

To give the latest updates and address questions at the highest levels, Jean-

Gilles invites experts from universities such as Johns Hopkins, Howard, Ohio State and others to speak at day-long gatherings. They offer new findings and news of improvements in medications to health care workers and doctors who might otherwise go lacking, Jean-Gilles explains. Clinical training and mini-residency programs are also available for health care providers.

An important challenge for Jean-Gilles is to encourage health providers to treat their AIDS and HIV clients proactively. She promotes dealing with some of the same health concerns, obesity and smoking, for example, that remain important within the general population. That way, Jean-Gilles says, "We're not just focusing on HIV and forgetting the whole person."

### Taking His Time with Patients

Bruce Ricke, M.D., '79 conducts his private psychiatric practice, in his words, "the old-fashioned way." In an era when managed-care companies cover just a fraction of psychiatric services and promote, as Ricke describes it, psychiatrists' serving as no more than "medication managers" encouraged to see multiple patients in an hour, he insists on giving clients regular 50-minute sessions to talk through their problems. "I get to know them," he says.

Among the problems that Ricke encounters most often in his practice are the ones that have remained common for years: anxiety, bipolar disorders and schizophrenia. Additionally, some clients come in to deal with the aftermath of a divorce, the loss of a job or similar personal issues.

A biology major while at FIU, Ricke studied medicine at the University of Miami, completed his residency at Jackson Memorial Hospital and then went on for five additional years of psychoanalytical training, which he calls some of the most rigorous in any medical field. Today, the Miami doctor does not subscribe to any single style of treatment

continued

but relies on a number of different methods. Listening to people and getting the story straight, he says, are the most important aspects of the job.

Easy to talk to and generally upbeat, Ricke expresses concern that many of those who require help the most, among them individuals with schizophrenia who are restricted to the limited mental-health coverage offered by Medicare and Medicaid, often get inadequate or no care.

"These people are in need, and their families suffer mightily," he says. "But there's not much of a good lobbying group."

### **A Commitment to Public Health for the Poor**

After 20-some years working at Mercy Hospital in Miami—the last several running the high-tech nuclear cardiology lab—Marisel Losa '03 received a call from her boss asking her to consider a new assignment: manager of the church-based St. John Bosco Clinic, which provides health services to the poorest of the poor in the East Little Havana neighborhood. Four years later, Losa has more than doubled the size of the facility and put it on solid footing.

The only clinic in Miami that is completely free to those who qualify—a state contract stipulates that clients fall at least 150 percent below the poverty line and have access to no other health care, as determined by thorough screening—it is run with an all-volunteer support staff and works with 120 doctors who do not charge for their services.

Losa spends much of her time recruiting the help, fund-raising and establishing relationships with other community health care resources that can further assist her clients. Last year the clinic, now 14 years old, served nearly 6,000 individuals. On-site general practitioners conduct exams and, when warranted, recommend any of the clinic's associated specialists, who see a specified number of patients each month in their own offices.

Adept at combining academia and the real world, Losa wrote a thesis paper while working on her master's degree in Health

Services Administration from FIU that involved the development of a federally funded diabetes education program for the clinic, which today is in place. More recently, she collaborated with the dean of FIU's Stempel School of Public Health and two professors on ways to offer students valuable hands-on experiences, among them opportunities to visit the clinic and other public health settings. She has team taught a course and is working on the syllabus for another.

"The [Public Health] program is very idealistic," Losa recalls telling one of the professors, "but do [students] really have a true feeling or capture the idea of community health?" Thanks to Losa—who lauds FIU's openness to her contributing—they do now.

### **Creating a New Model for Seniors' Health Coverage**

Hearing the complaints of doctors tired of fighting with HMOs, Joseph L. Caruncho '81 and Justo Pozo '80 began investigating an alternative health plan that would better serve both physicians and their senior patients enrolled in Medicare HMOs. Considered a cost-effective means for achieving the comprehensive care not offered by traditional Medicare, private Medicare HMOs usually provide clients with additional benefits, sometimes requiring co-payments and/or extra premiums, so long as they visit doctors associated with the plan. Physicians have often complained that HMOs cover too little of a client's actual bill.

Enter Caruncho and Pozo, a health care attorney and CPA, respectively, who would turn the system on its head. The pair, who met as undergraduates in the College of Business Administration, were among the first in the country to establish a "provider-sponsored organization," or PSO—a managed care company that collaborates with the very doctors providing the services. Legislation in 1997 opened the door to such organizations.

Preferred Care Partners began operating in 2002 following a four-year pilot program and now offers 7,800 South Florida enrollees (representing \$78 million

in annualized revenues) all the same or more benefits as most Medicare HMOs—among them vision and dental care, which traditional Medicare does not cover, as well as transportation to appointments—while including in its network an impressive 700 physicians. At the same time, enrollees are responsible for few co-payments and have no additional premium charges over what they would regularly pay for Medicare (Part B) coverage. Medicare pays the company a monthly operating fee for each enrollee, and doctors are reimbursed at a rate considerably higher than what they were getting from HMOs.

"Our whole model is based on the physician-patient relationship," explains Pozo, who adds that the specialist a doctor recommends to a patient is automatically made a part of the company's network.

To build trust, the men invited doctors to help establish company policies regarding such items as drug coverages and the types of procedures (relatively few) that require pre-approval. Doctors themselves serve as the company's best marketing tool as they suggest the PSO to their clients, Caruncho and Pozo say. Those serving 50 or more members receive bonuses, while overall patient costs are kept down through negotiated contracts with hospitals, drug companies and others. Also attractive to physicians: the company's commitment to investing in "disease management," or the identification and ongoing treatment of such chronic conditions as diabetes and congestive heart failure, an approach that other managed care companies often balk at, the two explain.

Several newer PSOs have sprung up around the country as a result of their well-publicized success, Caruncho and Pozo say. (The pair say their enrollee-retention rates are among the highest in the country, even as Medicare HMO enrollment continues to decline.) Likewise, Medicare has taken notice of Preferred Care Partners, this year selecting the company's plan as the only one in Florida to implement a new demonstration project. The outlook for PSOs remains positive.

Says Caruncho, "I think [this] model is the future of managed care." ■

# Elizabeth Foley

## Professor Envisions Bridging Law School and Future Medical School

By Deborah O'Neil

The potential synergy between FIU's new College of Law and its planned School of Medicine may not appear immediately obvious. Unless, of course, you are a health care lawyer with a specialization in bioethics.

Law Professor Elizabeth Price Foley, a national expert on health-law issues, foresees meaningful collaborations between the University's legal and medical sciences programs. Imagine law school students doing rounds at a hospital, learning from physicians, administrators and risk managers. Or medical students taking a class on medical malpractice or managed care at the law school. Students from the two schools could come together in a seminar to probe ethical issues such as cloning, stem cell research or euthanasia.

"If you sit medical students and law students in a room together and start talking about these common issues, the light bulb goes on," Price Foley said. "They realize that they have much more in common than they realized."

To Price Foley, this is what diversity is all about—bringing different people together with the goal of obtaining greater understanding.

"This is what FIU does best; harnessing the intellectual power of diversity, which is not limited merely to gender and race, but must also include diversity of viewpoint," she said. "There's nothing that will give you better viewpoint diversity than having a class of students from different disciplines, each of whom is inculcated with their profession's own culture and orthodoxy."

Foley's scholarship has focused on issues surrounding cloning, regulations of the Federal Drug Administration and medical privacy. She has published numerous articles that have been cited in more than 100 different law reviews and journals. In addition, she has authored op-ed pieces and provided commentary on health law issues for a variety of media, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and CNN.

Recently, Foley was appointed to an advisory committee for the National Academy of Sciences tasked with drafting guidelines for federally funded stem cell research. She is the only lawyer among a committee of scientists, including two Nobel laureates. The challenge is to come to a consensus on how to ethically proceed with stem cell research.

"We have to take all the scientific knowledge, confine it within ethical parameters, and come up with guidelines the American people can understand and accept," Price Foley said. "It's not just about science. These are issues that ordinary people care about, such as informed consent, respect for human life and mixing genetic material between species. It is going to be important to find a compromise where most Americans can feel good about this research."

University officials say scholarship such as Foley's on the ethical dimensions of medicine will complement the rigorous science education at the School of Medicine.

"Elizabeth Price Foley's nationally respected work is yet another indication of the breadth and strength of the academic foundation available to support an important medical school at

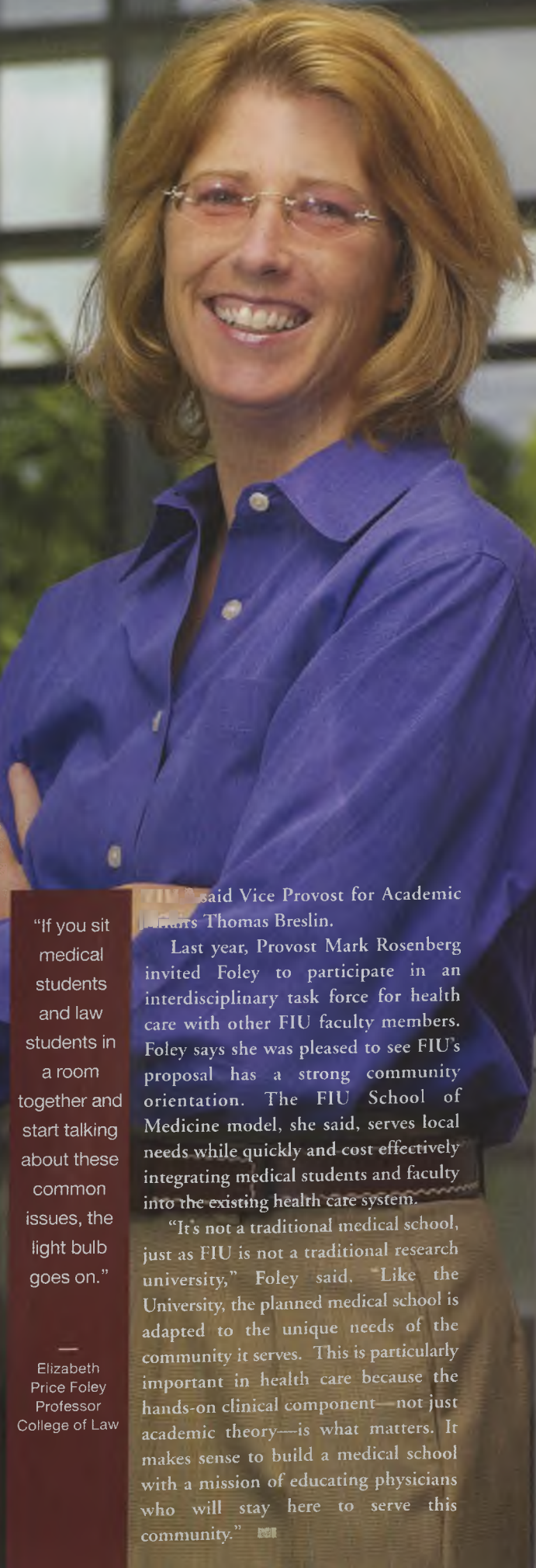
"If you sit medical students and law students in a room together and start talking about these common issues, the light bulb goes on."

—  
Elizabeth  
Price Foley  
Professor  
College of Law

FIU's said Vice Provost for Academic Affairs Thomas Breslin.

Last year, Provost Mark Rosenberg invited Foley to participate in an interdisciplinary task force for health care with other FIU faculty members. Foley says she was pleased to see FIU's proposal has a strong community orientation. The FIU School of Medicine model, she said, serves local needs while quickly and cost effectively integrating medical students and faculty into the existing health care system.

"It's not a traditional medical school, just as FIU is not a traditional research university," Foley said. "Like the University, the planned medical school is adapted to the unique needs of the community it serves. This is particularly important in health care because the hands-on clinical component—not just academic theory—is what matters. It makes sense to build a medical school with a mission of educating physicians who will stay here to serve this community." ■





# Basketball Teams Putting on Full-

## MEN'S PROGRAM LOOKS TO 'CREATE AN IDENTITY' FOR TEAM

A new era has begun for the men's basketball team as head coach Sergio Rouco takes over the reins of the Golden Panthers program. Rouco, the fifth head coach in FIU basketball history, returns a nucleus of four players, all of whom have seen major minutes and have been positive contributors in the past.

But Rouco also knows that he has to infuse some much-needed talent to the roster if FIU is to break through the malaise it has suffered in the last several seasons. To do that, the head coach has brought in 11 new players to join the four who are returning. Many of the newcomers have pedigrees from winning junior colleges or high schools.

"We haven't set a goal for this season as far as wins and losses are concerned," Rouco said. "We want to be competitive in our non-league schedule as well as in the Sun Belt Conference. We want to re-establish a home-court advantage and a winning attitude. If we can, we will have a very successful year. That's our goal."

The team has a demanding schedule by which to measure its progress. Five teams that advanced into post-season play, including defending national champ

UConn, six in-state opponents and an entire slate of Sun Belt Conference games await Rouco and his team.

FIU opened the season on Fri., Nov. 19, at home against Florida Atlantic and met Florida A&M on Fri., Nov. 26, as part of Orange Blossom Classic festivities that culminated with the FAMU/FIU football game in the Orange Bowl the following afternoon.

Highlights from this season's schedule also include the FIU Holiday Tournament on Mon.-Tues., Dec. 27-28, with Ohio University, Binghamton and Colgate.

"There may be some bumpy roads along the way, especially with games against the likes of Connecticut, Florida State, George Washington and Miami," said Rouco. "But if we can win just one of those games, we can gain a lot of confidence going into the league schedule.

"We want to create an identity for the FIU basketball program. We want to play the top teams in this state, and beyond, because we want to be able to recruit those types of players," he continued. "I just wanted the most competitive schedule we could put together so people would begin to realize that we are a Division I school here in Miami."

### MEN'S 2004-'05 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME	DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME
<b>November</b>				<b>January</b>			
6 (Sat)	St. Mary's College (Exhib.)	HOME	7:30 p.m.	15 (Sat)	Denver*	HOME	7:30 p.m.
11 (Thu)	Florida Memorial (Exhib.)	HOME	7:30 p.m.	17 (Mon)	North Texas*	HOME	7:30 p.m.
19 (Fri)	Florida Atlantic	HOME	8:00 p.m.	22 (Sat)	Louisiana-Lafayette*	Away	8:05 p.m.
21 (Sun)	Hofstra	HOME	2:00 p.m.	24 (Mon)	New Mexico State*	HOME	8:00 p.m.
26 (Fri)	Florida A&M	HOME	2:00 p.m.	30 (Sun)	Arkansas-Little Rock*	HOME	7:30 p.m.
28 (Sun)	Central Connecticut State	Away	2:00 p.m.	<b>February</b>			
30 (Tue)	Connecticut	Away	7:30 p.m.	5 (Sat)	Middle Tennessee*	Away	8:00 p.m.
<b>December</b>				7 (Mon)	Western Kentucky*	Away	8:00 p.m.
7 (Tue)	Miami	HOME	7:30 p.m.	14 (Mon)	Arkansas State*	HOME	7:30 p.m.
9 (Thu)	Florida Tech	HOME	8:00 p.m.	19 (Sat)	South Alabama*	Away	8:05 p.m.
12 (Sun)	Florida State	Away	3:30 p.m.	21 (Mon)	New Orleans*	Away	8:00 p.m.
20 (Mon)	USF	Away	7:00 p.m.	26 (Sat)	Western Kentucky*	HOME	7:30 p.m.
23 (Thu)	George Washington	HOME	7:30 p.m.	28	Middle Tennessee*	HOME	7:30 p.m.
27 (Mon)	FIU Holiday Tournament	HOME		<b>March</b>			
<b>January</b>				4-8	Sun Belt Conference	Denton, TX	
6 (Thu)	Arkansas-Little Rock*	Away	8:00 p.m.	(Fri-Tue)	Championships		
8 (Sat)	Arkansas State*	Away	5:05 p.m.	* Sun Belt Conference opponent			
11 (Tue)	La Salle	Away	7:05 p.m.				

# Court Press for Successful Seasons

## Women's Team Looks to Return to Winning Ways

Winning has been the centerpiece of the women's basketball program since its inception 29 years ago. Since the program's inaugural season in 1975-'76, the Golden Panthers have recorded 535 wins—including 516 under head coach Cindy Russo, the 13th winningest active coach in NCAA Division I women's basketball. Russo is entering her 26th year as head coach of the FIU program.

Since the Russo era began, FIU women's basketball has been synonymous with success. The Golden Panthers have put together 22 consecutive winning seasons, 17 20-win seasons and 13 post-season tournament appearances—including six trips to the NCAA Division I Tournament—while producing six All-American student athletes. And despite an uncharacteristic 11-16 finish last year, Russo and the team have every intention of returning to their winning ways on the hardwood this season.

The team hopes to capitalize on the experience of seven returning players. The performance of seniors Milena Tomova and Deniz Boz will be a key factor for

the team in 2004-'05, according to Russo.

"We are counting on these seniors," said Russo. "They have the desire to lead this team, which is going to be necessary for success at any level. They have improved, and we really need them to emerge and continue to grow."

The team is facing a challenging schedule this year, one that features games versus seven teams that competed in post-season tournaments last year. Additionally, FIU will participate in four in-season tournaments, including three at Pharmed Arena. Of its 27 regular-season games, FIU will play 17 at home.

The Golden Panthers hope to dominate their opponents at Pharmed Arena, where they own a 233-48 record.

"We're going to do better than last year," said Russo. "We played some good basketball, but we didn't get enough wins.

"We have more home games this season and we have [seven] players returning," she continued. "They have grown and matured, and with a tough preseason, we will be ready."

### WOMEN'S 2004-'05 SCHEDULE

DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME	DATE	OPPONENT	LOCATION	TIME
<b>November</b>				<b>January (continued)</b>			
6 (Sat)	Barry (Exhib.)	HOME	6:00 p.m.	8 (Sat)	Arkansas State*	HOME	7:00 p.m.
10 (Wed)	Miami Suns (Exhib.)	HOME	7:00 p.m.	15 (Sat)	North Texas*	Away	8:00 p.m.
19-20 (Fri-Sat)	Traveler's Tournament	HOME		17 (Mon)	Denver*	Away	4:00 p.m.
26-27 (Fri-Sat)	FIU/Herald Thanksgiving Classic	HOME		22 (Sat)	New Mexico State*	Away	9:00 p.m.
				24 (Mon)	Louisiana-Lafayette*	HOME	6:00 p.m.
<b>December</b>				<b>February</b>			
1 (Wed)	Fordham	HOME	7:00 p.m.	5 (Sat)	Western Kentucky*	HOME	7:00 p.m.
4 (Sat)	Miami	HOME	7:00 p.m.	7 (Mon)	Middle Tennessee*	HOME	7:00 p.m.
11 (Sat)	Florida Atlantic	HOME	7:00 p.m.	12 (Sat)	Arkansas State*	Away	8:05 p.m.
16 (Thu)	Northwestern	HOME	7:00 p.m.	14 (Mon)	Arkansas-Little Rock*	Away	8:00 p.m.
18-19 (Sat-Sun)	UCF Christmas Classic	Away		19 (Sat)	South Alabama*	HOME	7:00 p.m.
28-29 (Tue-Wed)	Sun & Fun Classic	HOME		21 (Mon)	New Orleans*	HOME	7:00 p.m.
				26 (Sat)	Middle Tennessee*	Away	3:00 p.m.
				28 (Mon)	Western Kentucky*	Away	8:00 p.m.
<b>January</b>				<b>March</b>			
3 (Mon)	Alabama	Away	8:00 p.m.	5-8	at Sun Belt Conference Tournament	Denton, TX	
6 (Thu)	Arkansas-Little Rock*	HOME	7:00 p.m.				

\* Sun Belt Conference opponent

# ALUMNI

Ty Javellana



## Message from FIU Alumni Association President

Dear Fellow Alumni,

As the fall season wraps up and we head into the holidays I would like to plant an idea for the new year: Volunteer. The FIU Alumni Association is growing every day and there are more and more opportunities for individuals to make valuable contributions. Under the umbrella of the Alumni Board are a number of active and important committees that organize such annual events as the Fishing Tournament, the Torch Awards and the Golf Tournament on the Famous Blue Monster. We have recently established a new health care issues committee to support the University's drive to establish a medical school. All of our committees are open to interested alumni and represent a meaningful way to learn about the activities and mission of the Alumni Association while reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. Alumni can also initiate new area chapters. Already, chapters are being formed in Washington D.C., Broward and Palm Beach and we look forward to branching out across the state and country. We also have a number of chapters being formed in association with various colleges and schools: the Honors College Chapter, the College of Education Chapter, the Stemple School of Public Health Chapter, the School of Journalism and Mass Communication Chapter and the School of Nursing Chapter.

The Alumni Association is presently looking for volunteers to host a "Dinner with 12 Strangers," a fun way to make connections within the FIU community. Alumni are also needed in the spring to assist with the FIU Book Awards. The book awards program is a partnership between participating local high schools and the FIU Alumni Association whereby select high school juniors are presented a book written by FIU faculty member Les Standiford ("The Last Train to Paradise"). Books are presented at high school annual awards ceremonies by FIU Alumni Association staff and board members.

Mentoring students is another great way to get involved. FIU's alumni mentoring program matches students with alumni who have similar academic and/or career aspirations as well as personal interests and hobbies. These alumni mentors provide personal support and academic guidance through frequent contact with the student.

All of the volunteer opportunities provide valuable community service and help build Panther Pride. I encourage you to contact me directly at [tjavellana@nextreamfx.net](mailto:tjavellana@nextreamfx.net) or contact Alumni Affairs to learn more about any of these programs. I also hope to see you at the many events we host throughout the year. Feel the Pride!

Ty Javellana, CPA '88 '98  
President  
FIU Alumni Association

## Post your pride with FIU mailing labels



Looking for a unique way to express your Panther Pride? FIU mailing labels may be the answer. The self-adhesive, return-address labels come in

four attractive designs, each featuring the Golden Panther mascot. Using the labels allows you not only to display your school spirit but supports the University with your purchase, a portion of which returns to FIU.

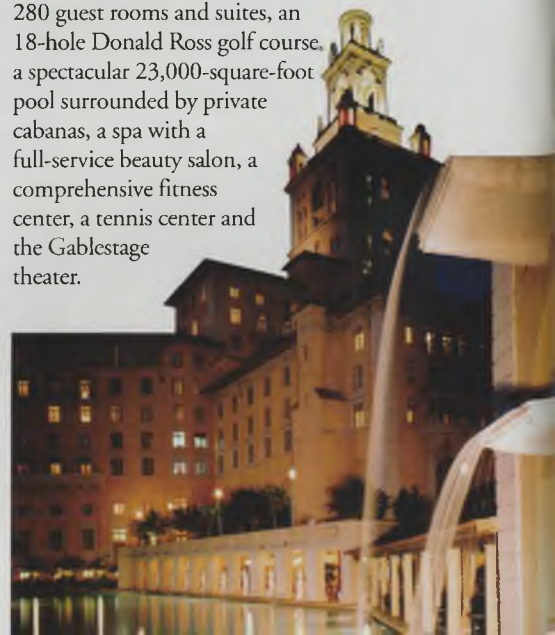
Members of the FIU Alumni Association receive a \$2 discount on labels orders. To get your savings, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at 305-348-3334 for the necessary online password.

To place an order visit [www.fiu alumni.com](http://www.fiu alumni.com) and click on the "Alumni labels" icon.

## Alumni members receive preferred customer rates at Biltmore Hotel

All FIU Alumni members can now take advantage of discounts when they book a stay at the historic Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables. Built in 1926, the four-star, diamond ranked hotel is recognized as a National Historic Landmark.

With these special rates, alumni members can enjoy the Old World European luxury of the Biltmore. The hotel features 280 guest rooms and suites, an 18-hole Donald Ross golf course, a spectacular 23,000-square-foot pool surrounded by private cabanas, a spa with a full-service beauty salon, a comprehensive fitness center, a tennis center and the Gablestage theater.



*Feel the Pride!*

To make your reservation and hear about the special rates call 1-800-727-1926 and identify yourself as a member of the FIU Alumni Association. If you encounter any difficulties please contact Biltmore Corporate Sales Manager, Alexandra Lima at 305-445-8066, ext. 2318. ■

## Share your enthusiasm for FIU with prospective students

How much Golden Panther spirit do you have? Are you excited enough about FIU to speak with potential FIU students?

FIU's Office of Undergraduate Admissions is introducing a new program in conjunction with the Alumni Association in which graduates of FIU are being invited to assist with recruitment efforts. There are several ways in which alumni can participate, depending on the amount of time you are able to commit and your interests.

- 1) College Fairs:** Attend these events to speak with students and parents about our university (programs of study, student life, research/internship opportunities, personal experience and about the city of Miami).
- 2) Phone Campaign:** Call targeted students to talk about applying, deciding to enroll or about an on-campus program.
- 3) On-campus Programs:** Assist with set-up, registration, alumni panel and tours.
- 4) Phone/E-mail Directory:** Be listed in a directory for prospective students and parents from your geographic area to contact you with questions or concerns.
- 5) Receptions:** Speak with students and parents. (five-to-10 minute presentation about your time at FIU and what you have accomplished since graduation)

If you are interested in helping out, please fill out the online form available at [www.fiu.edu/~admiss/alumni](http://www.fiu.edu/~admiss/alumni). Admissions counselor Tiffany Kristall will contact all alumni who submit a completed form. ■

Fishing tournament co-chairs Jose Bofill (far left) and Jose Perez de Corcho (far right) were happy to give the top prize to tournament team, Marine Max.



## Fishing Tournament a success

Thirty-five boats headed out on the clear waters of Biscayne Bay on Sun., June 27, for the Second Annual FIU Alumni Association Fishing Tournament. Anglers spent the day fishing for dolphin and kingfish. Prizes were awarded in the following categories: aggregate dolphin, largest dolphin, largest kingfish, largest dolphin caught by a female and largest dolphin caught by a junior angler.

Participants and family members had a great time at the dock party afterward!

Thanks to the following sponsors who helped make this year's event the best yet: Ben Trust Financial, Bofill & Vilar Attorneys at Law; CyberAngler.com; Delta Dental, Excalibur Health Systems; FIB Financial Insurance Brokers, Inc.; FIU Alumni Association, Marine Max, Preferred Care Partners, Ron Matusalem Rum, Star Imaging and TotalBank. ■

## Sports Pass Special for Alumni Association Members

Show your Golden Panther pride by coming out to home games and cheering our sports teams to victory! For an unbelievably low price, FIU Alumni Association members can purchase any of a variety of sports-pass packages that offer a great entertainment value for the price.

### Information on the packages is as follows:

**All-Sports Pass:** Includes entry to all men's and women's soccer matches, volleyball matches, all men's and women's basketball games, all baseball games (with the exception of the FIU vs. UM game) and softball tournament weekends. Alumni Association members can purchase an Individual Pass for \$100 (a savings of \$25). A Family Pass—two adults and up to three

children—is \$250 (a savings of \$50). With the purchase of an Individual Pass, one additional Individual Pass may be purchased for \$75.

**Fall Sports Pass:** Includes entry to all men's and women's soccer games, plus all volleyball matches. Alumni Association members can purchase a Fall Sports Pass for \$30 (a savings of \$10).

**Winter Sports Pass:** Includes entry to all men's and women's basketball games. Alumni Association members can purchase a Winter Sports Pass for \$50 (a savings of \$10).

**Spring Sports Pass:** Includes entry to all baseball games (with the exception of the FIU vs. UM game) and softball tournament weekends. Alumni Association members can purchase a Spring Sports Pass for \$50 (a savings of \$10).

With the purchase of any one of these packages, Alumni Association members will receive 10 additional tickets to be used at any game (with the exception of football games and the FIU vs. UM baseball game).

For more information, please call 305-FIU-GAME or toll-free 1-866-FIU-GAME or visit [www.fiusports.com](http://www.fiusports.com). ■

## Host dinner with 12 strangers, make new friends

The Alumni Association is looking for volunteer hosts for Dinner with 12 Strangers, the nationally successful program that brings together alumni, faculty and students. The concept behind the Dinner for 12 Strangers program is to build and strengthen the FIU community by creating an informal environment for FIU alumni to make new friends and establish connections with students and faculty.

Here's how it works: Alumni host dinners in their homes for 12 students, faculty and other alumni. Dinners can range from a catered affair to a backyard barbecue. A member of the Alumni Association staff help the hosts make the invitation arrangements.

To host a dinner, fill out the form at <http://www.fiucrew.com/strangers.htm> or to learn more, email Sean Kramer at [kramers@fiu.edu](mailto:kramers@fiu.edu). ■

## ALUMNI

## CLASS NOTES

## 1970s

**Robert L. Bonnet '75** was highlighted as "The Newsmen" in the May 27 edition of Miami Today. Bonnet is the president of Florida Savings Bank in Pinecrest.

**Earl Rodney '75** works in the Finance Department of the city of Pembroke Pines. A certified public accountant, Rodney has had a long career as corporate controller of publicly held corporations, chief finance officer of several utilities and owner of a public accounting firm.

**Arthur Sweed '75 '82** is a practicing clinical social worker in Cowell, Mass. He received a master's in social work from Boston University in 2002.

**Adolfo Henriques '76**, CEO of Union Planter Bank's Southern Banking Group, received the Essie Silva Community Builder Award. He served as chairman of site for Community Partnership for the Homeless, led the capital campaign for the new Miami Children's Museum, and serves as chairperson of Florida International University's Board of Trustees.

**Mariazell H. Arias '77** joined the Coral Gables accounting firm of Ocariz, Gitlin & Zomerfeld, LLP, as a senior accountant. Arias brings with her 25 years of experience in accounting and construction management. She will assist the firm in general accounting with an emphasis on construction-related clients, setting up their financial infrastructure and related accounting needs.

**Luisa Calderin '77** graduated magna cum laude from Fairleigh Dickinson University.

**Loretta A. Garfunkel '77** is board certified in pain management, wound management, and geriatrics. She is currently the clinical coordinator of Rehabilitation and Medicine at the New York Harbor Health System and an adjunct instructor at Touro College in Manhattan. She is also on the regional faculty for the American Heart Association.

**Gabriel M. Bustamante '78**, the managing director of RSM McGladrey, Inc., was highlighted in Miami Today in March in "The Newsmaker" profile.

## 1980s

**Miguel Rabay '81**, a College of Business Administration Alumni Circle member and president and CEO of e-Globalnavigators, Inc. will be a guest speaker at the conference, "France and the Americas: Economic, Political and Cultural Relations" in April at the Omni Colonnade Hotel. The event is hosted by the Miami European Union and the Miami French Consulate.

**Stephen C. McGill '84** is currently chief operating officer for Eastern Financial, where he has worked for 20 years. He earned his MBA from Nova Southeastern.

**Jeanette Altarriba, Ph.D. '86** has been promoted to full professor in the Department of Psychology, University at Albany, State University of New York. Her research focuses on bilingualism and second-language acquisition. She received her master's and doctoral degrees from Vanderbilt University in cognitive psychology.

**John C. Santalo '86** has been named assistant vice president of Preferred Care Partners. He will supervise the Pharmacy and Grievance Department.

**Conrado Yero '87** is an insurance agent with Conrado Yero, Inc. of Allstate Insurance Company. He has been an insurance agent since 1988 and is married to Lissette Francisco, an FIU alumna. She is a partner in a law firm in Miami Lakes.

**Robert J. Midyette, Jr. '88** is manager of fleet beverage operations of Royal Caribbean Cruise Line. He has been appointed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to the 2003 Board of Exam for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

**Hena M. Aguirre '89** was named chief financial officer for Esslinger Wooten Maxwell. Her responsibilities include financial reporting and accounting at EWM and its subsidiary companies.



**Willie B. Marshall '89 '95** was recently promoted to Police Division Chief with the Miami-Dade Police Department. He now oversees the Special Investigations Division, which encompasses the Economic Crimes Bureau, Narcotics Bureau and

Strategic and Specialized Investigations Bureau.

**Christopher J. Rosica '89** has been elected president of New York's Young Entrepreneurs' Organization, the world's largest chapter. Rosica is the president and chief operating officer of Rosica Strategic Public Relations, a national public relations and marketing agency focused on consumer products with an emphasis on the beauty, medical, multicultural and food industries. Rosica developed SalesSmart PRsm, a proprietary methodology for creating consumer demand for products and services, elevating distribution and client sales.

## 1990s



**Rosalie R. Heffernan '90** was awarded the 2004 Medal of Honor Award from The Florida Bar for giving meaning and substance to the United States Constitution by teaching young women, primarily the daughters of Cuban exiles, the founding principles of our country. Since

1982, Heffernan has taught social studies and served as the department chair at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy in Miami. Heffernan was nominated for the Award by Judge Federico A.

Moreno, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, and Randall C. Berg., Jr., executive director of the Florida Justice Institute in Miami.

**Jorge L. Pereira, Esq. '90** is an attorney at Mesa and Pereira, P.A. in Coral Gables specializing in criminal law, insurance law and civil litigation. He is married to Heidi N. Shulman-Pereira '91; the couple has two children.

**Pilar Vasallo '90 '02** recently completed her accounting specialization and was awarded her CPA certifications.

**Eduardo M. Balcazar '91** has been named senior vice president and middle-market lending manager for Union Planters Bank in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties.

**Raul Incera '91** was promoted to partner at the accounting firm Morrison Brown Argiz & Company. Incera is a member of the firm's Consulting and Compliance Services Group.

**Dolmari (Franco) Page '93** and her husband Dr. Raymond Page had a baby girl May 4, Brianna Grace.

**Timothy A. Rubin '93** has joined Rachlin Cohen & Holtz LLP as audit manager for its Business Assurance Group.

**Vicente O. Fernandez '94** has been appointed business development officer for Commerce Bank's Doral Branch.



**Ivo Raza '94**, a Miami-based advertising and marketing consultant, has published a book, "Heads In Beds; Hospitality and Tourism Marketing."

**Corina J. Basulto-Fraga '95** is a stay-at-home mom raising her three children. She formerly taught English at Our Lady of Lourdes Academy.

**Cesar A. Becerra '95** began a 10,000-mile "World Walk" from Key West in January to raise money and awareness for both the American Diabetes Association and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes, Becerra will try to make history as the first diabetic to circumnavigate the globe on foot. His journey will cross four continents, 30 countries and could last nearly a decade.

**Debbie M. Schmuckal '95** has started "Let's Pretend Theme Parties, LLC" in Traverse City, Mich. Her business will focus on theme parties for children.

**Carlos A. Hernandez '97** has been promoted to senior vice president/ area executive for Colonial Bank, South Miami-Dade. Hernandez will oversee eight offices and more than \$448 million in deposits.

**Jeffrey R. Ice '97** is the new pastor at Poinciana United Methodist Church in Miami Springs.

**Patricia J. Scott, Ph.D. '97** is an associate professor and chair of the Occupational Therapy Department at FIU. She has had two liver transplants and recently competed in the transplant

*Feel the Pride!*

Olympics in Minneapolis, a competition for individuals who have had solid organ transplants.

**Magdalena Nieves '97** has joined the Prudential WCI Realty Co. in Coral Gables and will specialize in real estate sales in Coconut Grove, Coral Gables and South Miami.

**Suzanne M. Pena '97** is a physical therapist at South Miami Hospital. In February, she wed FIU graduate Carlos Pena.

**Anibal Rodriguez '98** has been promoted to VP of Marketing and Sales at Tiger Financial Group, Inc.

**Walfredo Sabria '98** heads his own Visual Communications Firm, RAW Media, Inc. He is happily married to Daily Hernandez.

**Wayne R. Smith '98** has been promoted to commercial real estate credit manager at Union Planters Bank. He has been with Union Planters since 1995 and was formerly vice president and credit administrator. In his new job, he is responsible for providing ongoing analytical support for large commercial real estate transactions, monitoring asset quality, performing general management duties and staff supervision.

**La-Shanda C. West '98** was the recipient of the United Teachers of Dade Young Educator's Scholarship in April. She has previously been honored as the 2003 Univision 23 and Papa John's Teacher of the Year and the 2002 Florida Warren Tracy Social Studies Beginning Teacher of the Year.

**Gil Kraus '99** recently joined Mosaic Software as a project manager and technical specialist.

**Charles J. McRay '99** was named Orange County's top corrections officer in a unanimous vote by county commissioners. He will oversee the nation's fourth largest jail system.

#### 2000s

**Heather L. Flood '00** wed Donald B. Treadwell of Severn, Maryland, on Sept. 11, 2004.

**Misty Jo '00** recently was appointed assistant treasurer to the Wine Institute Political Action Committee. This position strengthens her role in the government affairs department of the largest public policy organization in the wine industry.

**Denise E. Gaffor '01** has been appointed director of human resources at Hialeah Hospital.

**Melissa Lopez '01** and Claire Hutubise have started a new business named "Mr. Roses," a marketing and sales company which imports and distributes fresh-cut, high-quality roses directly from a farm in Ecuador.

**Maria T. Perez-Arche '01** has been promoted to the vice president of operations for the Home Financing Center. In her new role, she will supervise accounting and operations in branch offices and maintain relationships with title agencies.

**Michael Pustizzi '01**, director of human resources for Telemundo Network, has joined the College's Alumni Circle.

# TORCH

## awards GALA 2004



*Presented by FIU Alumni Association to honor outstanding alumni and faculty*

### 2004 FIU TORCH AWARDS GALA RECIPIENTS

**Regynald G. Washington '74**  
*Outstanding Achievement Award*

**Alberto C. Santalo '97**  
*Charles E. Perry Visionary Award*

**Raul L. Martinez, Sr. '77**  
*Community Leadership Award*

**Karis MacDonnell '84, '89**  
*FIU Service Award*

**Irma Becerra Fernandez '94**  
*Outstanding Faculty Award*

**Pamela M. Crawford '91**  
*Distinguished Alumna, School of Architecture*

**Ana Maria Polo '84**  
*Distinguished Alumna, College of Arts & Sciences*

**Demian M. Bellumio '00**  
*Distinguished Alumnus, College of Business Administration*

**Carole E. Bernstein '73**  
*Distinguished Alumna, College of Education*

**Jorge J. Rawicz '81**  
*Distinguished Alumnus, College of Engineering*

**Nancy O'Sullivan Humbert '93**  
*Distinguished Alumna, College of Health & Urban Affairs*

**Eliot Pedrosa '95**  
*Distinguished Alumnus, Honors College*

**Princell L. Hair '00**  
*Distinguished Alumnus, School of Journalism & Mass Communication*

**Roy R. Lustig '76**  
*Distinguished Alumnus, College of Law*



# Jorge & Carlos de Cespedes

## Athletics Department Receives Record Gift from Two Entrepreneurs

By Alexandra Pecharich

A pair of enterprising Miami brothers—successful businessmen who as children escaped poverty and oppression in their native Cuba—have made the largest single contribution to the Athletics Department in FIU history.

Jorge and Carlos de Cespedes, owners of the Miami-based Pharmed Group, one of the largest independent distributors of medical, surgical and rehabilitative supplies in the U.S., have donated \$1 million that will be doubled with matching funds from the State of Florida.

Established in 1980, Pharmed today is recognized as the eighth largest Hispanic-owned business in the United States and the 24th largest privately owned business in Florida.

In contrast to their current tremendous success, the entrepreneurs recall their humble arrival in the United States in 1961 when, at the ages of 8 and 11, the two were separated from their family with the explanation that they were going to Miami to learn English for the summer. The boys entered the country through the now-legendary Operation Pedro Pan project, a U.S.-supported refugee movement through which thousands of Cuban parents sent their children to live in the United States rather than face life under Fidel Castro's regime.

"The spirit that Jorge and Carlos have developed and nurtured in this country is the ideal we try to instill in our students."

—  
FIU President  
Modesto A.  
Maidique

Even as youngsters, the brothers early on displayed signs of the entrepreneurial drive that would define their futures. At the Miami orphanage where they lived, all the children were given a \$1.40 weekly allowance—four quarters and four dimes, Jorge de Cespedes recalls—in exchange for a handwritten letter home to their parents in Cuba. Noting that a number of the boys regularly found themselves at a loss for words but still eager for the change that would buy sodas and other goodies, the two began writing generic letters that they sold for 25 cents a piece. When business took off, the pair hired older kids—girls who lived in a separate area—to do the writing and concentrated their energies instead on sales. Upon their parents' arrival from Cuba four- and-a-half years later, the sons had \$1,500 in cash to contribute toward the family's limited finances.

FIU President Modesto A. Maidique praises the pair's business acumen and commitment to FIU. "The entrepreneurial spirit that Jorge and Carlos have developed and nurtured in this country is the ideal we try to instill in our students," he says. "This donation is a testament to that."

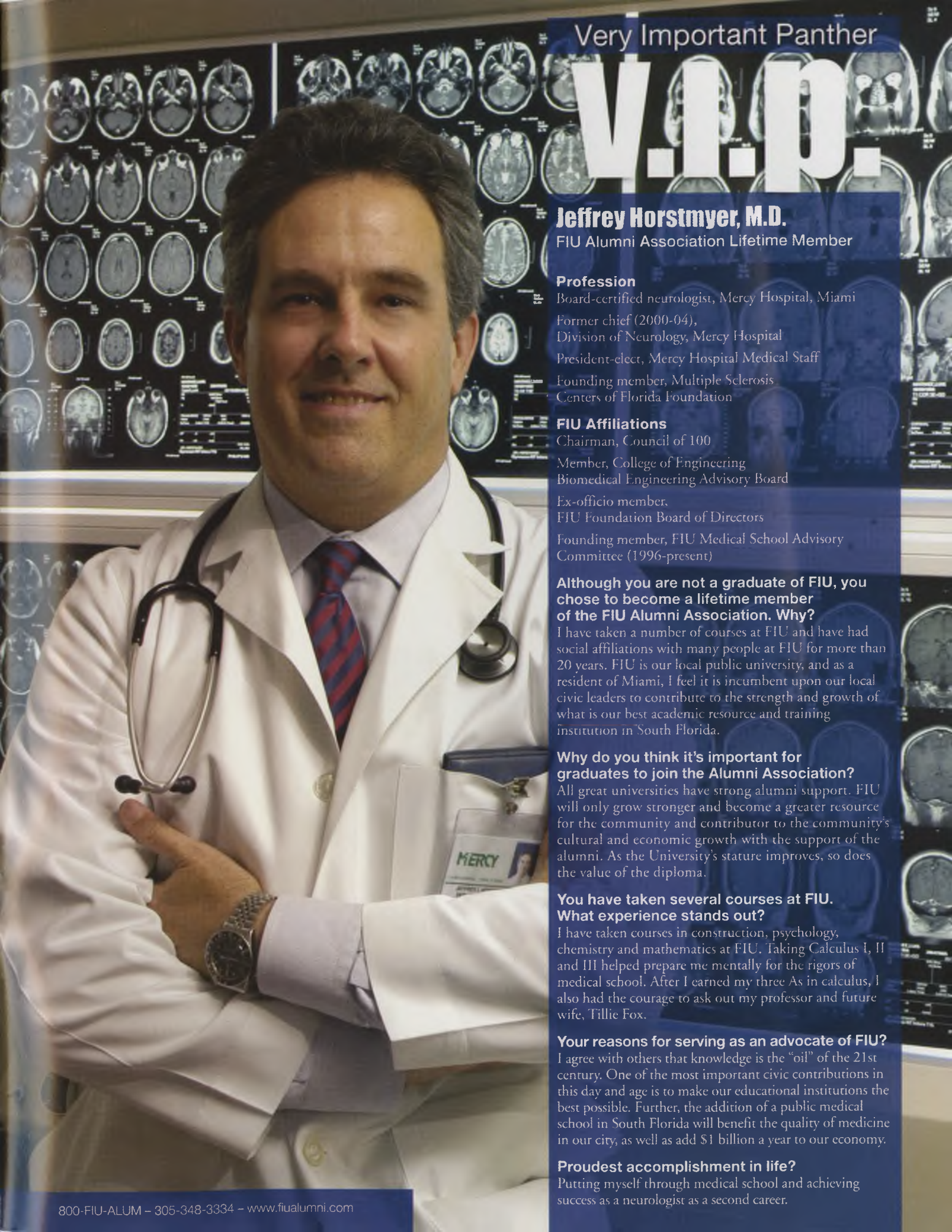
In recognition of the donation, the University has renamed the Golden Panther Arena—home to FIU basketball, volleyball and a variety of intramural competitions, as well as FIU commencement and other events—the Pharmed Arena.

The de Cespedeses' support of sports is nothing new. Members of FIU's Football Founders program, Jorge, a former college assistant basketball coach, and Carlos are minority partners in the holding company that owns and operates the Charlotte Bobcats, the NBA's newest expansion team, which began its inaugural season in November, and the WNBA's Charlotte Sting. Pharmed also sponsors an annual summer basketball league in Miami, which next year will be played in the newly christened Pharmed Arena.

"We are honored to be able to give back to such a wonderful institution and to become a member of the Golden Panther team," says Jorge de Cespedes, who has attended classes at FIU and considers the gift just one way to thank the collective South Florida community for its generosity toward himself and his older sibling. Carlos de Cespedes also supports the University through his service as a member of the FIU Foundation Board of Directors.

With Pharmed's 25th anniversary next year, the brothers continue to feel gratitude toward their adopted homeland, a place that allowed their natural business talent to flourish.

"We are the American dream in that sense," Jorge de Cespedes says. "We're the classic 'land of opportunity' story: You're given a chance, and you work hard and the doors keep opening for you." ■



## Very Important Panther

# V.I.P.

### **Jeffrey Horstmyer, M.D.**

FIU Alumni Association Lifetime Member

#### **Profession**

Board-certified neurologist, Mercy Hospital, Miami  
Former chief (2000-04),  
Division of Neurology, Mercy Hospital  
President-elect, Mercy Hospital Medical Staff  
Founding member, Multiple Sclerosis  
Centers of Florida Foundation

#### **FIU Affiliations**

Chairman, Council of 100  
Member, College of Engineering  
Biomedical Engineering Advisory Board  
Ex-officio member,  
FIU Foundation Board of Directors  
Founding member, FIU Medical School Advisory  
Committee (1996-present)

#### **Although you are not a graduate of FIU, you chose to become a lifetime member of the FIU Alumni Association. Why?**

I have taken a number of courses at FIU and have had social affiliations with many people at FIU for more than 20 years. FIU is our local public university, and as a resident of Miami, I feel it is incumbent upon our local civic leaders to contribute to the strength and growth of what is our best academic resource and training institution in South Florida.

#### **Why do you think it's important for graduates to join the Alumni Association?**

All great universities have strong alumni support. FIU will only grow stronger and become a greater resource for the community and contributor to the community's cultural and economic growth with the support of the alumni. As the University's stature improves, so does the value of the diploma.

#### **You have taken several courses at FIU. What experience stands out?**

I have taken courses in construction, psychology, chemistry and mathematics at FIU. Taking Calculus I, II and III helped prepare me mentally for the rigors of medical school. After I earned my three As in calculus, I also had the courage to ask out my professor and future wife, Tillie Fox.

#### **Your reasons for serving as an advocate of FIU?**

I agree with others that knowledge is the "oil" of the 21st century. One of the most important civic contributions in this day and age is to make our educational institutions the best possible. Further, the addition of a public medical school in South Florida will benefit the quality of medicine in our city, as well as add \$1 billion a year to our economy.

#### **Proudest accomplishment in life?**

Putting myself through medical school and achieving success as a neurologist as a second career.



Show your school pride every time you hit the road  
with a Golden Panther license plate.



The Replacement Program allows you to replace your current plate with the new FIU plate at **NO EXTRA CHARGE**. Your new plate will arrive complete with a decal ready to attach to your vehicle and no additional charges will be incurred until your next annual license plate renewal.

To get your **FREE** plate today  
visit <http://www.fiu.edu/fiuplate/>



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