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# Florida International University Magazine Winter 2008

Florida International University Division of University Relations

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# FIU

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WINTER 2008

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## On the Cover



### Blue, Gold...and Green

Golden Panther Melissa Abdo '07, MS '08 first learned about the South Florida Ecosystem Preserve at FIU as an undergraduate student in Environmental Studies. For four years, she has been passionate about preserving this hidden-away University Park jewel, which features a butterfly garden, a marked trail system, three ecosystems and a small adjacent lake. Abdo now is the preserve's volunteer alumni advisor and coordinator.

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## 2007-2008 DONOR HONOR ROLL

FIU Magazine is proud to present the first annual honor roll recognizing the philanthropists and organizations that made contributions during fiscal year 2007-2008. Their support makes all the difference to FIU's success.

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# FIU

M A G A Z I N E

WINTER 2008 VOLUME 19

## Letter from the Associate Editor



Dear Readers,

Last fall, as our most recent issue arrived in your mailboxes, *FIU Magazine* Editor Deborah O'Neil and her family, Department of International Relations professor Paul Kowert and son Devan, were settling into their new home in Sendai, Japan, where Kowert is teaching as a

Fulbright Fellow at Tohoku University during the 2008-'09 academic year.

O'Neil, whose print journalism class I took as a student in the FIU School of Journalism and Mass Communication, entrusted me to look after the magazine until her return next year. So this is where I introduce myself: Hello, my name is Martin Haro '05 and I am the associate editor of *FIU Magazine*.

I never imagined that eight years after relocating from Peru to the United States to attend college I would be sitting at my computer addressing you, the tightly knit blue-and-gold community, in this capacity. I was happy to be a student at FIU and then by sheer happenstance, a writer with the university's Editorial Services. (Young Alumni: It will serve you well to stay in touch with your professors!)

I took on the challenge of overseeing the magazine because it was the perfect opportunity to give back to my *alma mater*, to an instructor who taught and continues to teach me long after graduation and to colleagues whose work has inspired me since I joined Editorial Services almost three years ago.

The issue you hold in your hands – our Green Issue – is a reflection of FIU's community. We strived to highlight the eco-friendly accomplishments of our students, faculty/staff and alumni, and invite you to take part in the ongoing green movement by adopting some of the green tips you will find in these pages.

We also are introducing a new section called "I 'Feel the Pride' Because..." that we hope will inspire you to write us and share with our community the reasons why you call yourself a proud Golden Panther.

Exciting things are happening here. I am grateful and proud to be a part of that, and I look forward to your stories and to bringing FIU's good news into your home.

Until next time,

Martin Haro '05

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**Change of Address:** Please send updated address information to FIU Office of Alumni Relations, MARC 510, Miami, FL, 33199 or by e-mail to [alumni@fiu.edu](mailto:alumni@fiu.edu).

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**Gifts to FIU:** Contact University Advancement at 305-348-6298 or visit: <http://advancement.fiu.edu/giving.htm>.

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The new School of International and Public Affairs building will centralize FIU's internationally oriented disciplines when it is completed in 2010.



## Construction on new SIPA building underway

On Dec. 18, FIU broke ground on a new \$40 million, five-story building at University Park that will house the new School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA). Construction on the two-phase project will begin in January 2009 and is expected to be completed in 2010.

The new school will provide Golden Panthers with a world-class international education for global training, competence and citizenship. The new building will bring together for the first time an array of academic programs and area study centers that will encourage unprecedented interface and cross-feeding in teaching and research. Centralizing the university's internationally oriented disciplines, which now are global resources, will facilitate the vital interaction among students, faculty, world and community leaders essential to a 21st century education.

Miami-based firm Arquitectonica is responsible for the design, which includes a state-of-the-art, 500-seat auditorium – the largest academic space on campus – envisioned as the centerpiece of the building and capable

of hosting lectures and convocations of international educators and leaders.

The auditorium already has been named in honor of Ruth and Shepard Broad thanks to a generous gift from the Shepard Broad Foundation. The College of Arts and Sciences has launched a fundraising campaign that considers the option of a private gift of \$5 million to name the entire building in perpetuity. ■

## FIU to catch March Madness

Next spring, as the weather heats up, Miami will come down with a case of March Madness – and FIU will be front and center at the American Airlines Arena on March 20-22 when the university co-hosts the 2009 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship.

FIU and the Miami-Dade Sports Commission will welcome 65 teams to the AAA for the first- and second-round games of the tournament.

"This is a pretty big deal for FIU to be hosting this event," said Athletic Director Pete Garcia. "There will be 65 teams at the beginning of the championship and 16 – the Sweet 16 – will remain after our rounds. FIU

will be there every step of the way."

Tickets are on sale now for the first and second rounds of the 2009 NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Championship. For tickets and more information, visit <http://ncaa.com/tickets>. ■

## FIU ranks No. 1 in awarding degrees to Hispanics

A survey conducted by *Hispanic Outlook Higher Education* magazine ranked FIU first in the nation out of four-year colleges in awarding bachelor's degrees to Hispanic students.

FIU was among six Florida public universities and two private universities included among the Top 50 in the list.

In determining the rankings, the magazine used 2007 data collected from the National Center for Education Statistics. The enrollment rankings were based on data from 2006. Several factors were used to determine the rankings, including the total number of degrees that each school awarded to Hispanics as well as the percentage of those that went to Hispanics.

The University of Florida ranked 11th, the University of Central Florida came in at No. 13 and the University of Miami ranked 38th.

*Hispanic Outlook* also ranked the Top 100 schools for awarding master's and doctoral degrees to Hispanic students. FIU also ranked first for awarding master's degrees to Hispanics.

To review the complete list of rankings, visit <http://www.hispanicoutlook.com/top100>. ■



## in brief

### Street named in honor of late FIU professor



A portion of S.W. 8th Street, from 107th Avenue to 117th Avenue, was named in July in honor of Dr. José A. Marqués, the late attorney, professor

and founding member of the criminal justice program at FIU. University, federal, state and local officials attended the naming ceremony at University Park.

"This boulevard honors Dr. Marqués' commitment to education and his dedication to equality and justice," said Miami-Dade County Commissioner Joe Martinez.

To further honor Marqués' legacy, the professor's family has established The Dr. José A. Marqués Endowment to support students in the Department of Criminal Justice and the College of Law. Contributions can be made to the FIU Foundation, Inc., by calling 305-348-1925.

### FIU president to host geo-political summit

FIU President Modesto A. Maidique will host a February 2009 academic conference titled "America and the Rising Powers: A Geo-political Summit" made possible by presenting sponsor the Knight Foundation.

The conference will bring to University Park leading thinkers from around the world whose research focuses in international relations, political science and economics to discuss the world's shifting balance of power and its impact on the United States.

Speaking at the event will be: Francis Fukuyama, a Bernard L. Schwartz professor of international political economy at Johns Hopkins University; Robert Kagan, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; Parag Khanna, director of the Global Governance Initiative and senior research fellow at the New America Foundation; and Fareed Zakaria, editor of Newsweek International and host of CNN's "Fareed Zakaria GPS." ■

### Take FIUSports.com everywhere you go

FIU sports fans now can access blue-and-gold news, scores and updates easily from their cell phones and other mobile devices with the release of a mobile version of FIUSports.com.

The new mobile version of FIUSports.com can be accessed through <http://m.fiusports.com>. WAP technology provides the university's mobile fans a streamlined and convenient browsing experience.

"The ability to access FIUSports.com from a wireless device will allow our loyal fans, students, [faculty/staff] and alumni to stay connected and up to date with all FIU Athletics news and information wherever they may be," said Assistant Athletic Director Jesse Marks.

"This is another step toward creating a complete multimedia experience for our constituents." ■

### Sculpture Garden at BBC keeps growing



In May, the Biscayne Bay Campus Sculpture Garden added "Column Trees," a sculpture by Cuban-born artist Florencio Gelabert, thanks to a donation from Marc Routh, a New York-based art collector, and funding from the Florida Art in State Buildings Program.

Gelabert, who was born in Cuba in 1961, belongs to a generation of artists who came of age after Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959. His recent works focus on nature and aim to evoke an emotional response to our spoiled environment.

The 4-foot-wide, 10-foot-tall "Column Trees" is fabricated from steel, aluminum, tree trunks and polyester gel coat resin. It will remain a permanent part of the BBC Sculpture Garden, which already features four stainless steel sculptures by environmental artist Ross Power. ■

### University Park gets "Burn Notice"

In the last year, FIU has become a go-to location for several Hollywood and Latin American productions.

In 2007, Univision's Telemundo filmed scenes for the telenovela "Pecados Ajenos" in front of the Graham Center at University Park, and R&B star Chris Brown chose UP as the location for the filming of the video for his song "Kiss Kiss."

Last summer, the crew and cast of USA Network's "Burn Notice" – including stars Jeffrey Donovan, Gabrielle Anwar and Bruce Campbell – arrived at UP to shoot scenes of Episode 8 of the hit show's sophomore season.

The episode was shot in front of the College of Business Administration's Office Depot Student Center, which stood in as a museum in the episode, and outside the College of Law.

*FIU Magazine* spotted Donovan and Anwar rehearsing for an afternoon shoot among a dozen or so extras and a small army of assistant directors, script supervisors, hair and makeup artists, cameramen and technicians. ■



# Who's That Girl?

Alumna Syesha Mercado will “Feel the Pride” at the 8th Annual Torch Awards Gala in February

By Martin Haro '05

It is late August and theatre alumna Syesha Mercado is in Oklahoma City enjoying a rare day off from the “American Idol Tour.” She is preparing for a show the next day, but she cannot shake the emotions she felt the night before during a show in Louisiana.

“As a performer,” she said in a phone interview, “you always want to connect with your audience and with the music you’re doing. Last night was really surreal. On ‘Idol’ it didn’t feel organic and natural and it put me out of my element. Last night I felt like I was singing in church for the first time. I was in the zone, but my voice was shaking.”

She said she made a dynamic and affirming connection with the audience while performing Beyoncé’s “Listen.” At the end of the song, Mercado fell to her knees and broke down in tears, but something else happened, too. The audience embraced her.

“She put her heart and soul into the performance and it poured out on stage,” said her fiancé and manager, fellow Golden Panther Hess Wesley '08. “The audience gave her a long standing ovation.”

“Those are the moments that I hold dear to my heart,” she said. “I told them, ‘That wasn’t supposed to happen.’ But sometimes the moment takes over.”

Her life has been full of such moments this year. It all began with the January premiere of the seventh season of Fox’s “American Idol” and reached a crescendo when she ended her run on the hit show as second runner-up. Following the finale, Mercado, 21, embarked on the grueling, 53-stop “American Idol Tour” that brought her back to South Florida in August for a show in Sunrise.

The Golden Panther then returned to FIU on Sept. 20 to sing the national anthem in front of an enthusiastic crowd during FIU’s inaugural football game at the new FIU Stadium. Not having been back to FIU since 2006, it was an opportunity the Los Angeles-based singer said she could not pass up.

Since “American Idol,” the Connecticut-born, Sarasota-raised talent has learned to surround herself with people she can trust. She said that strategy and her FIU training have allowed her to grow as a performer and an individual.

When asked about the best part of her newfound fame, Mercado did not hesitate: improving every day and meeting the fans. Her least favorite part is being away from her fiancé, her friends and family, and having every moment of her day choreographed (on tour she had a day sheet that detailed almost every aspect of her life, from morning to night).

She said if she could offer one piece of advice to members of the FIU family, it would be to fight for their dreams.

“If there’s anybody around you that doesn’t support you, stay away from them,” she said. “Migrate to a positive environment and keep going no matter what anybody says. Have a determined spirit.”

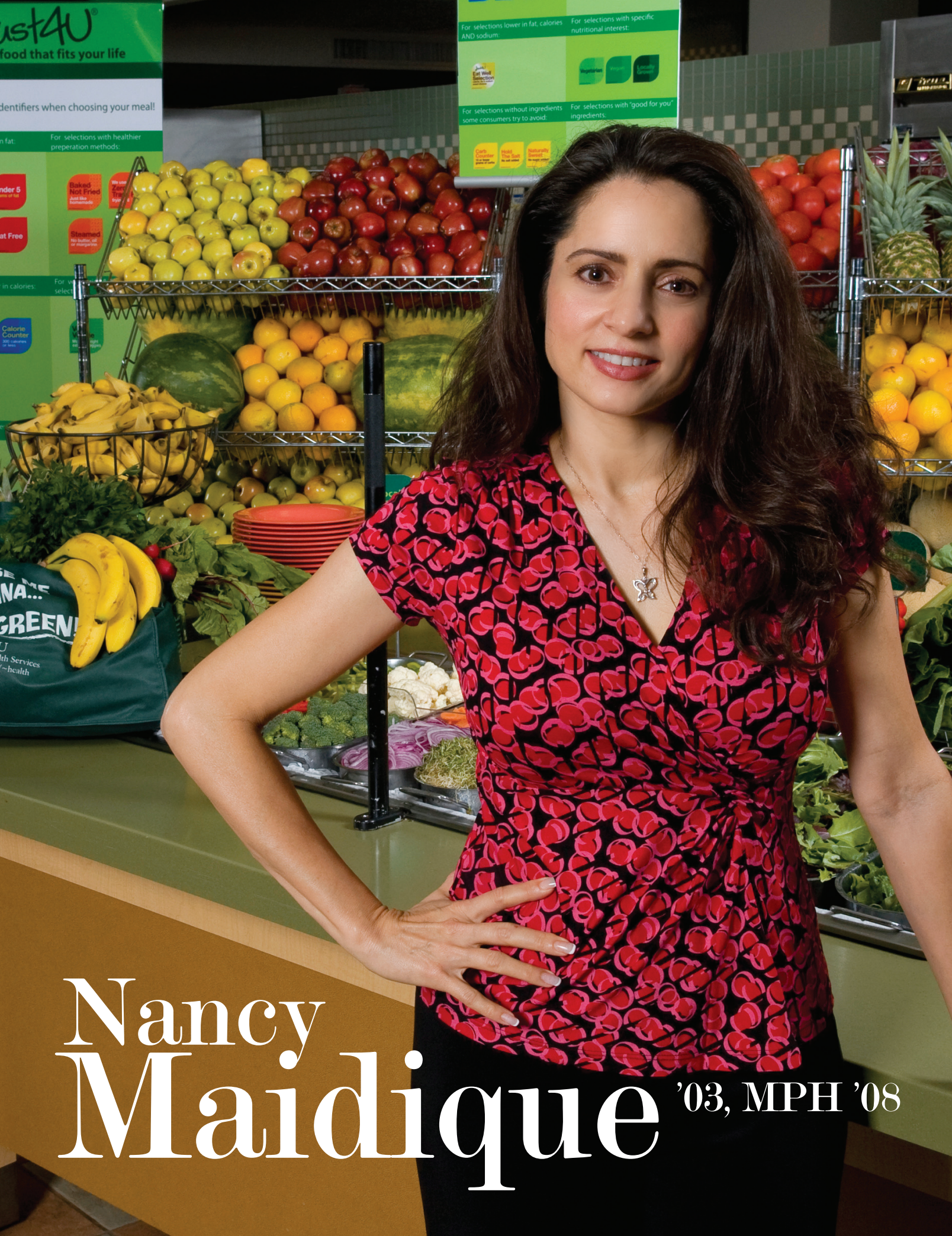
That confidence will be on display when Mercado returns to University Park on Feb. 28 to perform at the 8th Annual Torch Awards Gala.

“I’m excited to be coming back,” she said. “The last time I sang at FIU [prior to singing at the Sept. 20 home opener] it was for an on-campus contest – kind of like ‘Idol.’ I didn’t even win. So it’s kind of weird coming back after I was denied. No, I’m kidding. I’m looking forward to it.”

To stay in tune with the latest happenings in this Golden Panther’s career, visit <http://syesha.com>. To attend the 8th Annual Torch Awards Gala and see Syesha Mercado perform, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at 305-348-3334 or [alumni@fiu.edu](mailto:alumni@fiu.edu). ■







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Nancy  
**Maidique** '03, MPH '08

## Living Healthy with FIU's First Lady

Nancy Maidique '03, MPH '08 is leading a university-wide task force that aims to improve eating, exercise and air quality at FIU

By Deborah O'Neil

Last Valentine's Day, FIU's president wanted to wow his wife, Nancy. So he came up with a one-of-a-kind gift: her very own Whole Foods Market stock certificate.

You're thinking, really? For Valentine's Day?

But if your spouse were the sort of person who halted the use of pesticides in your home, grows her own tomatoes and started a composting pile beside the president's official residence, well then, a slice of ownership in the nation's first certified organic grocer would be downright romantic.

Nancy Maidique '03, MPH '08 loved her husband's gift.

In the two years she has lived in the Reagan Presidential House, Mrs. Maidique has begun to transform FIU's green consciousness.

Often, she's merely asking questions such as, "Why are all the lights on in the Green Library when it is closed?" Drive by the library after hours these days and you'll see many lights are off and the rest are now on dim.

What Mrs. Maidique has in mind for the university is about more than shutting off lights, though. As FIU's first lady, she's leading a movement for healthy foods, regular exercise, clean air and toxin-free environs on the university's campuses.

Mrs. Maidique has volunteered her time to co-chair the Healthy University Task Force, appointed by Vice President of Student Affairs Rosa Jones and led jointly by Mrs. Maidique and Robert Dollinger, MD, assistant

"Becoming a healthier university is something important, not only for FIU but for the community at large."

—  
Nancy Maidique

dean of the College of Medicine. The task force is working hand-in-hand with a university-wide environmental initiative, the President's Climate Commitment Task Force. Both task forces were formed after President Modesto A. Maidique signed the American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment in May 2007. FIU is one of more than 500 universities that has signed onto the agreement and pledged to eliminate or offset greenhouse gases.

"Universities must lead the way when it comes to the environment," said President Maidique. "We aim to put FIU at the forefront of this movement, by both demonstrating sound environmental practice as an institution and also by focusing on environmental issues in our research."

Maidique admits with pride that his wife has made his own lifestyle healthier. "She has helped me understand how small changes can make a difference," he said. "What's exciting is that she is investing all of that knowledge and talent into helping all of us at FIU live better, healthier lives."

Mrs. Maidique has brought "boundless energy" to FIU's efforts, says Dollinger, a physician who came to FIU in 1989 to head the Student Health Care and Wellness Center.

"She has a personal passion for healthy living that transcends all," he said. "It is a joy for me to co-chair the Healthy University Task Force with her and, together with the help and expertise of the superb task force members, have a great professional

Continued

team to improve the health and well being of the entire university community and environment.”

Some might take the narrow view that a “Go Green” initiative should be about recycling more paper rather than eating more greens, but Mrs. Maidique views them as wholly connected.

In her vision for FIU’s future, students, faculty and staff will park the golf carts and walk if there are more leafy shaded paths. And they’ll enjoy those walks if idling buses shut off their engines and cigarette smokers stick to designated areas. Students will make better food choices if they’re given healthier options in the cafeteria and in vending machines. And yes, they will toss their empty cans (of low-fat yogurt shakes) in the recycling bin.

“There is so much interest and enthusiasm about healthy eating and environmental sustainability, now is the time for this,” she said. “We have already begun making a difference and there is much more we can do.”

The Healthy University Task Force is promoting three objectives: healthy foods, exercise and clean air.

To promote better eating, vending machines on campus will eventually offer organic foods and all snacks will be free of hydrogenated oil. This chemically altered oil contains high levels of trans fat, linked with high cholesterol, obesity, diabetes and coronary disease.

The FIU cafeterias will also begin offering a selection of organic foods, starting with the infamous “dirty dozen,” that is the fruits and vegetables known to retain the most toxins when sprayed with pesticides. In addition, FIU’s Dining Services has launched the new “Just4U” program to educate students about such issues as portion size, calories and trans fat.

“My wife has helped me understand how small changes can make a difference.”

—  
President Modesto A. Maidique

And beginning in January 2009, the task force will organize a weekly farmer’s market on campus.

Increasing pedestrian traffic and decreasing the use of golf carts on campus will be the first steps toward encouraging exercise. To cultivate a “walking campus” one initiative involves planting more native trees to provide shade along walkways and installing signage marking walking distances.

The task force wants to promote smoking cessation as part of its clean air effort. To start, students and employees will be encouraged to take advantage of the Wellness Center’s smoking intervention program. Other changes will include enforcing FIU’s existing smoking policies that restrict cigarettes to certain areas, prohibiting idling buses and eliminating the use of aerosol pesticides and toxic cleaning supplies.

Creating a healthy university is a long-term mission but changes are already underway. The no-idling-buses policy and the cafeteria’s Just4U program are already in effect. As the initiatives progress, Mrs. Maidique wants to seek out the support of like-minded alumni.

“This is something important, not only for FIU, but for the community at large,” she said. “We can bring people in and get them involved. I believe the community will lend its support as we move toward becoming a healthier university.”

Mrs. Maidique’s passion for clean living began long before going green was all the buzz. Trained as a dental hygienist, she was a vegetarian 20 years ago and has studied alternative medicine, food science, religion and psychology, graduating from FIU summa cum laude. She recently

completed her master’s degree in public health, a field that united her interests in physical, spiritual, emotional and environmental health.

It’s also a personal calling. Mrs. Maidique’s mother is a lifelong gardener who worked with widely used agricultural pesticides at a time when there was little awareness of their dangers. Today, her mother suffers from Parkinson’s disease, which scientists have linked to exposure to toxic chemicals. As a result, Mrs. Maidique pays attention to often invisible environmental toxins. At the nail salon, she asks for a mask. She doesn’t allow pesticides to be sprayed in the presidential home.

“I’m a strong believer in natural remedies,” she said. “If I have a sore throat, I eat garlic for a couple of days. That is how I treat myself. I believe in being as simple as possible. I try not to even use a hair dryer.”

Becoming FIU’s first lady required some adjustments, not in her health principles but as a local public figure. Occasionally, there are people who waltz into the president’s house thinking it is a campus museum or an information center. There’s the busy schedule of social engagements.

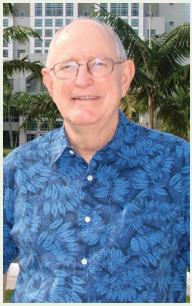
“I’ve always been a very private person,” she said. “I’m a homebody. It was definitely a drastic change.”

The new public role, however, hasn’t made Mrs. Maidique feel she must behave differently.

“What I do feel is a responsibility to make FIU better,” she said. “As an alumna, I feel that I need to give back and it’s intensified with the fact that I am married to Mitch. Having the chance to make FIU better is terrific. I am grateful for the opportunity.” ■

# 15 Ways to GO GREEN

## Professor emeritus Jack Parker shares useful green tips with Golden Panthers



At *FIU Magazine* we understand that change begins at home – and so do the blue-and-gold community's green efforts.

We asked professor emeritus Jack Parker, a founding faculty member of the departments of Environmental Studies and Chemistry who retired last January after almost 36 years of service to FIU, to come up with a list of tips our readers could adopt in their own lives.

On average, Parker says, each Floridian produces an annual 24 tons of carbon dioxide (which is the leading cause of global warming), most of it through fossil fuel consumption at home and on the road. The 15 green tips that follow are some of the best energy efficiency measures that we can take to lower our emissions and our electric and gasoline bills.

### Air conditioning consumption can be reduced by up to 40 percent by doing all of the following:

1. Plant five drought-resistant native shade trees (such as oaks or gumbo limbos) on the east, south and west sides of the house so that mature canopies will be adjacent to the house.
2. Upgrade the insulation and, after duct testing, plug any leaks in A/C ducts.
3. Install ceiling fans in all frequently occupied rooms – particularly bedrooms – and raise A/C thermostats by two degrees.
4. Install a light, reflective roof or coat current roof with reflective coating.
5. When away for more than a few hours, set A/C thermostats to 83 degrees or turn off the units.

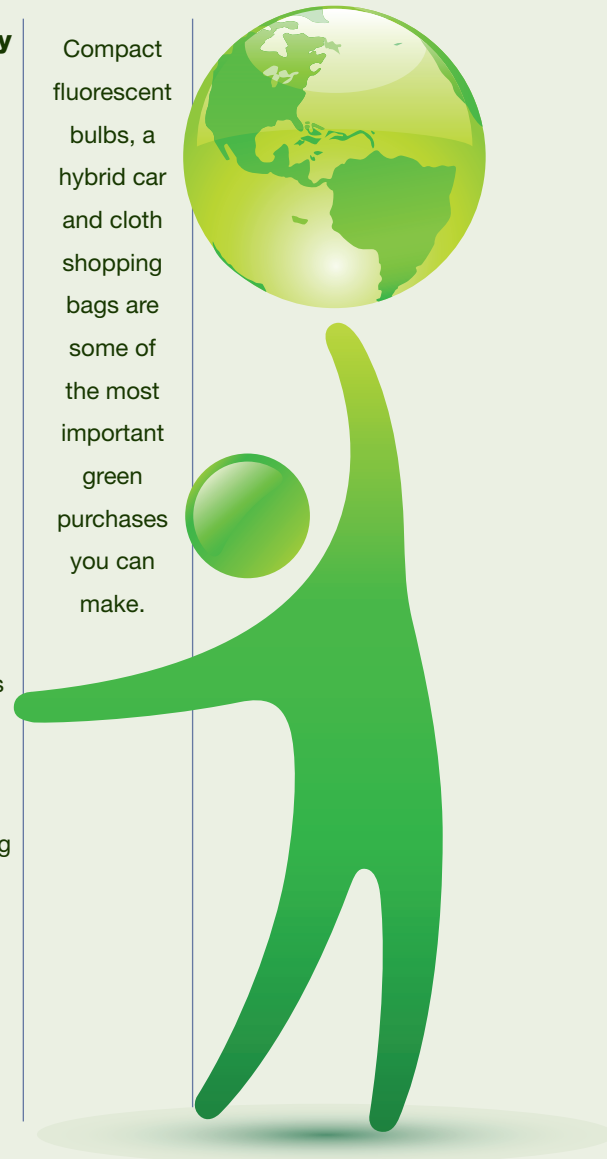
### Automobiles produce about a pound of carbon dioxide per mile driven, so:

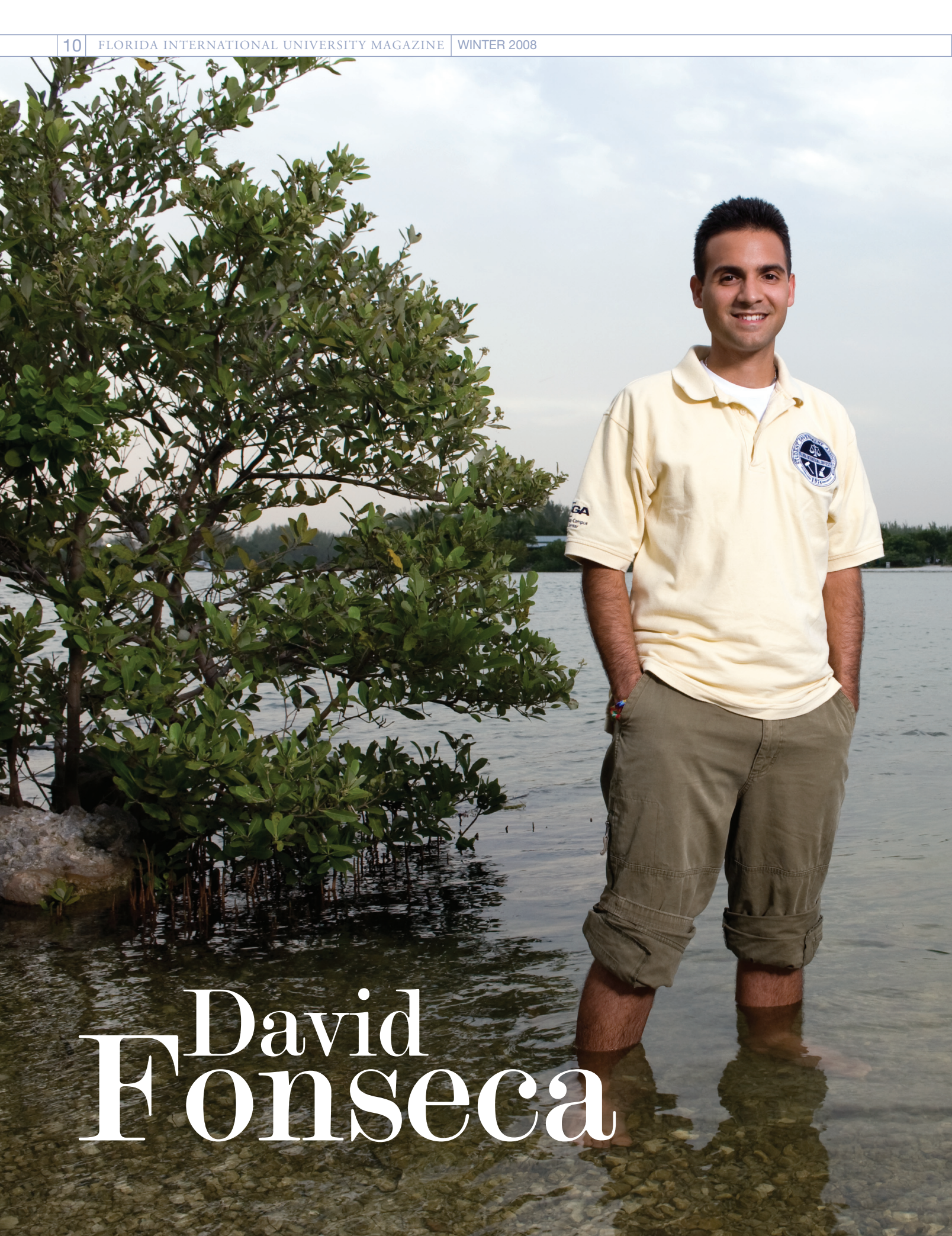
6. Inflate tires to the maximum listed on the tire (usually 35 psi). This can reduce gasoline use and carbon emissions by about 5 percent.
7. Keep the trunk as empty as possible.
8. Combine shopping trips: a warmed-up car is much more efficient.
9. For each domestic airplane trip, donate \$25 to [solarcookers.org](http://solarcookers.org) for a carbon offset of your carbon dioxide emissions. This organization provides solar cookers to women in the developing world thereby reducing poverty, lung disease, deforestation, and energy and soot pollution.

### The most important green purchases you can make are:

10. A solar water heater, which can save about \$300 a year and reduce water heating by 70 percent or more (current tax credits provide an 18 percent return on your investment),
11. Compact fluorescent bulbs for all frequently used light fixtures,
12. A slightly smaller high-efficiency air conditioner (SEER of 16+),
13. A compact, safe, high-mileage car, particularly a hybrid,
14. Energy Star appliances, particularly clothes washers and refrigerators, and/or
15. Cloth shopping bags, particularly for groceries, to reduce pollution while educating others about the need to care for our planet.

Compact fluorescent bulbs, a hybrid car and cloth shopping bags are some of the most important green purchases you can make.





# David Fonseca

# Ripple Effect

## How David Fonseca mounted a one-man campaign to conserve water usage in the FIU dorms

By Karen Cochrane

When FIU junior David Fonseca was in high school, he would spend three hours a day on Biscayne Bay as a member of his high school's crew team. Dazzled by the bay's magnificence and resident wildlife, he was horrified by the trash and "sludge" floating past. The Golden Panther felt something begin to well up inside of him, a need to help do something, anything proactive.

For a time, advocating for the environment was put on hold while Fonseca adjusted to life at FIU. But when news reports about Miami-Dade County's worsening water shortage began to appear in the media, this native Miamian was compelled to act.

In 2006, he ran for a new position in FIU's Student Government Association – community relations and environmental affairs director.

"I knew this was the way I could help," says Fonseca, a political science major.

Has he ever. Fonseca brought the free shower exchange and retrofit kit program offered by Miami-Dade County's Water and Sewer Department to FIU's attention and convinced the university to give it a try. Angelique Bestard, water use efficiency coordinator for the county department that runs the program, was more than happy to supply FIU with the free, low-flow showerheads.

Last year, Fonseca worked side-by-side with facilities management personnel, replacing the existing showerheads in the Biscayne Bay Campus dorm rooms. Additionally, each room's kitchen and bathroom faucets were retrofitted with low-flow aerators, which also conserve water.

Six months ago, FIU switched out the showerheads in the University Park dorms.

With his own university now on board, Fonseca set his sites on Barry University.

"This is a free program," he says. "There's no reason why every university in the county shouldn't take advantage of it."

Patrick Devine, associate director of housing at Barry University, was surprised when Fonseca contacted him. "It was definitely intriguing," says Devine of his initial encounter with Fonseca. "We always try to work with student government at Barry, so we wanted to extend the same courtesy to a student from FIU. We figured the plan couldn't hurt and decided to try it out. The selling point for us was that we didn't have to buy the showerheads."

Based on positive feedback from a test in the gym showers, Barry replaced the showerheads in close to 600 dorm rooms. "Our buildings are decades old. We're willing to listen to any idea that's going to help us

conserve more," says Devine. "In David's case, he had a great idea."

Johnson & Wales University and St. Thomas University followed suit.

Says the county's Bestard, who has worked with Fonseca to supply well more than 1,000 showerheads to local universities, "He's got a great amount of energy. He really wants to make a difference."

These days, Fonseca, who plans on becoming an attorney and practicing environmental law, is working with FIU to explore switching the university over to a free mulching program offered by Florida Power & Light. While the university creates its own mulch from tree clippings, it doesn't produce enough to supply the university year round. Since FIU currently purchases mulch, Fonseca hopes to work with the university to determine whether the free program is feasible for FIU. And then there's the Adopt-A-Tree program, a Miami-Dade County program that offers free trees to homeowners. Talk to the Golden Panther for even a few minutes and it's obvious that he has no shortage of ideas.

"As a leader, you need to connect other people, and you need them to act," he says. "If you can just get a few people to believe in an issue, they'll each get a few people and pretty soon you have a lot more people to fight the battle than just one person." ■

"As a leader, you need to connect other people, you need them to act."

—  
David Fonseca

# Blue, Gold...and Green

FIU faculty and students strive to protect a rare swath of native forest habitat at University Park

By Aimee Dingwell

FIU's football stadium would be a logical place to spot the university's mascot, the Florida panther, but just a football pass to its north, hidden away at University Park, sits the animal's true habitat and FIU's oldest and most precious landmark, the South Florida Ecosystem Preserve.

The Ecosystem Preserve is a veritable oasis, unknown to most on campus but not to botanist Melissa Abdo '07, MS '08. She has been passionate about preserving this jewel for the last four years. Managing the preserve was the focus of her research as both an undergraduate and graduate student.

While it was formally established by FIU in 1978 as a place of recreation, education and research, the lush, nine-acre preserve is at least 6,500 years old. It is home to many indigenous plants, insects, birds and mammals, as well as several habitats, including the scarce, tree-rich Pine Rockland and Rockland Hammock habitats, both of which are down to less than 2 percent of their original coverage in South Florida.

"With so little of our native forest habitat remaining in Miami-Dade, habitats like the Ecosystem Preserve at FIU truly need to be conserved," says Abdo, who serves as the preserve's volunteer alumni advisor and coordinator.

Indeed, the status of the Pine Rockland habitat is classified as globally imperiled and that of the Rockland Hammock (or Tropical Hardwood Hammock) is considered endangered. Human land development and non-native plants and animals have done their share of degradation and damage, dismantling the unique South Florida habitats and challenging the survival of their flora and fauna.

Because of this, students and faculty won't encounter the carnivorous kind of Florida panther on campus. The preserve is too small and too far from other outside habitats, which do exist – albeit barely – in urbanized Miami.

Abdo says that most of these remaining forest habitats are orphaned urban islands that often function as community parks. But even those are subject to further degradation through rampant development and the intrusion of invasive exotics.

"All of these fragmented habitats must be managed in order for their ecological integrity to be preserved," she says.

Abdo first became familiar with habitats such as the Ecosystem Preserve at FIU as the program coordinator and field biologist for the not-for-profit Institute for Regional Conservation while an undergraduate student in environmental studies. She then pursued a master's degree in the same







## More than 96 FIU courses already include use of the South Florida Ecosystem Preserve, with the majority focused on biological and environmental sciences and the visual arts.

Continued

discipline and served as the preserve's coordinator as part of her graduate work. In that role, she researched and cataloged about 270 species of native plants, including some 40 plant species that are new to the preserve.

With that knowledge, she also has created an ecosystem management plan for the preserve. "Plants are, in many ways, the backbone of a habitat," she says. "If you are able to identify the plants, they can tell you volumes."

Prior to the plan's creation, says Abdo, there was not yet a formal strategy that incorporated scientific baseline data to use as a starting point. Her plan includes a field guide and her plant list, along with priorities and strategies for managing the unique habitats, such as breaking the preserve into mini-management "sites" based on preservation priorities. Abdo then catalogs the plant species for each "site" addressing respective management issues, whether removal of invasive species or increasing indigenous plant species to support the whole of the habitat.

The Pine Rockland habitat is characterized by flatlands with exposed limestone substrate, lush subtropical fauna and a single canopy species, the Florida slash pine. Understory plants include palms such as the saw palmetto, locust berry shrub and a diverse array of grasses and herbs. Pine Rockland communities, being globally imperiled, support equally endangered flora and fauna, such as the deltoid spurge and Small's milkwort, the bald eagle, key deer, various woodpeckers and warblers

"We would like to integrate the preserve as a living resource for students across all disciplines."

—  
Melissa Abdo

and many reptiles and invertebrates.

The Rockland Hammock habitat is also a flatland with limestone substrate, but has a diverse composition of canopy trees, including mixed tropical and temperate hardwoods such as live oak, gumbo-limbo and strangler figs, as well as about 65 species of shrubs. It is also an important habitat for ferns and orchids, the Florida black bear, short-tailed hawk, Peregrine falcon and many other mammals, birds, reptiles and invertebrates.

Both habitats are highly susceptible to damage from invasive exotics, which Abdo and hundreds of student "service-learning" volunteers in the preserve invest considerable time and resources to manage.

Professor Joel Heinen, chair of the Department of Environmental Studies, has raised about \$100,000 toward an Environmental Preserve Internship Endowment for one permanently endowed student-intern a year. However, costs to adequately manage and maintain the preserve are far greater. Currently, the student-intern provides the only day-to-day management of the natural resource.

"There is an ongoing fight here in South Florida and the preserve," says Heinen. "It is the fight against exotics that is first and foremost."

For example, he notes that Australian pine trees, a common exotic, require professional and periodic removal because of their size. "We must have money in the endowment to fund regular maintenance and occasionally buy new plants," he says.

Among the other exotics that Abdo and Heinen follow aggressively are the Brazilian Pepper tree and Burma reed. The former, for instance, is a highly invasive tree whose bright red berries are consumed by many songbirds, making seed propagation prolific. Once established the tree becomes dense and uniform, rapidly crowding out other vegetation. The Burma reed also crowds and shades out other plants, causing conditions ripe for wildfires.

"It is an adaptive management process. Year after year we have to see what new exotics are growing and figure out how to manage them," says Heinen.

One strategy against this is to maintain and even re-introduce new native species to the Ecosystem Preserve. The preserve's shade house helps to grow new seedlings and provides a pseudo-classroom for discussions.

But ideally, Heinen would like to secure enough funding to construct a modest building along the preserve's lake that could serve as a true classroom and place for evening alumni events. Since the state provides 100 percent matches for construction donations, Heinen believes a \$600,000 donation with naming rights would be ideal to cover long-term maintenance, manage exotics and create a permanent educational and recreational structure.

Until then, Abdo's long-term ecosystem management plan is crucial to the preserve's future survival and integrity. Her plan is to work closely with each student-intern, including agroecology graduate student Ric

Soto, this year's intern. Soto recently developed a sustainable agriculture garden around the preserve's perimeter. His work highlights the preserve's multidisciplinary nature and the importance of involving other fields. *[Editor's note: Read more about Soto's work on page 20.]*

"We would like to integrate the preserve as a living resource for students across all disciplines," says Abdo. "Photography, art and landscape architecture – they all make use of the preserve." The goal is to expand this interaction between the preserve and any programs that want to increase ecological awareness.

More than 96 FIU courses already include use of the preserve, with the majority focused on biological and environmental sciences and the visual arts. More recently, researchers have been sampling plants in the preserve looking for novel biologic compounds with pharmacologic activity against bacteria and other pathogens.

So chances are the next time you venture into the university's best kept secret you will likely see a Florida (International University) panther.

The South Florida Ecosystem Preserve is open to the public from dawn 'til dusk and features a butterfly garden, a marked trail system, three ecosystems and a small adjacent lake. For more information, e-mail [melissa.abdo@fiu.edu](mailto:melissa.abdo@fiu.edu) or visit <http://www.fiu.edu/~envstud/preserve>. ■

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*Aimee Dingwell is a freelance writer in Miami and holds a master's degree in public health.*





Ignacio  
Urbietta MBA '85

# The Greener Side of Big Oil

## Ignacio Urbieto Jr. MBA '85 expands his role from gas provider to energy-savings leader

By Sissi Aguila '99

Rising temperatures. Record high gas prices. Turmoil in the Middle East. Together, these elements were Ignacio Urbieto Jr.'s call to action.

The 1985 MBA graduate is an environmentalist of the most unexpected kind, one who owns a chain of gas stations. He is the co-owner of Urbieto Oil, a petroleum distribution company that is systematically changing South Florida's fuel infrastructure by providing options to consumers who are searching for an alternative to gasoline and energy dependence.

### A family affair

The Urbieto Oil Company, a family-owned business, was founded by Urbieto's father, Ignacio Sr., in 1973 with the purchase of an Amoco gas station in Miami. After working as an electrical engineer, Urbieto Jr. returned to school, earned a master's in business administration from FIU and joined his brother Guillermo to expand the company.

Urbieto Oil consistently ranks as one of the fastest-growing companies by *Hispanic* and *Entrepreneur* magazines. Through ingenuity and acquisitions, its portfolio now includes U-Gas, Marathon, Valero and Sunoco stations.

In 2008, Urbieto Oil's gross sales exceeded \$400 million and today it is one of the largest fuel distributors in the region and the first to retail ethanol and biofuels.

### E85 and beyond

Last year, Urbieto Oil's U-Gas stations were the first E85 ethanol providers in South Florida. The fuel,

Last year, Urbieto Oil's U-Gas stations were the first E85 ethanol providers in South Florida.

a blend of 85 percent ethanol and 15 percent gasoline, far exceeds the oil industry standard of 10 percent ethanol, 90 percent gasoline. E85 burns cleaner and reduces greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. Ethanol also degrades quickly in water. In the event of a spill, it would be less harmful than oil or gasoline.

"It made sense from a business perspective to be proactive," Urbieto says. "E85 is a natural fit for us because it presents a very real way to help the environment."

Made primarily from corn, E85 ethanol represents a renewable energy source. Produced by the fermentation of plant sugars, ethanol is typically derived from corn but can also be drawn from sugar cane and other grain products.

Corn-based ethanol does have its production limits, Urbieto points out. Ideally, alternative fuels would come from things we throw away. Wood chips, switch grass and orange peels can be converted into useable fuel and do not require any planting.

Several automakers offer flex-fuel vehicles that can run on ethanol. By 2010, 50 percent of General Motors' fleet will be flex-fuel. At a GM-sponsored conference on the importance of finding alternative fuel sources held at FIU in October 2007, panelists noted that if all 500,000 motorists operating flex-fuel vehicles on Florida roads were using E85, the state would save more than seven million barrels of oil annually. Drivers who want to pump ethanol can check for a flex-fuel label on the inside of their fuel tank cover.

Urbieto also likes that ethanol is domestically produced and promotes energy independence. The Golden Panther buys the fuel from the Midwest, helping to create American jobs and stimulate the economy.

"We have to look at the whole picture," he says. "First we have to cut our dependence on foreign oil as a matter of national security and then reduce the demand."

Six U-Gas stations currently sell E85 gas and six more are in the process of converting their pumps to offer the alternative fuel.

"E85 is not the only answer," he adds. "It mitigates the problem and it is something we can do right now that is completely transparent."

At the beginning of the year, Urbieto Oil opened in Hialeah the only B20 gas station in the county. B20 is 20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent fossil diesel fuel. Unlike E85, this biodiesel – extracted from vegetable oils and fat – contains no petroleum. It is biodegradable, non-toxic and essentially free of sulfur and aromatics. Any diesel vehicle can run using biodiesel.

### Lessons learned

Urbieto credits much of Urbieto Oil's success to the business training he received at FIU.

"Without those tools, I wouldn't be able to run this business in such a sophisticated world," he says. "I am very grateful."

The Golden Panther, who was inducted into FIU's Entrepreneurship Hall of Fame earlier this year, has given back to his alma mater and is one of the sponsors of the new FIU Stadium. ■

# FIU GOES GREEN

By Martin Haro '05 and Sissi Aguila '99 and Grant Smith

The need to protect the environment and achieve energy efficiency is being discussed by politicians and policy makers in every corner of the country. Yet, the great environmental transformation of our times is already underway on the nation's college campuses, places like FIU where administrators, faculty/staff, students and alumni have united to embrace the green movement and initiate change that is yielding remarkable results.

Did you know, for instance, that the university irrigates its campuses with water from its lakes? Or that 80 percent of the cleaning products used at FIU are environmentally friendly? Or that one-time disposable paper products purchased by FIU are made from recycled paper?

The university's effort began in spring 2006, when the Faculty Senate Building and Environment Committee was founded under a joint agreement among FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, Provost Ronald Berkman and Bruce Hauptli, then chair of the Faculty Senate. The committee already had succeeded in advancing

FIU's green initiatives by encouraging dialogue between faculty and administrators on issues related to the university's natural and built environments.

Then, in 2007, Maidique signed onto a bold new pledge by university presidents across the country to eliminate their campuses' carbon footprint. The American College & University Presidents Climate Commitment agreement today has more than 500 signatories committed to leading the way in reducing global warming.

As FIU began making changes, it faced a new challenge with an unprecedented budget crisis last summer. The need to save energy and optimize operational efficiency became even more pressing. In 2008, a great many initiatives have been put in place in the day-to-day operations of the university, and Golden Panthers have rallied behind FIU's green movement.

In the pages that follow, *FIU Magazine* shares how FIU is going green, operationally, culturally and academically. ■



## RIDING GREEN AND SAVING MONEY

Last summer, as the cost of gas rose to record highs, so did FIU's ingenuity.

In June, the university adopted a modified two-month 10-hour-a-day, four-day operational schedule that sought to save money in energy costs and save employees money on fuel.

Last spring, in what is FIU's most visible commitment to achieving eventual climate neutrality, the Department of Parking and Transportation

purchased two shuttle buses that are running on 100 percent biodiesel fuel. The buses transport riders from University Park to the Engineering Center.

"Any bus can run on at least 20 percent biodiesel fuel, but we're running ours at 100 percent," said Bill Foster, director of Parking and Transportation. "We needed to update our fleet and this seemed like the best, most responsible way to go."

In July, FIU launched its new Web-based GreenRide carpool program as part of the Presidents Climate Commitment. By pairing potential matches, the program seeks to reduce traffic and parking congestion on campus and save money for participating students, faculty/staff and administrators.

Foster said the program's convenience "is going to be a huge, huge advantage for FIU." Among the benefits of the GreenRide program are special carpool decals and access to new "preferred parking" carpool spaces.

The GreenRide program was featured in the local media after debuting on July 1. Some 350 riders had signed up by summer's end, with a goal of 1,000 within its first year. An additional 75 riders registered for Greenride during the first week of the fall semester, and the Department of Parking and Transportation has begun dispensing the special decals and designating parking spaces. ■



## SMALL CHANGES ADD UP TO BIG RESULTS

This year, FIU implemented several initiatives to increase the environmental sustainability of its day-to-day operations.

The university has placed more recycling bins around its campuses and is developing a more comprehensive and effective recycling program. Paper is by far the most significant material being recycled here, to the tune of approximately 40 tons per month. The university also recycles aluminum, glass and plastics, batteries, ink cartridges and even trees (all tree trimmings are converted into mulch that is re-used around campus when possible).

Facility managers began regulating air conditioning temperatures in all buildings in order to minimize energy waste, and last summer, in what the former chair of FIU's Climate Commitment Task Force and Associate Vice President of Real Estate Development and Planning Charles Scurr describes as "an incredible experience," facility managers also began collecting data on university-wide greenhouse gas emissions.

Cleaning up our air is but one of FIU's main objectives per the Presidents Climate Commitment agreement. The data will serve as the catalyst to future reduction strategies at the university. According to the research, in 2007, 56 percent of FIU's emissions were the byproduct of transportation. The university already has taken steps to reduce this number in the coming years.

As part of the multifaceted effort to make efficient energy use a top priority, FIU is increasingly relying on products bearing the Energy Star, which certifies that a product has met government standards for energy efficiency. The Graduate School of Business took an early lead, becoming the most saturated Energy Star building on campus, although plans are underway to use the products wherever feasible.

Finally, offices have been outfitted with motion-detecting light switches, and university employees have embraced the green movement by utilizing an automatic, double-sided copying system and moving toward using 30 percent post-consumer content recycled paper in their operations. ■



## BBC'S GREEN FRONTIER

This year, FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus (BBC) took an academic lead in the university's green efforts thanks to two grants that will help the campus create a unique, greener curriculum.

In April, BBC received a grant from the Florida Humanities Council that funded an interdisciplinary series of lectures co-presented with the College of Arts and Sciences during the fall semester.

In June, the campus received a two-year, \$140,000 grant from Jane's Trust for an interdisciplinary environmental studies initiative aimed at increasing the participation of minorities in environmental careers.

The BBC initiative, designed to integrate coastal and marine themes into the campus' curriculum and life, is in line with the trust's objective to educate South Florida's future environmental leaders, including a significant percentage of minorities who represent most of the campus' diverse student body.

The program also aims to create a pipeline of minority students who will pursue graduate degrees and careers in environmental fields, thus ensuring the area's future leaders are diverse and well-prepared to address coastal issues from an integrated point of view. ■

## NEW NURSING BUILDING CERTIFIED "GREEN"

The FIU College of Nursing and Health Sciences' (CNHS) commitment to health begins in the foundation.

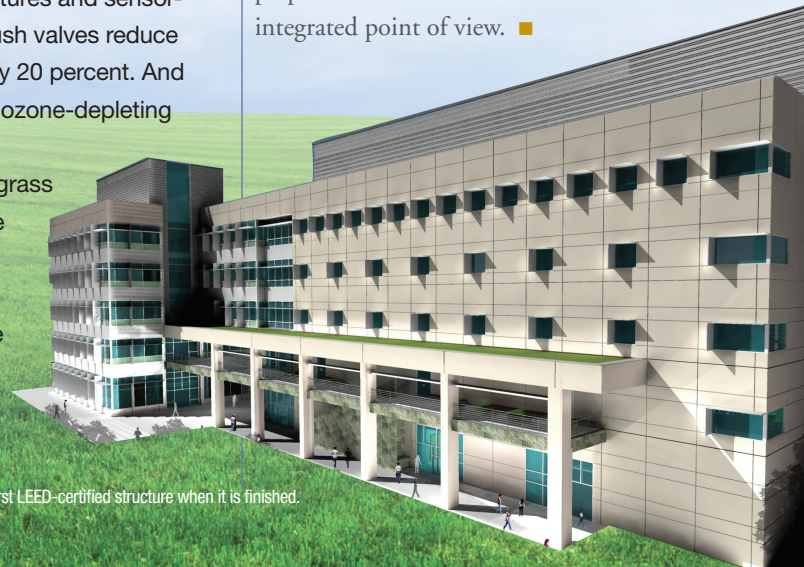
Administrators have worked closely with the globally recognized architectural firm H.O.K. to design a new teaching and research facility that will be healthier – healthier for the people who work in it and the natural environment that surrounds it.

The \$34 million, 100,000-square-foot CNHS building going up at University Park has been certified "green" under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system developed by the United States Building Council to provide standardization and independent oversight to claims of environmental performance for nonresidential buildings.

Once it is finished, the CNHS building

– FIU's first LEED-certified structure – will outperform energy efficiency standards by 20 percent. To control ventilation and air conditioning, builders installed variable air volume controls and an energy recovery system. Lights go on and off by way of motion-detecting, light-switching sensors. Low-flow fixtures and sensor-based faucets and flush valves reduce water consumption by 20 percent. And the building is free of ozone-depleting refrigerants.

Low-maintenance grass and vegetation will be planted on the roof over the second floor corridor, which will be sustained by rainwater. ■



The new College of Nursing and Health Sciences building will be FIU's first LEED-certified structure when it is finished.

# FIU GOES GREEN

## FIU'S COMPOST BLOOMS



Graduate student Ric Soto works with students in the organic garden at FIU.

For four weeks last spring, a group of resourceful Golden Panthers collected more than 800 gallons of vegetable and fruit waste from Fresh Foods. Their spoils were added to the soil of an organic garden and served to teach students from the Department of Environmental Studies recycling through composting.

Compost, which is aerobically decomposed remnants of organic matter, is used in landscaping, horticulture and agriculture as a soil conditioner and fertilizer. Of special interest to South Floridians, compost is also useful for erosion control, land reclamation and wetland construction.

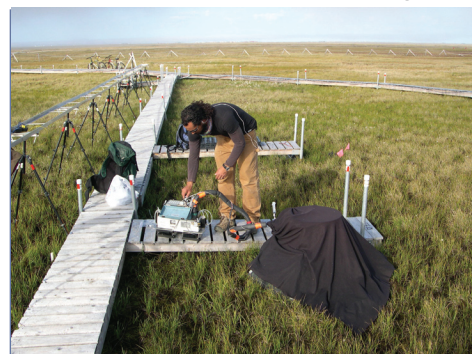
Graduate student Ric Soto and undergraduate student Jose Luciani initiated the project funded by the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service's Hispanic-Serving Institutions education grant program. They applied the compost during the summer to beds prepared for an agroecology class. Their fellow classmate Erich Dautel, who has continued their efforts, hopes to expand the project by introducing vermiculture—the use of worms for the recycling of wastes.

Soto also began the organic garden as part of his thesis. It features two 40x5-foot beds with an edible landscape—plants that produce food in lieu of more commonly used ornamental plants. Sustainable agriculture students helped plant, weed and water the beds all by hand. When they started, there was no power, water tap or a shade house. They have since outfitted the garden with all these features.

The organic garden at FIU serves as a demonstration plot for a proposed community garden extension plan in Miami. ■

Many initiatives have been put in place at FIU and Golden Panthers have rallied behind the university's green movement.

Paulo Olivas MS '07, one of professor Oberbauer's students, is shown here measuring methane release levels from the tundra in August 2007.



## THE ALASKA CHRONICLES

### PROFESSOR STUDIES GAS EMISSIONS IN THE TUNDRA

For the last four summers, biology professor Steven Oberbauer has journeyed 4,200 miles from his University Park classroom to the Alaskan tundra to measure gas emissions and their effect on global warming.

Oberbauer, a team of FIU graduate students and scientists from San Diego University are working on a \$2 million grant funded by the National Science Foundation's Biocomplexity program. They have turned a 100-acre lake in the Arctic Coast of Barrow, Ala., into their lab, where they flood and drain different portions of the lake to estimate how much carbon dioxide and methane are released in areas of the tundra covered with water and those that are drier. Water levels, he says, are in many ways more important than temperature.

The tundra's frozen ground holds an enormous amount of organic matter. Up until recently, the cold kept the organic matter from decomposing and releasing carbon dioxide. But with rising temperatures, carbon dioxide is released from the decomposing organic matter in drier soil and methane is released from microbes eating the organic matter in wetter soil. Because of the cyclical nature of this process, the globe may warm exponentially.

The purpose of Oberbauer's research is to measure the amount of carbon dioxide and methane released from soil covered by different depths of water and determine just how much water levels in the tundra affect global warming. ■

## SAVE THE RAINFOREST, SAVE THE WORLD

### ERICA COURTNEY EMBA '07

Winning the New Venture Challenge Business Plan Competition sponsored by the Eugenio Pino and Family Global Entrepreneurship Center in 2007 enabled Erica Courtney EMBA '07 to take her Biodiversity & Company, LLC, to the next level.

Courtney's company works with an Ecuadorian not-for-profit to align commercial and conservation objectives in the country's Chocó rainforest, which runs south, from Panama to Peru, and is home to 3,000 species of flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world.

"In order for forestry projects to be successful you must incorporate the local indigenous people in all aspects of the planning," she said. "It's their livelihoods along with the forest we aim to protect. Major energy companies and nations have carbon emission caps. If they exceed their annual authorized amount, they pay heavy fines to the international community or they can work with developers like us to 'offset' their pollution.

"Based on the territory we protect, we can keep about 12 million tons of carbon from entering the already-saturated atmosphere. So we have 'credits' to sell. People pay us to clean up the air."

Recently, Oprah Winfrey chose Courtney as one of 80 winners of her Women Rule! competition (more than 3,000 women applied). Her business plan was chosen as a strategy that could change the world by a woman with the background to succeed. ■



## THE GREEN BROTHERHOOD



### KEVIN '07 AND RUSSELL OTWAY '07

Twin Iraq War veterans Kevin '07 and Russell Otway '07 think it's time for a change from fossil fuels to green energy and they'll bet your wallet would agree.

"One of the reasons the United States went to Iraq was oil," said Kevin Otway.

Russell witnessed America's oil dependency when he guarded Iraqi oil terminals on the USS Yorktown by the port city of Umm Qasr. He escaped death on board the aircraft carrier after a local Iraqi fishing boat botched a suicide attempt. When his tour ended in late 2004, he and Kevin decided to help curb our nation's dependency on foreign oil.

They figured the sooner the country weans itself off of oil the sooner it will stop sending troops to Iraq. They established Veterans Energy Solutions (VES), a company that tests homes, offices and warehouses for energy efficiency and provides practical energy solutions. Before launching VES, they went to California and New Jersey to learn about solar and green industry trends and gain experience. They also studied Florida-specific energy principles at the Florida Solar Energy Center in Cocoa Beach.

The brothers install solar, wind, geothermal and micro-hydro energies throughout Florida. While some alternative energy devices can be costly, they remind customers that they'll save money in the long run. University of Miami President Donna Shalala recently contracted them to make her house green. VES is a recognized green rater firm and can grant a building LEED (Leadership in Environment and Energy Design) certification. However, an easier way to make a building greener, Kevin says, is to paint the roof a lighter color, which can reduce electric bills by 20 percent.

In 2007, the Otway twins tested their company's soundness at FIU when they entered VES into the New Venture Challenge Business Plan Competition sponsored by the Eugenio Pino and Family Global Entrepreneurship Center. They received second place.

Today, VES is one of the few companies that solely promote green energy in South Florida. For more information, visit <http://www.ves1.com>. ■

## THE GOLDEN PANTHER AND THE JAGUAR

### GRADUATE STUDENT JOE FIGEL SHARES PASSION FOR ENDANGERED CAT

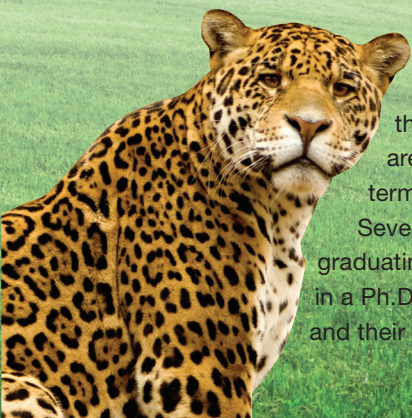
As an environmental studies master's student under professor David Bray, I spent five months from May 2007-July 2008 doing field research on jaguars in the Chinantla region of Oaxaca, Mexico.

I've always had an interest in wildlife and traveling, but it was Alan Rabinowitz's "Jaguar: One Man's Struggle to Establish the World's First Jaguar Preserve" that inspired me to learn more about jaguars. As a 19-year-old I spent the summer of 2001 saving money working construction in my hometown of Seattle to go track them in Belize, where the book is set.

After participating in jaguar research projects in Brazil (with a Ph.D. student from the University of Idaho) and Bolivia (through the Bronx Zoo's Wildlife Conservation Society), I decided to do my own research outside of national parks. Jaguars have large territories that often overlap agricultural areas, timber production forests and other unprotected areas. They are also endangered throughout Latin America and commonly referred to as the "least-known big-cat on Earth." That's why I wanted to focus my graduate work on them.

In the field I set camera traps and interviewed local people to document jaguar presence and distribution in the Chinantla region and find out about the severity of livestock loss to the cats and how they are perceived in the community. I hope that my work will inspire continued jaguar research in the area and raise awareness about an animal whose long-term existence is far from guaranteed.

Seven years after first stepping foot in jaguar land, I'll be graduating at the end of the 2008 fall semester. I plan to enroll in a Ph.D. program and continue doing field research on jaguars and their prey. ■





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Associate Vice President of Alumni Relations Bill Draughon and FIU's first First Lady Betty Perry '74 at the 2008 Torch Awards Gala.



FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, Pamela Garrison, Trustee R. Kirk Landon and Dean Divina Grossman unveil the Pamela J. Garrison Mock Scrub Room in the College of Nursing and Health Sciences.



Miami Children's Hospital and Ware Foundation representatives celebrate their gift to FIU during a dinner at the Ronald W. Reagan President House.



Agostinho L. Macedo, Dean Joyce Elam, Agostinho de Smisa Macedo and Jose Concepción present a check for their final payment towards their gift to the new College of Business complex.



Benjamin and Silvia León of León Medical Centers along with their family members present President and Mrs. Maidique with a \$20 million gift (with match) for the College of Medicine.



FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, Provost Ronald Berkman, Trustee Albert Dotson present Adalio Sanchez and Luis E. Perez from IBM Corporation with gold medallions at the Torch Society Induction Ceremony along with Foundation Board Member S. Lawrence Kahn.



FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, Michael Mendez '03 and College of Law Dean Leonard Strickman at the dedication of the Carlos A. Costa Immigration and Human Rights Clinic in February.



College of Medicine Founders at the preliminary accreditation event at the Ronald W. Reagan Presidential House.



Board Members of the North Dade Medical Foundation celebrate their \$5 million gift (with match) to the College of Medicine with FIU President Modesto A. Maidique and other College of Medicine faculty.



College of Medicine Founders and board members Justo Pozo '80, Joe Caruncho '81, Nelson Adams, Dany Garcia, FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, Larry Kahn, Noel Guillama-Alvarez, Christopher Korge and Donald Lefton receive their founder recognition plaques during a Board of Directors meeting.



Mirta Mendez, Osvaldo and Mirta Costa, Michael R. Mendez '03, Marlene Alejandre-Triana, Miriam and Mario T. de la Peña celebrate their gift to establish the C.A.M.P. 4 Justice Human Rights Endowment in the College of Law.



Carlos Chantres, FIU President Modesto A. Maidique, Michael R. Mendez '03, Mirta Costa, Osvaldo Costa, Mirta Mendez, Nina Carolina Chantres, Melisa Mendez Chantres and College of Law Dean Leonard Strickman unveil the Costa Human Rights Clinic in the College of Law.



# TO THE OLYMPICS AND BEYOND



## Track and field star Ronald Forbes '08 sets a Caymanian national record in China

By Grant Smith

On Aug. 8, Ronald Forbes '08 walked into the Bird's Nest during the official opening ceremony of the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, China, as the flag-bearer for his native Cayman Islands, one of five athletes representing the island nation in front of a blur of camera flashes and roaring crowd.

"As far as the opening ceremony goes, it is one of the greatest honors an athlete can have, carrying the flag of their country," Forbes told *FIU Magazine* in an e-mail from China. "Many will come and go, but some will never get the opportunity to do such a thing. It is something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life. I can look back one day and say with pride, 'I did that.'"

Forbes, 23, credits a large measure of his success in track and field to FIU and particularly to head coach Eric Campbell.

"Coach Campbell took me from being nothing to where I am right now," he said. "That guy basically made my career."

Campbell first met the student-athlete after Forbes transferred to FIU from a small Oklahoma college.

"The first thing I noticed about Ronald when I met him was just how dedicated and committed he was to improving himself, whether it was on the track or academically," Campbell said. "He works harder than anybody I've ever met."

Forbes traces his running career back to his high school years in the Cayman Islands when he saw running as a plane ticket off the island. He became a disciplined and dedicated athlete in order to fulfill his dream.

In the runner's senior year in business administration at FIU, Campbell set several goals for his track and field star at the start of the season and watched him consistently accomplish each one.

The Golden Panther went on to qualify for China after surpassing the Olympic "B" qualifying standard in June, with a time of

13.625 seconds at the NCAA Division I Outdoor Track & Field Championship.

He also was the Sun Belt champion in the 55-meter hurdles for the second year in a row. Not too bad for being sidelined in 2007 due to a foot injury and spending the previous year learning how to actually race the 60- and 110-meter hurdles.

The road toward success was not without its bumps, though: Early in his career, he didn't qualify for his first several meets off the island, and it took him five years to medal. But he never quit. His dedication can easily be seen in his running, which he approaches with scientific precision.

"I break it down in three stages," he said. "The start is crucial, but then, between the second and third hurdle I can feel myself trying to kick that extra gear in and at the seventh and eighth hurdle, trying to do that again. I'm trying to get over every hurdle faster, trying to be as precise as I can when it comes to sprint mechanics and minimizing time lost in the air."

Forbes did just that on Day 10 of the 29th Olympiad when he set a Caymanian national record in the first round of the 110-meter hurdles with a time of 13.59 seconds. He didn't make it past the second round, but he's still young and motivated to continue training for the next Olympics in London in 2012.

Forbes was not the only Golden Panther to compete at the summer Olympics. Sherri-Ann Brooks represented Jamaica in China and was the lead-off runner in the 4x100 meter. The team was disqualified after the third runner dropped the baton.

"I hope that many young and up-and-coming [athletes] from around the world, my country and FIU realize that it could be them next," he said in his dispatch from China. "[It's truly] 'One World One Dream.'" ■





# THE LONGEST YARD

By Sissi Aguila '99

On Sept. 20, Juan Gomez '80 anxiously settled into his seat in section 116 of the new \$50 million FIU Stadium. With the blistering South Florida sun beating down on him, Gomez and his old college buddies reminisced while they waited for the home opener kickoff against USF.

This was the first time Gomez had visited University Park in 25 years. The Golden Panther and thousands of other alumni who bought a chunk of the 6,000 season tickets sold delighted in their alma mater's transformation. "It's like fast-forwarding a movie," he said looking around at the stands. "When I was a student here this was a concept. Now it's reality."

Before the stadium's groundbreaking, university officials

hoped it would bring alumni back home and serve as a symbol of FIU's growth as well as a source of pride. By all accounts, they were successful.

While the players on the field went on with the business of playing the game, the FIU faithful reveled in the moment. Roberto Valdes '83 yelled instructions to coach Mario Cristobal from his seat, flashing a wicked smile back at his friends, seemingly happy just to have the opportunity to be a part of it all.

"I wish we had this when I was a student," he said.

"We built this," added Gomez, who was student council vice president his senior year and senator of the College of Business Administration. "We bought bonds and raised funds. This is the fruit of our labor."

University officials hoped FIU Stadium would bring alumni back home. By all accounts, they were successful.

Alumni spread their infectious enthusiasm to current students. "This is awesome," said senior Stephanie Sanchez. "I think this will build spirit and community."

At the home opener, Golden Panthers from all eras celebrated the underdog. They cheered both the team and the university, which began as a two-year institution in the abandoned field of the Tamiami Airport and became the largest university in South Florida.

There was no storybook ending for the team. The Golden Panthers didn't slay their opponent in a fourth-quarter upset. FIU lost 17-9. But fans will have plenty to remember from an exciting game in the team's new home. ■

# ALUMNI



**A Message from Alumni Association  
President Jose M. Perez de Corcho '93**

Dear FIU Alumni, Family and Friends,

Have you visited our University Park campus lately? If you have not, you have missed out on our recently inaugurated FIU Stadium as well as the soon-to-open Frost Art Museum. On the other hand, if you have, I hope you also noticed the sign announcing the future site for our Alumni Center – our campus home. The Alumni Center will be located east of FIU Stadium. The location was selected because of its accessibility, highly visible location and its proximity to the football stadium.

Whenever I speak with the alumni who have not been on campus in quite some time, their reaction is always the same: “I can’t believe how many new buildings have gone up since the last time I was on campus.” My response to their comment is usually the same also: Not only has our campus grown, but the quality of FIU’s education is at its highest level. This increase in quality is a testament to our university’s leadership under President Modesto A. Maidique and the dedication of our faculty. One compelling example is the fact that the College of Law graduates just led all state universities in the pass rate for the bar exam. Another example is that the College of Business Administration’s undergraduate international business program is now ranked No. 7 in the United States.

On Saturday, Sept. 20, a packed stadium witnessed the start of a new era at our new football stadium. We also witnessed our football team give USF, the No. 12 team in the country, a fight to the end. The most moving moment of the game did not involve a football play, though. After a serious injury to one of the USF players, coach Mario Cristobal led our team onto the field to join the USF team in a prayer for the injured player. This speaks of Cristobal’s character and that of his coaching staff and of the entire team.

The excitement before and during the game was truly exhilarating. If you would like to share in this excitement, we would like to hear from you. I encourage you to get connected with our Alumni Association at 305-348-3334.

In the Spirit of Blue & Gold,

Jose M. Perez de Corcho '93



A group of young alumni shine in their formal wear during the 2008 YUPA! Labor Day Cruise on Royal Caribbean.

## YUPA! members cruise to the Caribbean

The 2nd annual YUPA! (Young Urban Professional Alumni) cruise took place Labor Day weekend, with 42 young alumni setting sail for the Bahamas aboard Royal Caribbean’s *Majesty of the Seas*.

Travelers were welcomed with FIU goodies in their staterooms, a fun meet-and-greet cocktail reception and an itinerary of events throughout the weekend.

YUPA! provides a venue for the university’s young alumni to interact and network with one another for their professional/personal development. Join YUPA! today and be invited to special activities tailored for FIU’s young professionals.

For more information, visit the group’s Facebook page. ■

## Advertise in *FIU Magazine*

Alumni, you now have the chance to promote your business in the award-winning *FIU Magazine* and support your alma mater at the same time.

*FIU Magazine*, the flagship publication of your university, is published quarterly and distributed free of charge to more than 120,000 FIU alumni, students, faculty/staff, donors and friends of the university.

For more information and to access an ad rate sheet, visit <http://magazine.fiu.edu>. ■



Top: Student ambassadors William Brown and Laura Fajardo speak to new students about the benefits of becoming a Student Alumni Association member.

Bottom: 2008-'09 student ambassadors and SAA officers pose for a group photo before the event begins.



## Trail of the Torch burns bright

The Trail of the Torch, hosted by the Student Alumni Association (SAA) on Aug. 28 at University Park, was a great success this year.

With more than 1,000 Golden Panthers and friends of the university in attendance, the annual tradition kicked off the 2008-'09 academic year in the Housing Quad at UP and featured performances by the FIU Cheerleaders, Dazzlers, Golden Panther Band and the ladies of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

Among the special guests who addressed the crowd were the 2007 Torchbearer, football head coach Mario Cristobal; Student Government Association-UP president Arthur "AJ" Meyer (UP); SGA-BBC president Ana Maria Silva; SGA-BBC vice president Kenasha Paul; Jose M. Perez de Corcho, president of the Alumni Association; and Rosa Jones, vice president of Student Affairs.

Attendees enjoyed water slides and music in the Housing Quad before the procession to the FIU Torch of Knowledge, Service and Understanding.

Coach Cristobal passed the flame to 2008 Torchbearer Angel Garcia, who lit the

torch outside Primera Casa as a symbol of the university's continued support of hope, knowledge and opportunity.

Throughout the event, student organizations collected Torch Dollars for exhibiting spirit and participating in the Hawaiian shows.

Alpha Omicron Pi received a first-place \$300 SAA sponsorship award and was named the 2008 Trail of the Torch Tradition Keepers. The ladies of Phi Sigma Sigma came in second place, winning a \$200 SAA sponsorship award, while Sigma Lambda Gamma came in third with a \$100 SAA sponsorship award. All three organizations were awarded a surfboard trophy along with a medal to display on campus. ■



# I "FEEL THE PRIDE" BECAUSE...

We think FIU is pretty great – and not just because we work here.

Most of the staff members around here are also proud Golden Panthers. Since we work here, we are trying to stoke the Panther Pride we know exists among our alumni. With this in mind we are launching a new section in *FIU Magazine*: "I 'Feel the Pride' Because...".

To start things, we asked Golden Panthers in the Division of University & Community Relations to share their own stories of how they "Feel the Pride." We hope that you will be inspired to do the same.

To tell us how you "Feel the Pride," visit <http://magazine.fiu.edu> and post a story with your name and year(s) of graduation in the comments box of the feature "I 'Feel the Pride' Because...". (Stories may be edited for length and clarity and may appear in *FIU Magazine*.)



**FIU Magazine Editor Deborah O'Neil, MA graduate student:** I've had a pretty amazing and unusual journey at FIU. I came here as a

full-time graduate student, ended up working part-time and then full-time as a staff member and have taught here as an adjunct in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication. Then, two years ago I met and married FIU professor Paul Kowert. I "Feel the Pride" at so many different levels. First, I'm proud to be a graduate student in one of the nation's premier Latin American and Caribbean Studies programs. Professionally, I get great reward from being part of an institution that plays such an important role in the community. I learned first-hand about just how important we are from one FIU undergraduate. I met Jasmin a couple of years ago when she was still in high school and she wrote a letter of support

## UPCOMING EVENTS

<b>ALUMNI EVENTS</b>		
<b>Panthers For Hire: Alumni Career Fair</b> When: Tuesday, Feb. 3, 6-9 p.m. Where: Graham Center Ballrooms at University Park Contact: Vanessa Baldomero in Alumni Relations at vbaldome@fiu.edu.	<b>FIU Dance</b> When: Jan. 29-31 Where: Wertheim Main Stage at UP FIU Dance showcases a variety of dance styles and original choreography featuring students and faculty. Contact: Call 305-348-0496 or visit <a href="http://carta.fiu.edu">http://carta.fiu.edu</a> .	<b>Theatre Department presents "Pericles"</b> When: March 5-15 Where: Wertheim Main Stage at UP A staging of Shakespeare's timeless adventure of a family separated and reunited by the power of the sea. Contact: Call 305-348-0496 or visit <a href="http://carta.fiu.edu">http://carta.fiu.edu</a> .
<b>8th Annual Torch Awards Gala</b> When: Saturday, Feb. 28, 6 p.m. Where: Graham Center Ballrooms at UP The FIU Alumni Association hosts its annual gala to salute the accomplishments of the university's alumni. Theatre alumna and "American Idol" Top 3 finalist Syesha Mercado performs. Contact: Office of Alumni Relations at 305-348-3334 or <a href="mailto:alumni@fiu.edu">alumni@fiu.edu</a> .	<b>12th Annual Dance Marathon</b> When: Jan. 31-Feb. 1 Where: Recreation Center at UP The 25-hour 2009 FIU Dance Marathon, the largest student fund-raiser at FIU, will help raise funds for the Miami Children's Hospital Foundation. Contact: For more information, call 305-348-2149 or visit <a href="http://www.fiu.edu/~dm">http://www.fiu.edu/~dm</a> .	<b>5th Annual FIU Relay for Life</b> When: March 6-7 Where: FIU Stadium at UP The entire FIU community is encouraged to walk the talk at the annual fund-raiser benefiting the American Cancer Society. Contact: Beverly Dalrymple at 305-348-6995.
<b>Order of the Torch 6th Annual Student Leadership Reception</b> When: Wednesday, March 4, 12:30 p.m. Where: Ronald W. Reagan Presidential House at UP The FIU Alumni Association recognizes the work of the presidents and vice presidents of on-campus organizations. Contact: Dianne Cordova in Alumni Relations at <a href="mailto:dcordova@fiu.edu">dcordova@fiu.edu</a> .	<b>Wednesday After Hours Concerts</b> When: Feb. 4, March 4, April 1 Where: The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at UP FIU Music presents a series of concerts held on the first Wednesday of the month during the spring semester. Contact: Call 305-348-0496 or visit <a href="http://carta.fiu.edu">http://carta.fiu.edu</a> .	<b>MFA Exhibition</b> When: Friday, March 13 Where: The Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum at UP Graduate art students show their most recent works. Contact: Call 305-348-0496 or visit <a href="http://carta.fiu.edu">http://carta.fiu.edu</a> .
<b>UNIVERSITY EVENTS</b>		
<b>World Music Festival</b> When: Jan. 5-30 Where: Wertheim Concert Hall at University Park and other South Florida locations FIU Music presents performances featuring students, faculty/staff and guest artists. Contact: Call 305-348-0496 or visit <a href="http://carta.fiu.edu">http://carta.fiu.edu</a> .	<b>Theatre Department presents "The Birds"</b> When: Feb. 12-22 Where: Wertheim Main Stage at UP A free-flying musical adaptation of Aristophanes' classic Greek comedy, featuring showgirls, computer geeks and a Vegas lounge act. Contact: Call 305-348-0496 or visit <a href="http://carta.fiu.edu">http://carta.fiu.edu</a> .	<b>Wolfsonian-FIU exhibition</b> "American Streamlined Design: The World of Tomorrow" features 180 examples of furniture, ceramics, metalwork, plastics, graphic design and archival design books. When: Through May 17 Where: The Wolfsonian-FIU, 1001 Washington Ave., Miami Beach Contact: For more information, call 305-531-1001 or visit <a href="http://www.wolfsonian.org">www.wolfsonian.org</a> .

*Qualified individuals with disabilities as defined under the Americans with Disabilities Act who need special accommodations for any FIU-sponsored event can request assistance by calling the phone number listed for the function or via Florida Relay Service at 800-955-8771. Requests must be made five working days before the event.*

# TOP 10 Reasons to Feel the Pride

1. FIU professors Richard Olson and Juan Pablo Sarmiento entered into a \$4.5 million agreement with the United States Agency for International Development to provide communities across Latin America and the Caribbean technical expertise to assess their vulnerabilities in the face of natural disasters.
2. Last spring, Maija Renko became the first Golden Panther to earn a Ph.D. in management with a concentration in entrepreneurship.
3. Madhavan Nair, professor and chair of Immunology in the College of Medicine and associate dean of Biomedical Research at FIU, received the National Institutes of Health prestigious MERIT (Method to Extend Research In Time) Award, doubling the duration and amount of his existing five-year \$1.7 million NIH grant.
4. As of Sept. 25, FIU student-athletes had completed more than 100 hours of community service in the fall semester. The teams with the most hours as of that date were the baseball and women's soccer teams.
5. College of Law graduates placed second among Florida's 10 law schools in passage rate of first-time Florida bar exam takers last July. Their passage rate was 90.6 percent.
6. The College of Business Administration became the only Florida school to earn a Top 15 spot in *U.S. News and World Report's* "America's Best Colleges 2009," in the international business

Continued



2008-'09 student ambassadors smile after their first summer meeting. Front Row: Alfredo Valdivia, Sarena Bahad, Sara Rasekhi, Sara Feigenbaum. Second Row: Alexander Eisenberg, Ruben Diaz-Neda, Kassandra Pool, Brenda Benitez, Darcelle Skeete, Daniela Ottati, Giselle Perez, Lissette Perez, Laura Fajardo. Back Row: Andrew Calienes, Jose Boubou, Vignesh Doraiswamy, Stephanie Jacques, William Brown.

Not pictured: Anamaria Arias, Paul Ashe, Johnny Betancourt, Allison Bodnar, Ana Capaldo, Regina Castaneda, Jeffy Jacob, Mellissa Jayawickrema, Robert Llanio, Lisandra Luis, Pablo Martinez, Abdel Perera, Tahirim Rahman, Roxanna Rasekhi, Frank Reyes and Kelly-Ann Williams.

## Student Ambassadors continue to represent FIU well

The FIU Student Ambassadors are a select group of Golden Panthers who serve as hosts for visiting dignitaries at numerous university and community functions such as conferences, convocations, guest lectures, the annual Torch Awards Gala, groundbreaking ceremonies, alumni tailgating and the president's skybox at FIU Stadium.

The offices of the president, vice presidents, deans, Alumni Relations and other prominent areas within FIU work with

student ambassadors for their various needs. Their efforts are vital to the mission of the university.

Fellow students and staff members of the Office of Alumni Relations select these student ambassadors through an intensive interview process. To be selected is an honor and an excellent opportunity for personal and professional growth. Those students who are selected possess strong interpersonal skills, leadership qualities, a genuine interest in meeting new people and a sense of school spirit and blue-and-gold pride. ■

7. The Chapman Graduate School of Business has one of the Top 25 MBA programs in the world, according to a survey by *AmericaEconomia* magazine.
8. FIU received \$100,000 from the USDA to strengthen the global competitiveness of students and faculty/staff in agriculture and related areas and to enhance business performance in international agriculture.
9. School of Journalism and Mass Communication associate professor Margo Berman recently won the Association for Women in Communications' Outstanding Faculty Advisor Award, the second time she has been honored. The FIU AWC student chapter was singled out, for the sixth time in 11 years, as the outstanding Chapter in the country.
10. Volleyball junior hitter Yarimar Rosa was ranked No. 1 in NCAA rankings in kills per set when this magazine went to print.

## I "FEEL THE PRIDE" BECAUSE...

Continued from page 33

for the medical school. An honors student, she dreamed of becoming a doctor but knew her family would not be able to pay for an expensive medical education. Her father was dying of cancer. Just weeks before the start of her freshman year here at FIU, her father died. Understandably, she found herself unable to take care of some critical financial aid and enrollment details. I was so impressed to see how this very large university with thousands of incoming students managed to take care of this one, very special student faced with a tragedy. Thanks to some caring people in financial aid, enrollment and in the Biology Department, she started her classes on time. Today, Jasmin has finished her freshman year in FIU's highly selective accelerated pre-medical program with flying colors. She wants to attend the FIU College of Medicine so she can practice medicine here in Miami, helping families like her own. Students like Jasmin are the truest reason I "Feel the Pride."



### FIU Magazine Writer

**Sissi Aguila '99, MA '08:**

FIU is more than my alma mater. It is the place the world rose up to meet me. First as an undergrad and then as a graduate student, I was immersed in a multitude of languages, cultures and political views. I learned as much from other students as I did from professors. The naysayer will say, "That's true of everyone's college experience." Yes, but at FIU it is magnified. The university is part of a larger international community, which is itself a microcosm of the world. The boundaries between South Florida and FIU are seamless. As a student, I was never isolated behind ivory walls. I was in the real world. And I felt it daily – when I was stuck in traffic during my hour commute or

Continues on page 37

## Do You Know Any of Our

## LOST

## Alumni?

Do you know a LOST Alumnus? Please help us find your fellow Golden Panthers so we may reconnect with them and help them stay in touch with their friends from Florida International University. Check to see if their names are on this list and if so, please fill out all the information on the address update form located at [http://www.fiu alumni.com/update\\_address.htm](http://www.fiu alumni.com/update_address.htm). As a result, these LOST Alumni will begin receiving copies of our award-winning quarterly *FIU Magazine* and monthly NOW@FIU e-newsletter along with a host of other important news flashes from your FIU Alumni Association.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to call 1-800-FIU-ALUM or e-mail [alumni@fiu.edu](mailto:alumni@fiu.edu).

## 1970s

Leyla T. Bolet '76  
John J. Braz '76  
Frank E. Breeland '76  
Joseph C. Brown '76  
Lawrence A. Burgess, Sr. '76  
Connie L. Byrd '76  
Gail Y. Cannon '76  
Debbie L. Chapman '76  
Barbara J. Citron '76  
Jules P. Clavan '76  
Mary E. Corey '76  
Betty L. Cowles '76  
Harry W. Craig '76  
Eunice C. Crosby '76  
Claudia M. Dahlman '76  
Regina Daza '76  
Cislyn E. Delancy '76  
Raul R. Delgado, Esq. '76  
Humberto Delgado '76  
Frank J. DeWerff '76  
Terry C. Dickinson '76  
Christine L. Dietz '76  
George W. Dobrin '76  
Jeffrey Dorian '76  
Pauline R. Dunlap '76  
Kathleen H. Dunn '76  
Jaber Ehsaei '76  
Oscar D. Espinoza '76  
Deborah S. Esterman '76  
Pa-Edirissa D. Fal '76  
Shani S. Fenson '76  
Beatriz M. Fernandez '76  
Yee B. Fong '76  
Farajullah  
Forouzandeh '76, '79  
Harold J. Fox '76  
Glenn A. Gatti '76  
Judith A. Gibbs '76  
Mary J. Gibbs '76  
Joann M. Giordano '76  
Raul Gomez-Mendoza '76  
Malcolm D. Gonick '76  
Leonardo H. Gonzalez '76

Diana H. Gonzalez '76  
Lucille Goodman '76  
Linda S. Greenstone '76  
Landiss M. Haddon '76  
Georgann Hamilton '76  
Jose A. Hendricks '76  
Charles A. Hepburn '76  
Sharon M. Honaker '76  
Kent A. Housouer '76  
Gene H. Huddleston '76  
Patrick W. Hughes '76  
Martin G. Johanson '76  
Dennis A. Jones '76  
Raphael S. Kaan '76  
Harriet D. Kerge '76  
Lillian D. King '76  
Linda L. Kish '76  
Johanna N. Klein '76  
Marilyn A. Klock '76  
Charles L. Knighton '76  
Frederick L. Kovinow '76  
Sanford Kuttler '76  
James Labarbera '76  
Virginia C. Lambert '76  
Leonard J. Lang '76  
Monima E. Lawson '76  
Joan B. Leader '76  
Joseph S. Levitsky '76  
James L. Lewis, Jr. '76  
Carlos E. Longa '76  
Vivian M. Lopez-Navailles '76  
Ramona D. Madera '76  
Santos L. Martinez '76  
Dorothy L. McKinney '76  
Richard A. Medeiros '76  
Mohammed I. Memon '76  
Sue B. Middleton '76  
William L. Mitchell '76  
Joaquin Montero '76  
Bertha Moro '76  
David F. Morris '76  
Maria R. Murphy '76  
Sylvia N. Murphy '76  
James J. Musser, Sr. '76  
Richard M. Muther '76

Francine M. Myre '76  
Jamie L. Orson '76  
Jamie L. Orson '76  
Lillian A. Ouellette '76  
Efrén Paolini '76  
Michelle A. Pasawicz '76, '79  
Luis Perez-Aguayo '76  
Mireya Planas '76  
Gertrude K. Pope '76  
Ana R. Pousa v76  
George S. Pratts '76  
James L. Quianthy '76  
Barbara J. Rabinowitz '76  
Michael E. Rafey '76  
Mohammad Y. Rana '76  
Nelson H. Roberts '76  
Enrique Rodrigo '76  
David A. Rosenblatt '76  
Jorge L. Rubio '76  
Minoi M. Saberi '76  
Gale L. Sampson '76  
Rita H. Sander '76  
Virginia A. Santa-Maria '76  
Maria E. Serrano, Esq. '76  
Cesar H. Servellon '76  
Mohammed S. Sheikh '76  
John N. Simos '76  
Frank L. Spicciati '76  
Linda F. Taft '76  
Jose R. Tafur '76  
Eduardo J. Tavel '76  
Stephen J. Temple '76  
Paul G. R. Thiel '76  
Richard L. Tobin '76  
Martha L. Tobin '76  
Constance J. Tost '76  
Sharyn A. Tremblay '76  
Susan C. Uzoka '76  
Alice Van Der Poel '76  
J.D. Vanarsdall '76  
Luis Vidal '76  
Leslie K. Villaverde '76  
Tony M. Vrankic '76  
Steve J. Wright '76  
Eliezer Zeidman '76

Richard Adams '77  
Maria E. Anderson '77  
Mark S. Arnold '77  
Nancy K. Babcock '77  
Janice F. Barrett '77  
Gilbert Bartlett '77  
Randall J. Bass '77  
Kheradmand M. Bayat '77  
Janine E. Behrens '77  
Carol V. Benton '77  
Diane E. Bill '77  
Frank J. Bresk '77  
Sharon J. Bridge '77  
Jonathan W. Browne '77  
Jeanette Buelow '77  
Selva A. Buntinx '77  
Shelley R. Burns '77  
Zink G. Cadavid '77  
Thomas W. Calnan '77  
Daniel C. Chambers '77  
Suzanne L. Chawk '77  
Reyad H. Choudhury '77  
Fanny C. Cohen '77  
Kenneth P. Collins '77  
Maureen T. Cooney '77  
Russell E. Craver '77  
Samuel Dantonio, Sr. '77  
Mansour Dehghani '77  
Carlos A. Delgado '77  
Gerald L. Desalvo  
Susan D. Diaz '77  
Mary L. Donovan '77  
Eileen M. Dwyer '77  
Mostafa M. El Zaghl '77  
Elia E. Falco '77  
Michal Farkash '77  
Sandra E. Feinzig, Esq. '77  
Marshall B. Fenton '77  
Michael Fernandez '77  
Beverly Y. Francis '77  
Barbara M. Gentile '77  
Kirk D. Gilbert '77  
Martha H. Gillespie '77  
Teresa M. Golden '77  
Rodolfo S. Goncenate '77

Robert M. Gross '77  
Jesus A. Guerra '77  
Benito Guerra '77  
Paruiz Hadaeh '77  
B. J. Hansen '77  
Dorothy V. Hanson '77  
Mary E. Harrison '77  
Joseph M. Hart '77  
Carole Hendrickson '77  
Egho S. Igbneweka '77  
Werner J. Jayson '77  
Merle G. Jensen '77  
James W. Johnson '77  
Zarrin R. Joo '77  
Peter Z. Kamenesh '77  
Jalil Karimpour '77  
Lorens P. Keip '77  
Judith A. Keller '77  
J. D. Kinchen '77  
Simon D. Kopel '77  
Darylne A. Koss '77  
Leo F. Kramer '77  
Louise J. Kuscevic '77  
Ira N. Lack '77  
Marvin S. Ladin '77  
Ray N. Lammi '77  
Gloria D. Lawson '77  
Princess L. Lee '77  
Ronald E. Legler '77  
Dahlia D. Lockhart '77  
Barbara-Rose Loffredo '77  
Donald J. Maclaurin '77  
Emile Mandoukou-  
Ziengui '77  
Francisco J. Marrero, Esq. '77  
Juan J. Martinez '77  
Nicolette M. Mason, Esq. '77  
Madge K. Medford '77  
Vissar Modabber '77  
Jaime N. Molina, Jr. '77  
Yuphawan  
Nangkalaphivath '77  
Joel A. Nesbitt, III '77  
Alfredo S. Nevinczenko '77

To be continued in the next issue.

Associate Vice President of Alumni Relations Bill Draughon met up with alumna Syesha Mercado and her fiancé and manager Hess Wesley '08 at the Fort Lauderdale stop of the "American Idol Tour" last summer.



## 8th Annual Torch Awards Gala to honor alumni

Per tradition, the FIU Alumni Association will host on Saturday, Feb. 28, the 8th Annual Torch Awards Gala in the Graham Center Ballrooms at University Park to honor FIU's accomplished alumni and a faculty member for their ongoing contributions to their fields, the community and their alma mater.

Presented by Wachovia and featuring theatre alumna and "American Idol" Top 3 finalist Syesha Mercado, the reception will begin at 6 p.m. Proceeds from the gala will benefit the FIU Alumni Center Building Fund.

Last year's Torch Awards Gala proved to be an historic and magical night for the FIU Alumni Association when, in a spontaneous flurry of giving, FIU alumni and supporters raised \$90,000 for the Alumni Center. In the weeks that followed, several alumni and friends of the university also pledged \$10,000 each.

"I have never been more proud of our alumni," said FIU President Modesto A. Maidique at the ceremony. "We have now opened the door to a new era – one where our alumni will play a vital role in building FIU's success."

If you are unable to attend the gala and would like to make a donation, contact Duane Wiles, associate executive director of Alumni Relations, at 305-348-4213 or wilesd@fiu.edu. ■

## Be part of FIU's social networks online

FIU has embraced the e-revolution.

Last spring, the university launched pages on the popular social networks Facebook and MySpace. It also set up accounts on the photo sharing Web sites Flickr and YouTube.

"Social networks are simply conversations," said Eduardo Merille '97, MBA '00, the university's associate director of marketing. "FIU has launched pages and groups on some of the most popular networks to keep in touch with those students,

faculty/staff and alumni who are interested in learning about FIU via these Web sites. We want to keep expanding the reach and readership of our various communications and these networks allow us to do just that."

Merille says FIU also is experimenting with Twitter, a micro-blog that allows users to keep up with an individual or in this case, with the blue-and-gold community.

Sign up today, catch up with Golden Panthers and help paint the Internet blue and gold. ■



# I "FEEL THE PRIDE" BECAUSE...

Continued from page 35

when I was asking my boss for time off to finish a paper. This is the reality of the FIU student. Golden Panthers learn quickly how to balance academia with personal obligations and when they graduate that sense of responsibility extends into the community. When do I "Feel the Pride"? Daily. Every time I run into my fellow alumni entrenched in the field, fueling this community's success and opening South Florida to the world stage. In my position as a writer I am a witness to their commitment. Every time I look at the Miami skyline, I see blue and gold.



**Eduardo Merille '97, MBA '00, Associate Director of Marketing:**

Every time I hear "Feel the Pride" I think of that 1980 Jackson 5 song,

"Can You Feel It." Visions of FIU President Maidique and FIU alumni spreading glitter over the city of Miami fill my head. Perhaps all that silliness is not too ill founded. My grandfather drove a newspaper delivery truck as one of his many odd jobs in Miami. He was an accountant in Cuba. Along with many of his generation, he had to leave it all behind and start from scratch. FIU gave his oldest daughter (my mother) the opportunity to get a great education and ultimately, it allowed her to enter into a profession that helped her to provide care not only for her parents but for many of their family members, too. My mother is a driven individual and I would be blind to think that it was FIU alone that made it all possible. However, the fact remains that FIU laid the foundation. I have been attending FIU in one way or another for 32 years. My mother attended classes while she was pregnant and maybe even a few night classes with me in tow. I attended FIU's daycare center for several years. I completed my bachelor's in marketing and later my MBA in FIU's College of Business Administration, and for the last four years I have been focused on



## ALUMNI

## CLASS NOTES

## 1970s



**David Wells, Esq. '78**, a trial attorney, has joined the Jacksonville office of Gunster, Yoakley & Stewart, P.A., as a shareholder.

Wells is recognized as one of the foremost complex commercial and construction litigators in the state. His practice spans the full range of business disputes. He is recognized by Chambers USA, one of the nation's most well-known attorney ranking services, as "One of America's Leading Lawyers."

## 1980s

• **Rene M. Cibran '80** is a financial consultant and business advisor with more than 17 years of experience. Cibran is a licensed insurance agent and registered representative for the Miami-based MassMutual and the executive director for TimePlus Payroll, payroll management services provider to businesses throughout South Florida.

**Ana M. Gallo '80**, an educator, has achieved National Board Certification. Gallo has taught school since 1980 and was a region finalist for Teacher of the Year in 2003.



**Paul D. Mainieri '80**, LSU's head baseball coach took his team to the College World Series 2008. This is the second team Mainieri has taken to the CWS (he took Notre Dame in 2002).

**Jorge T. Espinosa, Esq. '83**, a former president of the FIU Student Government Association, has joined fellow alumnus William Trueba, Jr., Esq. '90 (a past president of the FIU Alumni Association), to form Espinosa | Trueba PL, a law firm dedicated to trademarks, patents and copyrights.

**Donald E. Ondrejcek '83** has been named partner in Hawkins Construction, Inc., a statewide general contractor located in Tarpon Springs, Fla., specializing in commercial construction. Ondrejcek has been part of the Hawkins Construction family for 21 years.

• **Robin A. Kolodny Gaddy '85**, an associate professor of political science at Temple University, has been awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to lecture and conduct research at the

University of Sussex in the United Kingdom during the 2008-'09 academic year. Kolodny, an expert in American political parties and U.S. national election campaigns, will lecture on American government party staff and political consultants in advanced and recently established democracies.

**Mary T. McCullagh '87** was one of 20 United States teachers who participated in the Fulbright German Commission's Spring Teacher Exchange program that included three weeks of study and meetings with teachers and students in Marburg, Berlin and Cologne, Germany.



**Julio C. Jaramillo '88** has been re-appointed to a three-year term on the board of directors of The Florida Bar Foundation, a statewide charitable organization that fosters law-related public service programs on behalf of Florida's legal profession. Jaramillo is a civil litigation attorney based in Miami, Fla.

• **Guido H. Inguanzo, Jr. '89, MS '96** and his wife Monica S. Inguanzo '06 welcomed their first-born, Benjamin, on Jan. 21, 2008. Guido Inguanzo has been the village clerk of the Village of Pinecrest since 1996.

## 1990s

**Jose Lopez-Varela '91** recently became executive group account director at Lopez-Negrete Advertising, a leading U.S.-Hispanic advertising agency in Houston, Texas. Lopez-Varela also was named president of the Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies (AHA), the trade organization for Hispanic ad agencies.



• **Howard Shore '91, MBA '96**, a partner of Activate Group, Inc., has been tapped to represent Gazelles International Coaching Association as the first local coach in South Florida to teach and implement the techniques found in the best-selling book "Mastering the Rockefeller Habits: What You Must Do to Increase the Value of Your Fast-Growth Firm." The book was authored by Gazelles, Inc., founder and CEO Verne Harnish.

**Myrna M. Soto '93**, MGM Mirage vice president of information technology governance and chief information security officer, was named earlier this year one of the Most Important

Hispanics in Technology by *Hispanic Engineer & Information Technology* magazine.

**Jacqueline Calderin, Esq. '94** is managing partner of the law firm of Ehrenstein Charbonneau Calderin in Miami, Fla.

• **Catherina M. Pareto '95, MBA '06** was honored when her company Cathy Pareto & Associates was selected last summer by *Forbes* magazine as one of the Top 10 Most Dependable Wealth Managers for Women in the United States. Pareto's company provides a more personalized approach to financial planning and investment management.



**Rita Maria Martinez '96, MFA '03** has published "Jane-in-the-Box," her first poetry chapbook with March Street Press. Martinez, who worked in the Office of Media Relations while attending FIU, lives in Fort Lauderdale with her husband. She currently is an Academic Services writing consultant at Nova Southeastern University's Kendall Campus.



**Norma M. Richards '96** has been named Palm Beach Community College's new equity officer. In her position as employment manager and assistant to the president for equity programs, Richards is responsible for the leadership and management of employee recruitment and the college's equity and diversity programs. That includes ensuring it is Equal Employment Opportunity compliant.

**Anitere Flores '97**, a Florida state representative, welcomed son Maximo Monte Anderson Flores on Sept. 6, 2008. The bouncing baby boy weighed 8 lbs. 13 oz., and measured 20 inches.

• **Julio C. Blanco '99** has joined MetLife as a financial planner for professionals.

**Francisco J. Medrano '99, MA '07** recently published a book of short stories titled "Cuentos Incompletos I," which is available on Amazon.com, lulu.com and Barnes & Noble stores. This is his second published book. His first, "Poesias Incompletas I," was published in 2006. Medrano currently teaches Spanish at Palm Beach Central High School and is an instructor at Palm Beach Community College.

**Charles B. Sachs '99** is a chartered financial analyst with Evensky & Katz, a Miami-based wealth management and financial planning firm.

## 2000s

• **Lourdes C. Balepogi '00** has relocated the offices of her company, Chispa Marketing, to the South Miami area. Among Balepogi's company clients are the Food Network South Beach Wine & Food Festival, The Keyes Company, Legal Services of Greater Miami and Miami-Dade College.

• **Cynthia Clay '00** recently published her first children's book titled "Anthony Learns to Read," which is available on Amazon.com.

**Raynold R. Fleurantin, Esq. '00** is the co-author of "Initial Supports to Regulate Information Warfare's Potentially Lethal Technologies and Techniques," which he presented in April at the Third International Conference on Information Warfare and Security held at the Peter Kiewit Institute of the University of Nebraska, Omaha.

• **Michelle Jo-Arencivia '00** has been selected for the executive training program at The Venetian Palazzo in Las Vegas, Nev., after consulting with the United Nations Development Programme investigation on North Korea.

**Modesta C. Tenay '00** served as president of the Philippine Nurses Association of South Florida from 2006-'08.



**Dianna L. Acosta '01** welcomed daughter Gabriella Lissette on July 1, 2008. Gabriella Lissette arrived 13 days early, and was born on her mommy's birthday, weighing 8 lbs. and measuring 19

½ inches. Her big brother David is adjusting well and loves "baby sister."

• **Ana J. Colls '02** has been hired to manage the Village of Key Biscayne's Community Center.

**Marco A. Incer '02** is the owner of Art District Cigars located at 1638 S.W. 8th St. in Miami, Fla. Among the features of Incer's business are cigars kept in a walk-in humidor, fine art from prestigious local and international painters, live performances by local musicians, dancing and karaoke. Art District Cigars is a Panther Perk Partner and offers a 10 percent discount to all FIU Alumni Association members with a valid FIU membership card or key tag.

**James J. Valle '05** has served as women's basketball head coach at Palmer Trinity School since 2006, leading the 2007-'08 team to its best finish at 18-7. Valle, who also is athletic director at St. Agatha School, is completing his master's degree in public administration.

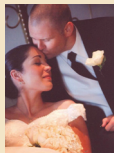


**Hatzel Vela '05** recently was named the 2008 Radio and Television News Directors Foundation's N.S. Bienstock Fellow. The Bienstock Fellowship recognizes one promising minority journalist in television news. Vela, who while at FIU was editor-in-chief of the student newspaper "The Beacon," received, in addition to a cash award, membership to the Radio-Television News Directors Association and an expense-paid trip to Las Vegas for the RTNDA@NAB, the association's annual conference and exhibition in April 2009.

• **Juan C. Mendoza '06** currently is in Bank of America's finance management associate program.



**Michael A. Hepburn '08** recently was one of 16 applicants (from a pool of 700) drafted by the National Football League to participate in their three-year Blue Chip Rotational Program. Hepburn will spend the next three years developing his skills and strengthening his networks within various NFL departments.



• **Stephanie (Martinez) Fernandez '08** recently married Eduardo Fernandez at Saint Michael's Archangel Catholic Church. The couple celebrated with a honeymoon cruise through the Greek Islands. They reside in Miami, Fla.

**Kenzie L. Perry '08** successfully completed and passed the National Council for Interior Design Qualification examination and received certification as an interior designer. Perry, who has been working for Gettys Miami, now can apply for a Florida state license.

**Steve Rios Ed.D. '08** joined FIU's faculty this fall as adjunct professor within the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies Department. Until recently, Rios also served as director of campus-based support for Educate Tomorrow, Inc., a non-profit organization that pairs professional mentors with young adults transitioning out of foster care.

**Kevin Rodriguez '08** has been named director of Parliamentary Procedure within the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO). In this position, Rodriguez will ensure that all NALFO affairs run in accordance with the NALFO Constitution, by-laws, policies and Robert's Rules of Order. He currently is the assistant director of Multicultural Affairs at Florida State University.

## I "FEEL THE PRIDE" BECAUSE...

Continued from page 37

FIU's external presence through my work in marketing for the divisions of Advancement and University & Community Relations. But let's get back to "feeling it." I "Feel the Pride" every time one of our programs achieves national recognition, every time I drive into campus and am reminded of the growth that I have witnessed in my time here, and every time I hear stories of successful alumni employing fellow alumni and contributing to the success of our community. There's also the little and not-so-little things, from a warm cookie from the Breezeway Café to the new sculptures that appear on campus or one of our athletic teams' triumphs. If you have not visited our campus in a few years, you owe it to yourself to come, take a stroll and see for yourself what we have accomplished. ■

# Panther Perks

Pounce on 'em now

### Panther Perk: MalibuWoody®

The FIU Alumni Association recently teamed up with Caldwell Golf Co., Inc., to bring members one of the year's most exciting new products... the MalibuWoody®.

Space age technology delivers the goods – a proprietary Ceramix Composite® golf club that is unlike any club you have ever owned. The core of the head is lined with Legal Cork® that conforms with USGA golf rules.

When purchasing a MalibuWoody®, using our unique FIU coupon code, members automatically will receive a special discount of \$70.00 and your FIU Alumni Association will receive a gift made possible by your generous support.

For more information and to take advantage of this exclusive Panther Perk, visit [http://www.caldwellgolf.com/\\_fiu.php](http://www.caldwellgolf.com/_fiu.php).

# Donor Profile: The Ware Foundation



Ware Foundation board members Mark Edwards, Morgan Ware Souman, James Odom, Elizabeth Eason and John Edwards at a family event in April 2003.

## Gift supports professorship in pulmonary medicine at FIU

By Martin Haro '05

This fall, the FIU College of Medicine received a generous \$1 million gift from one of the university's loyal givers, The Ware Foundation.

The gift, eligible for state matching funds, will establish and endow the Dr. Harry A. Edwards Professorship in Pulmonary Medicine.

"We are truly grateful to receive this gift from The Ware Foundation, which will provide the critical leadership component needed to develop a vibrant and cutting-edge academic, clinical and research program in Pulmonary Medicine," said College of Medicine Dean Dr. John Rock.

"The Ware Foundation's ongoing support of Florida International University serves as a model to foster a culture of giving and service in our community."

Named after Dr. Harry "Happy" Edwards, a pioneer in pulmonary education and the first pulmonary physician in South Florida, the Edwards Professorship at FIU will facilitate the education of the next generation of specialists to better serve our community.

Lung and respiratory tract diseases

rank in the Top 10 causes of death among children and adults in the United States. Given the prominence of respiratory disease, support from the Ware Foundation will significantly enhance the future of health care in South Florida.

This is one of the goals the College of Medicine expects to fulfill when it opens its doors in August 2009, welcoming a first class of 40 students. This endowment will enable the university to recruit a nationally recognized faculty member who has demonstrated academic leadership and excellence in both clinical and research settings.

"The Ware Foundation has a history with FIU and we have a history of supporting education and children," said Mark Edwards, an alumnus of the university's computer science and electrical engineering program and the foundation's executive director. "The College of Medicine has a plan for community outreach that is important to us. It resonated with our interests."

The Ware Foundation was established in 1949 by John H. Ware III (Mark Edwards'

great grandfather), a self-made man who found fortune in utilities. The family foundation, which also has ties to the University of Pennsylvania, has a long history of donations to FIU, which goes back almost 20 years to 1989.

Since then, the foundation has donated more than \$151,000 (including state matching funds) to support the Electrical Engineering Program and establish the Ware Professorship in the College of Engineering and Computing. It also has pledged an additional \$1.42 million to support research methods and facilities within the college.

Supporting FIU has been one of Mark Edwards' longtime causes. As a student in the College of Engineering and Computing, he became an avid advocate of the university.

"I had a great experience as a student there – good faculty, good size classes and a competitive curriculum," he said. "Watching the phenomenal growth of FIU and being involved with the growth of the College of Medicine, which is one of the newest medical schools in the country in the past 25 years, is exciting." ■

# Very Important Panthers **v.i.p.**

## **VIP: R. Kirk Landon**

FIU Alumni Association Lifetime Member

**Profession:** Retired CEO of American Bankers Insurance Group. Currently a community philanthropist.

**FIU affiliations:** My name is on the Undergraduate Business School and I am a member of the FIU Board of Trustees.

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

Because as a trustee I feel it is an opportunity to lead and I believe that every trustee, every faculty member and every graduate should support the FIU Alumni Association.

**As a Board of Trustees member you are an advocate of the university. What are some of your responsibilities in this role?**

Some of my responsibilities as a trustee are to act as chairman of the Internal Audit Committee, treasurer of the Board of Trustees and as a businessman, coach some of our academia members in techniques that will make FIU more efficient and more aggressive.

**Why do you think it is important for graduates and friends of the university to join the Alumni Association?**

Folks should join the Alumni Association because the alumni will eventually be the primary source of funding for FIU. We have seen where the state government will continue to give less and less, therefore alumni and friends have to give more and more. By being a member of the Alumni Association you keep in touch and you recognize that FIU is not for college days alone.

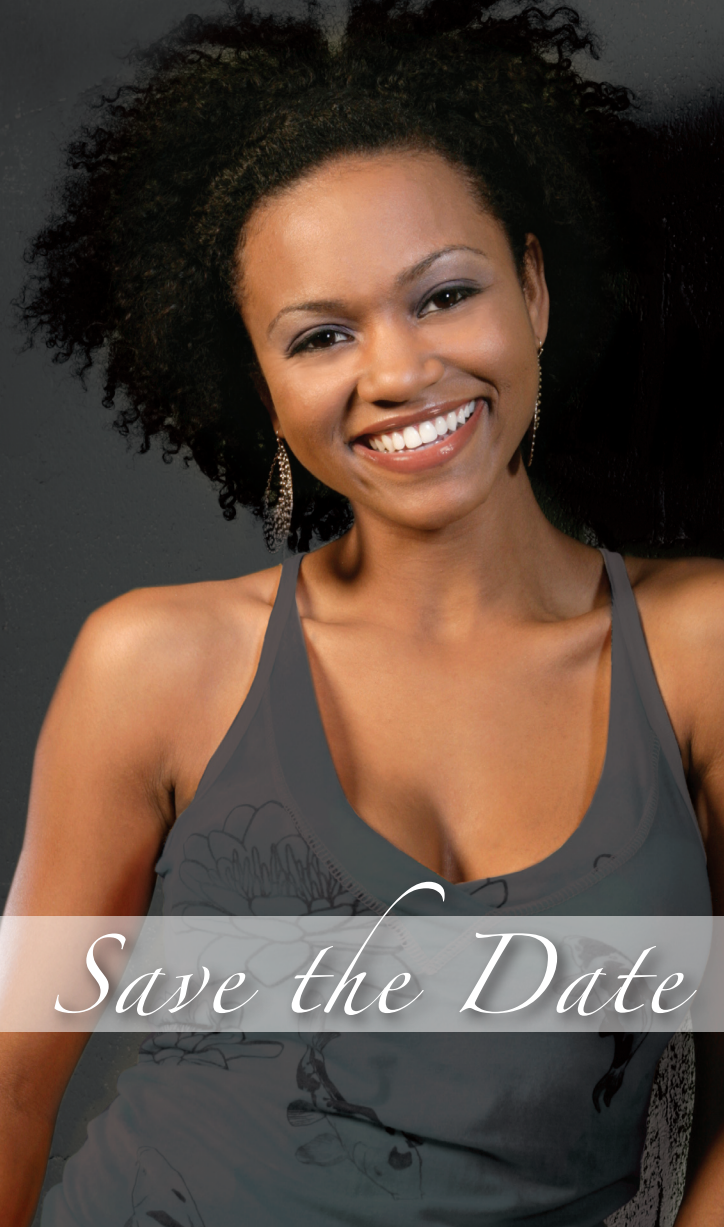
**Where do you see FIU in 10 years?**

Currently, FIU is educating one half of all the college graduates in Miami-Dade County. I visualize that this will continue. What FIU does is to produce these future citizens and leaders that will determine how great a community we have. I see FIU skewing more and more toward developing community leaders.

**What is your proudest accomplishment?**

When I was a CEO we developed a concept that "you pay for training whether you have it or not." As a result, we took many fine female clerical workers and trained them to be top leaders and senior officers in the company. This and some unusual product development constantly intrigued me and gave me a great sense of accomplishment. ■





# 8th Annual TORCH AWARDS *Gala*

Hosted by  
FIU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION  
Presenting Sponsor  
WACHOVIA BANK

RECOGNIZING OUTSTANDING ALUMNI

Featuring: FIU'S own "American Idol" Finalist, SYESHA  
Benefiting: FIU Alumni Center Building Fund

In 1972, Florida International University dedicated the Torch of Knowledge, Service and Understanding to the memory of the late Ernest R. Graham, the forward-thinking senator who championed the university's creation. On FIU's 25th anniversary, the FIU Alumni Association established the Torch Awards to honor successful individuals who have had a positive impact on their profession, the community and the university. The alumni and faculty that are selected represent FIU's finest – they are our Torchbearers.

*Save the Date*

Saturday, February 28, 2009

6 p.m. Reception and Silent Auction  
7:30 p.m. Dinner & Ceremony

Location: FIU Graham Center, University Park

FOR SPONSORSHIP, PROGRAM ADVERTISING, TICKET and RSVP information, contact:

Committee Chair: Jack F. Gonzalez '97 at 305-725-7731 or jackfgonzalez@gmail.com

FIU Staff: Duane Wiles, Associate Executive Director Office of Alumni Relations, at 305-348-4213 or wilestd@fiu.edu

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