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Florida International University Division of University Relations

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A woman with curly brown hair is smiling and painting on a wooden easel. She is wearing a black top and a ring. The background is a blurred art studio with various wooden frames and art supplies.

FIU

MAGAZINE

SPRING 2011 VOLUME 21

A Ver

“Miami Generation”
artist Maria Brito '77
provokes and inspires

Football Powers to the Top
in One Historic Season

What Happens When
Coral Reefs Get Herpes

The Mad Love of
FIU's Four Horsemen

Professor Agarwal's Lab is
Hotter than the Surface of the Sun

FIU

M A G A Z I N E

SPRING 2011 VOLUME 21



The Rise of the Panthers

FIU fans enjoyed a transformational football season in 2010 with the return of the FIU Marching Band, the introduction of a new Alumni Association tailgate village and huge wins by the Panthers. This photo by Angel Valentin captures the energy that the new band injected into November's Homecoming – the biggest homecoming in FIU's history. Complete coverage of the season begins on Page 14.

10 The Voice of the HEAT

Alumnus Michael Baiamonte '86 is one of the most recognizable announcers in South Florida

21 High Touch Leadership

FIU President Mark B. Rosenberg uses a personal touch to build pride during his first year

24 ON THE COVER: A Ver

Cuban artist Maria Brito '77 brings her evocative artwork to the Frost Art Museum

30 Donor Honor Roll Special Section



FROM THE EDITOR



A new look for 2011

The start of a new year is a great time to introduce positive change. Your *FIU Magazine* probably looks and feels a little different. After months of planning, we've redesigned the *FIU Magazine*, adding new features and expanding popular sections.

A year ago, we set out to update the look of the magazine, incorporate changes that reflect reader preferences and make the magazine more sustainable. Magazine Art Director Aileen Sola-Trautmann spent months creating a clean and energetic design that emphasizes strong photography. Aileen and I are also most pleased that the magazine is now printed on recycled paper from sustainably managed forests.

We gathered input from the Alumni Association Board, the Magazine Editorial Advisory Board and from readers who responded to a communications survey last year. The good news from all sources was that people already like the magazine. An overwhelming majority of those who responded to the survey rated the magazine's quality as excellent or very good in every category. Readers indicated that they are most interested in accomplishments and rankings followed by news from their colleges and stories about the arts. Readers also reflected an equally strong interest in stories about research, alumni and students.

Alumni board members told us they wanted the magazine to better reflect campus life, provide more short points of pride and offer more reasons to come back to FIU. You will see those changes reflected in the news briefs section that we have renamed "On the Prowl." We've added an arts calendar – a request also made by the Magazine Advisory Board -- that should give you more reasons to come visit our campus.

A number of alumni told me they wanted the magazine to be, quite simply, more fun. Well, it's not hard to find fun at FIU. The redesign seeks to better capture FIU's vibrancy and spirit through photography and design.

There are other additions, like the first-person faculty profile on page 28 that will be a regular feature of the FIU Worlds Ahead campaign. You will also find a revamped and expanded Class Notes section, so go ahead and fill our inbox with your personal accomplishments.

I hope you enjoy the new look of your *FIU Magazine*. Please let me know what you think by writing to me at oneild@fiu.edu. As you flip through the pages, you should find reason to be uplifted and inspired. FIU begins the year with great momentum – a victory in our first football bowl, the reaffirmation of our accreditation, a prestigious Carnegie ranking and terrific lineup of cultural events. Make 2011 the year you rediscover the exciting things happening at your alma mater.

Until next time,

Deborah O'Neil MA '09

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FIU MAGAZINE

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WRGP Radiate FM: FIU Student Radio is broadcast north of Kendall on 95.3 FM, south of Kendall on 88.1 FM and 96.9 FM in North Miami and South Broward.

FROM OUR READERS

Football fever

I have always enjoyed sports, especially football. However, as sad as it may sound, I had never attended an FIU football game until the Louisiana-Monroe game this season. I was lucky enough to get free tickets from an alumni friend who could not say enough about the amazing energy felt at every game.

I went and took my 8-year-old son, Jeremy, to his first college football game ever. As we both walked into the Cage, the student and alumni section was buzzing with anticipation and the energy was becoming contagious. I have to admit, my son and I felt the energy and couldn't wait for the game to start.

When the ball was finally snapped, I felt the excitement in the crowd which gave me such a sense of school pride. My son became immediately hooked by the gold-and-blue atmosphere. He had a blast and it was great to share this memory with him.

The very next day I joined the Alumni Association. I cannot wait to buy 2011 season tickets for my son and I. In the spirit of gold and blue, GO FIU!!!

George Suarez '96, MS '00
Alumni Association Member

My FIU pride story

The fall issue of the *FIU Magazine* featured the President's Corner, "Many Reasons to Show Your FIU Pride." Right away I identified with the article's theme because I received a great education that prepared me for the real world, an education that has molded me in such a way that I am empowered. I am very proud to be a graduate of FIU and I still display my roaring Panther Pride by wearing FIU T-shirts when I work out at the gym.

On April 30, 2007, I walked across that brightly lit stage to shake the hands of board members of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication and my professors who have made a remarkable difference in my life. It was one of the proudest moments of my life, as well as the lives of my family and friends who were there to support me because my achievement also impacted their lives in some way.

My husband, then boyfriend, also saw something special in FIU, so much so that he proposed to me that night outside of the arena. A nervousness that I had never seen before beheld him as he got down on

one knee, with ring in hand and said, "This is where we met, so it's only right that I propose to you here." At the end of his heartfelt beckon for my hand in marriage, I said yes. He was so apprehensive that he placed the ring on the wrong hand. I reminisce and laugh out loud. It truly feels like just yesterday, but almost four years later we have been happily married for two years and have a beautiful, very bright, energetic 21-month-old daughter who I hope to send to FIU someday.

Sarah Thompson '07

My Bowl Story

I have attended almost every FIU home football game and selected away games since the program's inception in 2002, flying from my home Puerto Rico.

Unfortunately, I couldn't make it to FIU's first bowl game in Detroit, not because I didn't want to go, but because I had a family trip planned for this time of the year. We flew into Milan, Italy on Christmas Day, landing and driving to Venice on Dec. 26, game day. I did all I could to stay awake after 38 straight hours without any sleep and found a site that webcasted the game. But I only made it until halftime. Sheer exhaustion, a generous dose of good food and drinks, plus the way the game was going did me in.

I went to sleep at 4 a.m. Venice time thinking we had lost. The next morning, I didn't really want to find out the final score, since I thought it would spoil my first full day in Venice with the family. My wife, who by now knows (and maybe understands or tolerates) my "FIU addiction," pushed me to get the game info on the internet to find out for sure. A bit reluctantly, I did. There was a loud yell from a crazy guy emanating from my hotel room when I found out we won that bowl game. I gave hugs and kisses to my wife and her kids as well. I sported my FIU sweatshirt proudly and giddily all over Venice that day.

You can't imagine how proud I am of my university, and even now as I write from Barcelona, Spain I can't get enough of how well we did in Detroit. I can only imagine what a moment it was for my fellow FIU diehard fans and friends while in Detroit.

Roberto Valcarce '89
Alumni Association Member

Letters to the Editor: *FIU Magazine* welcomes letters to the editor regarding magazine content. Send your letters via e-mail to alumni@fiu.edu, by fax to 305-348-3247 or mail to *FIU Magazine*, Division of External Relations, MMC PC 515, Miami, FL, 33199. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. All letters should include the writer's full name and daytime phone number. Alumni, please include your degree and year of graduation.

GIVE BACK. CONNECT. ENJOY.



Build something larger than yourself. Give back and increase the value of your degree while having a great time. Be a part of a community that educates, participates and engages with your fellow alumni and current students. Create connections everywhere. This is what it means to be a member of the FIU Alumni Association.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

MARK B. ROSENBERG



President Mark Rosenberg celebrates the 2010 Homecoming with Homecoming King Christopher "Spike" Salado, a junior health services administration major, and Homecoming Queen Cecily Arias, a senior elementary education major. Photo by Ivan Santiago.

As president of Florida International University, I have the best job in the world. I am proud to lead an institution that puts students first, excels in research and is engaged in problem-solving partnerships in our community.

In the year-and-a-half since I took office, I also have been pleased – and humbled – by the support of the people in our community, including alumni and local leaders, who love FIU and want it to do well. This love for FIU was out in full force during Homecoming. Current and former students, parents, faculty, staff, FIU retirees and other FIU fans all came together to make it an electrifying day where we celebrated FIU's achievements and forged new traditions.

It was that pride in FIU that fueled our football team's spectacular season. We captured the Sun Belt championship and went to – and won – our first bowl game. Whether huddled around a television set at home, or at a restaurant watch party, or cheering in balmy indoor Ford Field, the FIU family showed off their Panther Pride. I expect more of that in the year to come as both our baseball and football teams look to repeat as Sun Belt champions.

And there are more great things ahead. Our five-year Worlds Ahead Strategic Plan will guide us as FIU fulfills its destiny as a student-centered urban research university that is locally and globally engaged. Under the plan, arts,

environment, global and health are the themes that will be the foundation for teaching, research and engagement at FIU.

In the next 10 years, our enrollment will grow by 20,000 students, making a quality education accessible for the many people in South Florida who need higher education to fulfill their dreams. At the same time, FIU will be a major innovation, economic development and job creation engine for our region.

To reach that next level, we will need the continued support and involvement of our community. As I have in the past, I encourage you to join the Alumni Association, if you have not already. Come to FIU lectures, games and other events. You can learn more about the latest happenings and news at FIU by visiting news.FIU.edu.

We also need your assistance in creating crucial partnerships that will benefit South Florida. We need you to offer internships and other opportunities for our students to obtain real-world experience that will give them additional tools to compete in the global marketplace.

If you love FIU, if you appreciate the vital role it plays in South Florida, we also need you to make a donation to FIU and encourage others to do the same. Your contributions will ensure that we can continue to provide a high quality education to our students and continue to have a positive impact on our community.

With your help, FIU will continue to be Worlds Ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Mark B. Rosenberg".

ON THE PROWL



Acclaimed flutist joins School of Music

Latin Grammy winner Nestor Torres has joined the faculty of FIU as a visiting guest artist and founding director of the FIU School of Music's first charanga ensemble. Torres will also hold private jazz flute lessons for students in the School of Music and perform at the 2011 Torch Awards.

"We are honored to receive Nestor Torres at FIU," said Orlando Jacinto Garcia, director of the School of Music. "His work here, forming one of the nation's only university charanga ensembles and tutoring aspiring flutists, will be invaluable to the School of Music and to FIU."

The charanga is an ensemble made up of winds, strings and percussion instruments that perform traditional and modern versions of the folk music from Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean.

Born in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico, Torres attended Mannes School of Music in New York City, as well as Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston. It was then, while playing in New York City's Latin dance clubs, that he learned to improvise in the style of charanga, which helped to shape and develop Torres' melodic and danceable sound.

He has performed and recorded with the likes of Ricky Martin, Tito Puente, Herbie Hancock and Gloria Estefan.

Torres has recorded 13 CDs to date. His fifth and seventh records were nominated for a Latin Grammy, and his production *This Side of Paradise* won the Latin Grammy award in the pop instrumental category. His most recent production, *Nouveau Latino*, was also nominated for a Grammy and Latin Grammy in the Latin Jazz category. ■

TREASURES

A celebrated depiction of the "Adoration of the Magi" attributed to Baroque master Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) will be on exhibit at the Patricia & Phillip Frost Art Museum through September. The painting is on special loan to the Frost by Natan Saban, a private collector. The painting is central to "From Old to New," an exhibition of works attributed to masters such as Ferdinand Bol, Peter Paul Rubens and Jacob Jordaens opposite contemporary works.



Everglades project wins top design award

FIU landscape architecture student Brennan Baxley received the General Design Honor Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects in Washington, D.C., in September. His project was selected as one of the seven recipients of this year's student award from a pool of 618 submissions from 20 countries.

Baxley's "Ephemeral Boundaries" was created during the 2008 fall semester for professor Roberto Rovira's landscape studio class. He challenged students to find ways to integrate the natural and built environments along the Miami-Everglades boundary of Krome Avenue and SW 8th Street.

ON THE PROWL



FIU Biologist Joel Trexler is one of more than 70 scientists doing research in the Florida Everglades as part of the Long Term Ecological Research Program (LTER).

New Carnegie designation recognizes FIU's longtime community focus

FIU was selected for the prestigious Community Engagement Classification by the Carnegie Foundation in January, acknowledging the university's longstanding community partnerships.

"For more than four decades, FIU has been locally and globally engaged," said FIU President Mark B. Rosenberg. "This new classification recognizes the efforts of our faculty to direct their research and creative energies to address key issues in the community."

FIU joined about 300 institutions nationwide that hold the Community Engagement Classification. Institutions must demonstrate mutually beneficial partnerships in the larger community.

The classification comes less than a year after Rosenberg established the Office of Engagement and named Divina Grossman to lead it as FIU's first vice president for engagement.

Last year, thousands of FIU students and hundreds of faculty and staff collaborated with members of the community on a range

of issues, contributing more than 550,000 service hours to hundreds of projects. Here are some examples of FIU's community engagement:

The Florida Coastal Everglades Long Term Ecological Research Program

includes a team of 72 senior scientists and 59 FIU students who study how hydrology, climate change and human activities affect the Florida Everglades.

The FIU Honors College has partnered with the City of Sweetwater to help improve the quality of life of Sweetwater residents, working in the elementary school, senior center and City Hall.

The Lehman Center for Transportation Research is working with the Miami-Dade Expressway Authority to help address South Florida's traffic challenges.

The Green Family NeighborhoodHELP Program in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine partners medical students with colleagues in nursing, social work, public health, law and other disciplines to work with households in an underserved neighborhood.

FIU College of Law

TOP 10

Best Value Law School

the National Jurist

October 2010

#1 Most Diverse Faculty

The Princeton Review

2011 Best Law Schools

University commemorates anniversary of Haiti earthquake

Through art, education and reflection, the FIU community marked the first anniversary of the tragic earthquake that struck Haiti on Jan. 12, 2010.

The day was commemorated with FIU's third Haiti Teach-In, a moment of silence at 4:53 p.m. and a cultural celebration by the Haitian Student Organization.

For three weeks in January, the MMC campus hosted "Base Paint Tents," a goodwill project that created 10 pieces of art out of canvas tents that will go on to serve as classrooms for children in Haiti. The project was initiated by the Miami-based artist Antuan, in collaboration with Fundacion Manos del Sur and Step by Step Foundation. The works of art were painted by selected international artists who contributed their own perspective of Haiti, using the tents as their canvas.

In addition, the Graham Center Art Gallery hosted the exhibit, *Kenbe Pa Lage*, a Haitian Creole saying for "Stay Strong." The exhibit featured traditional and contemporary Haitian art.

The arrival of Divinity,
tent painting by
Nicolas Leiva





TRAVELS: INDONESIA

FIU nursing professor Randy Roark (left, blue shirt) and two nursing graduate students traveled through Indonesia last summer on a medical mission aboard the U.S. Navy's hospital ship, *Mercy*. The FIU

team was invited by Project Hope, which partners with the U.S. Navy to send medical volunteers around the world. The FIU nursing team included Vanessa Dooraswamy (center, blue shirt) and Dawn Horowitz, who both completed their final advanced nurse practitioner clinicals on board the ship. The team traveled to three eastern islands of Indonesia, working alongside Naval doctors and nurses. Plans are underway for two trips in 2011 that will take FIU nursing teams to Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and El Salvador.



New law clinic helps small investors

The College of Law has opened a new Investor Advocacy Clinic to assist individuals who have lost their investments as a result of misconduct or mistreatment by a broker.

The clinic was made possible by a \$250,000 grant awarded to FIU from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (FINRA) Investor Education Foundation. FIU was among four law schools in the nation selected by the FINRA Investor Education Foundation to open such a clinic. Visiting professor **Robert Savage**, who has almost two decades of experience with investor issues, is leading the clinic.

The clinic will give preference to clients who are elderly and live in South Florida and it will be able to work with potential clients whose first language is not English.

To contact the Investor Advocacy Clinic, call 305-348-7541 or visit law.fiu.edu.



Renowned conductor leading FIU Symphony Orchestra

Grzegorz Nowak, the world renowned principal associate conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in London, is FIU's new director of orchestral studies and artist-in-residence.

"Mr. Nowak will make an invaluable imprint on our orchestra," said Orlando Jacinto Garcia, director of the School of Music. "His decades of experience leading some of the world's best symphony orchestras will inspire our young musicians to reach their maximum potential. "

After studying conducting, composition and violin at the Music Academy in Poznan, Poland, Nowak was awarded a doctorate fellowship at the renowned Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester in New York, where he studied with David Effron and David Zinman. He honed his skills at Tanglewood in Massachusetts on a Serge Koussevitzky Fellowship with such masters as Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Erich Leinsdorf and Igor Markevitch, before assisting Kurt Masur with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

The FIU Symphony Orchestra, made up of about 50 students, was founded by maestro Carlos Piantini in 1994 and quickly developed into a first-class ensemble. Nowak plans to reenergize the FIU Symphony Orchestra and mold it into a world-class ensemble.



FIU in The Arts

ART

Through March 13: “My Eyes Have Seen” at the Frost Art Museum is an exhibition of Robert Farber’s work, sublime photographic imagery that evokes timeless emotion and takes the viewer into aesthetic realms.

Through March 13: “The Tale of the Unknown Island” at the Frost Art Museum. Spanish artists Esther Villalobos and Mar Solís interpret, through photography and sculpture, “a journey into the unknown” inspired by José Saramago’s book, *The Tale of the Unknown Island*.

March 23: “Aesthetics & Values 2011” at the Frost Art Museum is an exhibition of the works by leading contemporary artists, organized and curated by students of the FIU Honors College with Faculty Fellow and painter John Bailly. Featured in 2011 are Daniel Arsham, Jose Bedia, Ivan Toth Depeña, Jacin Giordano, Fabian Peña, Karen Rifas, Cristina Lei Rodriguez, John Sanchez, Jen Stark and Antonia Wright.

Through April 17: “Gran Torino: Italian Contemporary” at the Frost Art Museum presents the work of a selected group of Torino artists with their own national characteristics in an open and stimulating debate with the international scene.

Through April 24: “As of 24-03-07” at the Frost Art Museum is an exhibit by Cuban artist and FIU alumna María Brito ’77.

FILM

Interfaithout! Film Series: Reclaiming Our Faith explores issues of spirituality and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer identity. The film series focuses on the journey for visibility and acceptance

of GLBTQ individuals within religious communities. At The Wolfsonian-FIU. Begins at 2 p.m., followed by a moderated discussion and reception. Free.

Feb. 27: A Jihad for Love, 2 p.m. In a time when Islam is under tremendous attack from within and without, this daring documentary is the world’s first film to explore the complex global intersections between Islam and homosexuality.

March 27: Jerusalem is Proud to Present, 2 p.m. This documentary follows the effort to hold the 2006 World Pride celebration and march in Jerusalem. Advocates met with sharp opposition from religious leaders, faced accusations of “homo-sexualizing the Middle East,” received serious threats of violence and ultimately were vastly outnumbered by their opposition.

THEATER

March 3-13: Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen. This FIU Theatre production is adapted by Jon Jory and directed by Phillip M. Church. Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Herbert & Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center at MMC.

April 7-17: Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare. This FIU Theatre production is directed by Wayne E. Robinson Jr. Thursday-Saturday at 8 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. Herbert & Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center at MMC.

MUSIC

March 4: Dyno’Nite with FLEA-The FIU Laptop and Electronic Arts (FLEA) Ensemble, a cutting-edge group that presents electronic compositions using laptop computers, will perform unique works.

The founder and director of this ensemble is Paula Matthusen, who heads the music technology program at the School of Music. At The Wolfsonian-FIU, 7 p.m.

March 4-5: FIU Opera Theatre: “Cendrillion” by Jules Massenet, presented by the School of Music. 7:30 p.m. Herbert & Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center at MMC.

March 10: “Orchestra Masterworks Series” presented by the School of Music. The FIU Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Grzegorz Nowak, performs with winners of the FIU Concerto Competition. 7:30 p.m. Herbert & Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center at MMC.

April 15: Orchestra Masterworks Series: Beethoven and Brahms presented by the School of Music. 7:30 p.m. Herbert & Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center at MMC.

ARCHITECTURE

Feb. 24: “West African Modern: Modern Movement Architecture in West Africa and the Discourse of Tropical Regionalism.” At The Wolfsonian-FIU, 7 p.m. Ola Uduku examines the multiple legacies of modern architecture in West Africa alongside the professional, academic and discursive networks that shaped architectural practices in countries like Nigeria and Ghana. Uduku is a senior lecturer in Architecture at the University of Edinburgh. Free.

March 25: “Building Paradise: An Architectural Guide to the Magic City.” At The Wolfsonian-FIU, 7 p.m. FIU architecture professor Marilys Nepomechie discusses her new book on the architecture of Miami, which includes descriptions and analyses of more than 700 buildings and landscapes. Book signing follows talk. Free.

FIU adds summer graduation ceremonies

FIU will hold its inaugural Summer Commencement in August 2011. Students who have successfully applied for graduation will no longer have to wait until the fall to participate in commencement. Attending Commencement immediately after the final semester will enhance the experience for graduates and their families.

Summer Commencement has been scheduled for Saturday, August 13 in the U.S. Century Bank Arena on the Modesto A. Maidique campus. Once the university can determine how many students will be eligible to attend Commencement, a schedule of ceremonies will be announced.



Photo by Roldan Torres

New FIU-UM Latin America consortium wins coveted national designation

FIU and the University of Miami were awarded a \$1 million National Resource Center for Latin America grant in September from the U.S. Department of Education. Last year, FIU's Latin American and Caribbean Center and UM's Center for Latin American Studies formed the Miami Consortium for Latin American and Caribbean Studies; this is the consortium's first federally funded project.

The four-year Title VI grant is among the most prestigious awarded to area studies programs. It will enable FIU and UM to expand Latin American and Caribbean educational and training opportunities. This includes new course offerings in Portuguese and Haitian Creole, expansion of the universities' library collections, travel funding for faculty and greater support of K-12 outreach programming.

FIU bans smoking on campus

FIU is officially smoke and tobacco free.

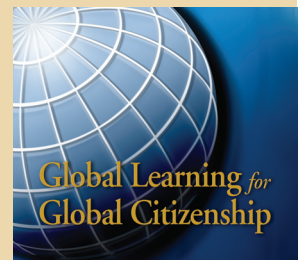
The Board of Trustees approved a regulation last fall that prohibits smoking and the use of tobacco products on all university-owned properties, including Modesto A. Maidique Campus, Biscayne Bay Campus, Engineering Campus, recreational facilities, residential facilities, parking lots and garages. Tobacco use in vehicles that are on FIU-owned property also is prohibited.

The regulation took effect in January. Enforcement of the regulation will come after a six to eight-month period of giving support to students, faculty and staff, that will incorporate smoking cessation services and resources.

With the vote, FIU becomes the second public university in the state to implement a tobacco-free initiative. The University of Florida is also smoke free. There are now at least 420 universities around the country with smoke-free campuses.

New Global Learning plan endorsed by accreditation board

FIU's new Global Learning for Global Citizenship initiative was front and center in the university's recent reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges of Schools.



FIU's global learning initiative is the university's roadmap for enabling all undergraduates to become engaged global citizens. The initiative supports higher levels of student achievement through courses and co-curricular activities that develop students' global awareness, global perspective and attitude of global engagement. The plan's bold, thorough and inclusive design was commended by SACS.

The reaffirmation of accreditation occurs every 10 years and involves years of planning and documentation. Accreditation signifies that a university has a mission appropriate to higher education; has resources, programs and services sufficient to sustain that mission; maintains educational objectives and is successful in achieving the objectives.

"The reaffirmation came with no reservations and no follow-up requirements," said FIU Provost Douglas Wartzok. "It was a clean, complete, unqualified reaffirmation."



The Voice of the HEAT

Alumnus Michael Baiamonte '86 is one of the most recognizable announcers in the South Florida sports market

By Sissi Aguila '99, MA '08

Photo by Greg Clark

South Florida sports fans know the voice and his trademark introduction, “Aaaaannnd noooooowww staaaand up and make some noooooise for your Miiiiiiii HEEEEAAAT!”

As the public address announcer for the Miami Heat since 1990, FIU business graduate Michael Baiamonte '86 has called the plays for many of the NBA's biggest stars –Alonzo Mourning, Dwyane Wade, Shaquille O'Neal and now LeBron James and Chris Bosh. He was the voice in the arena when the HEAT clinched the 2006

NBA Championship. And in 2010 he introduced “The Three Kings,” as Wade, Bosh and James have been dubbed, to an arena full of fans anxious for another championship.

Baiamonte is one of South Florida's most recognizable announcers, receiving national recognition when *USA Today*

referred to his “Gooooood Mourning!” call for an Alonzo Mourning dunk as, “The best call by a Public Address Announcer.”

Now in his 20th season with the HEAT, Baiamonte's career as a sportscaster started more than 30 years ago when he filled out his application to attend FIU.

“I had to write what I was most proud of,” says Baiamonte, a Lifetime Member of the Alumni Association. “I'd asked the principal at my high school, Gulliver Prep, if we could get an announcer for the basketball games. He said, ‘Sure, you can do it.’ So I did.”

Now retired, assistant athletic director for media relations Rich Kelch was FIU's sports information director then. Kelch was looking for an announcer for the new basketball team and came across the application. He

called Baiamonte and said, “You're our guy.”

Baiamonte became the official voice of the FIU Sunblazers, who didn't have an arena yet, announcing play-by-play at local high schools and the James L. Knight Center.

“Nothing about it made sense,” says Baiamonte of the games played at the James L. Knight Center. “There was a fancy foyer and the audience sat on one side. It was crazy, but I loved it. I got to meet people who would eventually give me my big breaks.”

“I really enjoy entertaining the fans. That give – back and forth – is what I love.”

An early break was working with the World Wrestling Federation and its CEO Vince McMahon for two years throughout Miami and Palm Beach. Baiamonte continued to attend school and announce FIU games while with the Federation.

After graduating with the university's first four-year class, Baiamonte went to work for FIU Trustee R. Kirk Landon at American Bankers Insurance Group. At night, he continued as the voice of the Sunblazers.

Because of his connections at the James L. Knight Center, Baiamonte was called to announce an NBA exhibition game there. The NBA was considering starting a team in Miami. He became a back-up announcer in the '90s after substituting one night during a HEAT-Seattle SuperSonics game.

“When they called me to go down there, I was scared to death,” recalls Baiamonte. “I felt like I needed an oxygen mask.”

A few years later, he became the official announcer for the Miami HEAT. In 1993, Baiamonte left FIU after 12 years.

“I didn't want to leave,” he says. “But my time was taken up with my day job, the HEAT, and I was emceeing more and more special events.”

In 1999, Baiamonte finally quit his day job in corporate America too. “It got to the point that I was out of the office a couple days a week,” he says.

“I was lucky,” says Baiamonte.

“My kids were born outside of the HEAT's season.” His wife Natalie went into labor with oldest, Arissa, 16, during an exhibition game.

Baiamonte now has three teenage girls - Janae, Ilana, and Arissa.

Baiamonte has a studio at home where he does voiceovers and commercials for several clients, including Brandsmart USA, Mercedes-Benz and Nike. He emcees special events throughout South Florida, such as the Miami Children's Hospital Diamond Ball. He returned to FIU last fall when he emceed the football home opener against Rutgers.

But on HEAT game days, he spends the morning learning the script and brushing up on the players from both teams, while trying not to talk too much.

Baiamonte says as a kid he was always drawn to the announcer in the arena. “I really enjoy entertaining the fans,” he adds. “That give-back and forth– is what I love.”

The Coral Doctor is In

Rebecca Vega Thurber searches for answers to the world's coral reef loss

By JoAnn Adkins



When you announce to the world that a coral reef has herpes, it's difficult to predict how people might react.

Rebecca Vega Thurber did just that in 2008 and caught the attention of marine scientists from all across the globe. Her diagnosis of the marine organisms, which typically live in compact colonies, intrigued diving enthusiasts and even garnered a mention on Comedy Central's "Colbert Report."

"Most living things have a type of herpes, but generally it's pretty innocuous. It shouldn't be a surprise that corals have it," Vega Thurber said. "But when we talk about coral health, it's always in the terms of disease. Examining the viral side of coral health is new."

Vega Thurber, an associate professor of biology, was born, raised and educated on the west coast of the United States. She spent the early part of her career traveling back-and-forth between her lab in California and the coral reefs in Hawaii. But the marine biologist wanted to be closer to her study organisms. She set her sights on the coral reefs of the Atlantic and Caribbean and in 2009, joined the faculty at FIU.

"Here in South Florida, my study organism is right outside my back door," Vega Thurber said. "The Caribbean is a hotbed of coral disease."

Scientists have been increasingly concerned about the health of the world's corals because of their importance to the world's oceans and to humans. Corals are home to more than one million diverse aquatic species. They act as natural barriers for coastal communities and beaches. Corals also contain chemical compounds that can be used in medicines for cancer, AIDS and other ailments. Economically, the reefs provide a major tourism draw for diving and snorkeling enthusiasts all across the globe.

Corals currently suffer from what

Vega Thurber calls a double whammy — decreasing abundance and increasing disease. However, the scientific community has long focused on the bacterial diseases of corals. Some scientists have explored the idea of viruses impacting reefs, but with little success. So when Vega Thurber, along with her research team, developed a new method of identifying viruses in corals, it was the first time scientists confirmed the existence of what many had long suspected — corals have herpes. They also have other viruses.

"We were the first to explore viruses in reefs at the molecular level," she said. "Corals have a stony skeleton and viruses are really small, really hard to work with. We came up with a technique to identify what types of viruses are in corals based on genetic sequence. Imagine shredding all the pages of a book into a million pieces



"Part of the reason I wanted to come to FIU is because of the young, invigorated marine biology faculty. Plus, I liked the idea of developing a new program."

and then trying to put the sentences back together. That's basically what we did."

Recently, Vega Thurber was awarded a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation to explore the next phase of her research. About 30 percent of coral death is attributed to disease, but the causes of those diseases is still unknown. Vega Thurber has already proven viruses exist in corals. Now it's time to explore the implications.

"I want to move beyond cataloguing these viruses and determine if they are actually contributing to the degradation of coral fitness," Vega Thurber said. "This grant is about what the first stage of the research actually means."

As she continues to look for ways to preserve and restore one of Earth's most

unique and diverse ecosystems, Vega Thurber has settled into her new lab at FIU.

"Part of the reason I wanted to come to FIU is because of the young, invigorated marine biology faculty," she said. "Plus, I liked the idea of developing a new program."

Vega Thurber's lab currently includes five people — a post-doctoral scientist, an NSF graduate student, a technician and two undergraduate students. She is expanding her research to include corals off the coast of Australia.

"Dr. Vega Thurber's studies of bacteria and viruses in coral are critical for understanding how humans are impacting reefs," said professor Michael Heithaus, director of FIU's School of Environment, Arts and Society. "She's a great example of the dedication that FIU faculty have in developing high-impact research projects while providing excellent opportunities for students and reaching out to the public."

But even with her drive and focus, Vega Thurber still has time to laugh about the national comedic draw her research attained after becoming the focus of a Stephen Colbert quip on *The Colbert Report*. Vega

Thurber's finding of herpes viruses in coral reefs led Colbert to call corals "the sluts of the seas."

"It was pretty funny," she said. "I was in Hawaii at the time, in my lab. I saw my phone ringing and turned it off. It started ringing again. And it kept ringing. And ringing. It was my sisters. I finally answered. I was shocked. Then the onslaught of e-mails came. It was all pretty funny."

While some of the information may have been exaggerated for television, Vega Thurber doesn't mind that it drew attention to the serious problem she is hoping to help solve — the loss of the world's corals.

To learn more about Rebecca Vega Thurber and her coral reef research, visit www2.fiu.edu/~microlab/.

THE RISE OF THE PANTHERS

By Pete Pelegrin '96
Photography by Samuel Lewis

Kyle Field in College Station, Texas – Home of the 12th Man -- is one of the most hostile stadiums to play in for an opposing college football team.

Yet that notion was lost on the FIU Panthers this past September.

That night on Texas A&M's home field more than 80,000 people were the first to witness the rise of the Panthers in 2010. This was the year of firsts for FIU Football.

The Panthers would achieve the first winning season in the nine-year history of the program. FIU would also win its first Sun Belt Conference championship, earn its first bowl invitation and win its first bowl game in the Panthers' first national TV appearance on ESPN.

The road to the 2010 championship season began three years ago in 2007 with a complete change in the culture of FIU Football. With an unyielding work ethic and meticulous preparation, the Panthers, under the leadership of coach Mario Cristobal and his staff, developed better talent, revamped their off-season workouts and practice regimen and cultivated an attitude that FIU can play with anyone, anywhere.

It began against the Aggies and then-Heisman Trophy candidate quarterback Jerrod Johnson. A defiant Panthers defense sacked Johnson six times and intercepted him four times to build a 20-6 lead heading into the fourth quarter.

Although the Aggies needed a late rally to escape with a victory, many of the home team's faithful predicted what the rest of the nation and eventually the Sun Belt Conference would realize. As the Panthers exited their

locker room for the team buses, the Aggies fans greeted them and many delivered the same message to FIU: "You guys are going to win your conference this year. You guys are going to be in a bowl game."

Soon, it was time for the Sun Belt to heed that prophecy. The Panthers out muscled and outran Western Kentucky and North Texas to open Sun Belt Conference play with two wins.

In a thrilling Homecoming game against ULM, FIU needed an arm tackle by T.Y. Hilton to help send the game into overtime. Warhawks linebacker Ken Dorsey was charging toward the end zone after an interception, but Hilton raced out of nowhere to make the stop late in the fourth quarter. The Panthers would win 42-35 behind Darriet Perry's touchdown run in the second overtime.

Then on November 13 came the season-defining victory.

FIU had never beaten defending Sun Belt Conference champion Troy in the six games the two teams had played. Still, the fearless and resilient Panthers rolled into Veterans Memorial Stadium in Troy and powered to their best offensive performance in program history.

FIU rushed for a program-best 448 yards and pounded the Trojans with a school-record 668 total yards in a 52-35 win that left the Panthers all alone in first place in the Sun Belt.

As Troy star receiver Jerrell Jernigan would say after the game, "FIU came in here and kicked our [butts], point blank."

After the defeat of Troy, FIU's defense recorded seven sacks and had three interceptions against Louisiana in an easy

38-17 win that set up a potential Sun Belt Conference title game against Arkansas State.

There the Panthers were put to the test by a gritty Red Wolves team. ASU led FIU 24-23 with less than two minutes left in the game when Hilton delivered in the clutch.

Hilton, whose nickname is "Goodbye" because of the speed that helps him outrun defenses, caught a short pass from Wesley Carroll, weaved his way through the ASU defense and went 42 yards for the winning touchdown.

The Panthers won 31-24 and captured their first Sun Belt Conference Championship.





With the most wins (six) in the nine-year history of FIU football, the Panthers received an invitation to play the Toledo Rockets in the Little Caesars Pizza Bowl at Detroit's Ford Field. With the NFL game between the Minnesota Vikings and the Philadelphia Eagles snowed out, the Pizza Bowl was the only football game played in the country on Dec. 26 and the only game on TV.

FIU's first bowl game did not get off to the start the Panthers envisioned.

FIU fell behind 21-7 at halftime. In the locker room defensive lineman Jarvis Wilson and Hilton rallied their teammates to start playing

"FIU Football."

Down 24-7 in the third quarter and before a Toledo kickoff, Hilton told linebacker Toronto Smith: "Watch me return this kickoff." Hilton sprinted past the Rockets and went 89 yards for the touchdown to ignite FIU's comeback.

Wilson, who would be named Defensive MVP of the bowl game, played "FIU Football," recording two sacks.

Yet despite the furious rally, the Panthers found themselves trailing 32-31 with 1:14 left in the game.

That's when FIU orchestrated the greatest play in program history.

On fourth-and-17, quarterback Wesley Carroll completed a nine-yard pass to receiver Jacob Younger, who flipped the ball to Hilton coming across the field. Hilton would scurry eight yards for the first down.

"The Motor City Miracle" helped set up Jack Griffin for the game-winning 34-yard field goal that would cap off an awe-inspiring, historic season for the Panthers.

FIU Athletics sportswriter Pete Pelegrin has been covering FIU football since the program began in 2002. Check out his blog "The Prowl" at go.fiu.edu/the-prowl

FIU Football 2010: The Season's Best

By Pete Pelegrin '96



MAYBE THEY KNEW

A boisterous, energetic, record crowd of 19,872 filled FIU Stadium for the season opener against Rutgers. The Panthers led the Scarlet Knights 14-13 in the fourth quarter before falling, but as nearly 20,000 would see, this was a different FIU team this season.

GAITOR LOOSE ON THE FIELD

Facing a then-Heisman Trophy candidate, FIU defensive back Anthony Gaitor made his own early case for a postseason honor. Against Texas A&M quarterback Jerrod Johnson on Sept. 18, Gaitor returned a 54-yard interception for a touchdown, forced a fumble and sacked the 6-5, 245-pound quarterback to lead the Panthers defense. FIU would go on to sack Johnson six times and record four interceptions ruining his chances at college football's most prestigious award.

ROLL CALL!

Throughout practice during the season whenever a Panthers' defensive player would make a standout play, senior linebacker Toronto Smith would yell out: "Roll Call!" and the rest of the defense would yell: "Ahooooooh!" It was the defense's rallying chant. Well, there was plenty of roll calling in

2010 as the Panthers, under defensive coordinator Geoff Collins, became the No. 1 defense in the Sun Belt and No. 57 nationally. FIU made a leap of 62 spots after finishing No. 119 in the nation in 2009.

SENIOR MOMENTS

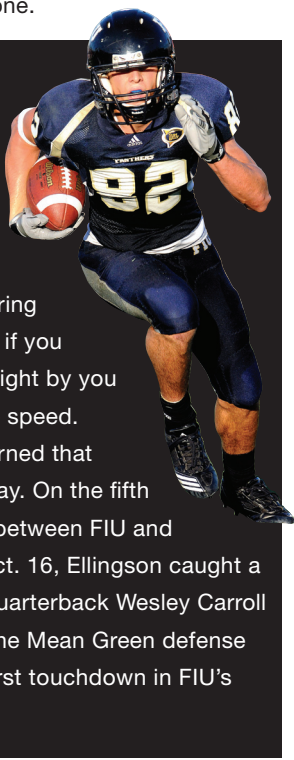
FIU's road to this championship season began with a win against

Western Kentucky on Oct. 9. However, the game was in doubt until a pair of defensive seniors stepped forward. With FIU holding a tenuous 28-21 lead in the waning moments of the fourth quarter, defensive backs Anthony Gaitor and Dez Johnson made a pair of game-saving plays. Gaitor clamped down a reverse at the FIU 22 and on the final play of the game, Johnson deflected a pass in the end zone.

DON'T BLINK

FIU veteran defensive backs like to tell the freshmen to get up on receiver Greg Ellingson during practice, because if you don't, he will run right by you with his deceptive speed.

North Texas learned that lesson the hard way. On the fifth play of the game between FIU and North Texas on Oct. 16, Ellingson caught a short pass from quarterback Wesley Carroll and zipped past the Mean Green defense 50 yards for the first touchdown in FIU's 34-10 rout.



REALLY ALL-PURPOSE

Throughout his career at FIU, T.Y. Hilton has accumulated plenty of all-purpose yardage, but against ULM on Nov. 6, he would need to be a true all-purpose player. Hilton scored four touchdowns in the game three different ways: returning a kick, receiving and rushing. Yet, Hilton would save his best all-purpose act for defense. With the score tied 28-28 late in the fourth quarter, ULM linebacker Ken Dorsey appeared to have a clear path to the end zone on an interception return, but Hilton chased him down and made the tackle to keep FIU in the game. The Panthers would eventually win 42-35 in overtime.

TROJAN HORSES

Perennial and defending Sun Belt Champion Troy did not know what hit them on Nov. 13 after FIU ran all over the Trojans in a 52-35 win. Three different Panther backs each rushed for more than 100 yards to spark a program record 448-yard rushing effort for FIU. Darriet Perry (186 yards, TD), T.Y. Hilton (158 yards, 2 TDs) and Darian Mallary (118 yards, TD) were the horses on the ground for FIU in what, at that moment, was the program-defining win.

NO WAY, GAUTIER

One game from a possible Sun Belt title showdown with Arkansas State, the Panthers were off to a slow start at Louisiana. FIU led just 7-3 before the Ragin' Cajuns blocked a punt and recovered at the FIU 2. The Cajuns needed just 72 inches to take the lead and momentum from the Panthers. But the FIU defense did not buckle, stopping UL quarterback Blaine Gautier on four consecutive runs to take the ball back from the Cajuns. The monumental goal line stand fueled the Panthers as they would go on to win 38-17.

THE MOTOR CITY MIRACLE

The greatest play in the history of FIU football happened at the Little Caesars Pizza Bowl and at the most important point of the game. Down 32-21 with less than one minute to play and facing 4th down and 17 yards to go, FIU executed a hook and ladder play to perfection to put the Panthers in position to win their first bowl game. Quarterback Wesley Carroll threw a nine-yard pass to Jacob Younger, who pitched the ball to T.Y. "Goodbye" Hilton. Needing eight more yards to keep FIU's hopes alive, Hilton tip-toed the sidelines and got the first down. Moments later Jack Griffin would kick the game-winning field goal.

TOUCHDOWN MAKER

After an injury-riddled 2009, running back Darriet Perry was back in stride this season and had a nose for the end zone. Perry shattered the FIU single-season record for touchdowns as he crossed the goal line 16 times enroute to leading the Panthers in rushing with 839 yards.

SUPER MARIO



Two years after winning the Sporting News' Sun Belt Conference Coach of the Year, FIU coach Mario Cristobal received the honor again, but this time from the Sun Belt. After the Panthers' historic season, Cristobal was named the Sun Belt Coach of the Year in a vote determined by the conference.

JACK FROST

There's a reason coming out of high school Jack Griffin was ranked the No. 3 kicker in Florida. It's just that fans had not witnessed his powerful leg or icy cool under pressure until this season. Against Middle Tennessee in the regular season finale, Griffin drilled a 50-yard field goal to mark the second longest field goal in FIU history. Then in the Pizza Bowl, Griffin delivered the pressure-packed, game-winning 34-yard field goal as time expired.

WHAT CAN BROWN DO FOR YOU?

Walk-on safety Kreg Brown sparked the Panthers defense with two interceptions in the Pizza Bowl. The first interception set up an FIU touchdown that closed the deficit against Toledo to 24-21. Brown's second pick put FIU in position to score the go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter.

SACKMASTER

The biggest pass rushing threat on the FIU defensive line this season was a man without a position since arriving at FIU. Considered by some not big enough to play defensive line, Jarvis Wilson played both linebacker and defensive end during his four years at FIU, but did not settle into one position until this season. Wilson was plenty big enough for the Panthers this season leading the team with 9.5 sacks and 15 tackles for loss. Wilson earned the Pizza Bowl's Defensive MVP Award for sacking Toledo quarterback Terrance Owens twice.



FIRST THE HILTON HEAVE, NOW THE HILTON WEAVE

In Jonesboro, Ark. they are counting down the days until T.Y. Hilton graduates from FIU. For the second time in three games, Hilton beat the Red Wolves on a dramatic late-game play. In 2008, Hilton threw an improbable game-winning touchdown pass in the fourth quarter to defeat ASU 22-21, a play that would become known as the "Hilton Heave." This season with FIU down 24-23 and less than two minutes left in the game, Hilton caught a short pass from quarterback Wesley Carroll and weaved 42 yards for a touchdown through the ASU defense in what is now known as the "Hilton Weave." FIU won 31-24 and captured its first Sun Belt Conference championship.

HOT -N- READY

Who would have thought it could ever be hot in Detroit on the night of Dec. 26. The Panthers won the first bowl game they ever played defeating Toledo 34-32 in a come-from-behind thriller. At 7-6, FIU achieved the first winning season in the program's nine-year history and won its first Sun Belt Conference title. The Panthers would celebrate on the 50-yard line of Ford Field by dancing and chanting the Little Caesars Pizza slogan: "Hot-n-Ready! Hot-n-Ready!"



Photos by Samuel Lewis, Roy Viera, Alex Hernandez, Ivan Santiago and Matt Shaw

THE FOUR HORSEMEN

They were believers long before the Little Caesars Pizza Bowl victory. Now Michael Maher '97, Frank Peña '99, Alberto Padron '98, MBA '09 and Eddie Hondal '88, MS '00 want you to join them at FIU Stadium.

By Deborah O'Neil MA '09
Photo by Ivan Santiago '00



W

hen the gut-wrenching moment arrived in Detroit's Ford Field – 32-31 Toledo, four seconds left on the clock and a 34-yard kick – Alberto Padron needed

Papa Panther. Heck, we ALL needed Papa Panther.

Padron, a marketing executive and father of three, leaped over four rows of seats to bury his head in the shoulder of Eddie Hondal – “Papa Panther,” FIU’s original football fan. “I can’t look,” Padron told his friend.

Hondal was just a breath away from exaltation as the clock counted down on the Little Caesars Pizza Bowl. Having attended nearly every game since the program’s inception, Hondal could feel the moment had arrived. With more than two million people watching on ESPN, FIU fans everywhere – the diehards and fair weathers -- were about to be rewarded.

On the sidelines, their friend Frank Peña paced between the 5 and 15. FIU Trustee Al Dotson reassured him, “Don’t worry. We’re going to win this.” Peña had nodded. He still had a knot in his stomach.

Back in Miami, Mike Maher, the fourth of the alumni foursome

nicknamed “The Four Horsemen,” blocked out the excited crowd at The Sports Exchange. He crouched in front of the bar with only his eyes peering over at the TV. “I’m focused on nothing but the snap and the kicker.”

Everyone held their breath during the 4-second arc of Griffin’s game-winning kick. When Padron looked up, he saw Athletic Director Pete Garcia alongside the goalpost with his arms in the air. The crowd exploded. The ESPN announcer boomed: “In their first ever bowl game, FIU has captured the Little Caesars Bowl!”

The Panther Roar echoed from Detroit to the Gables, across barrooms, living rooms and wireless networks. Grown men wept, wives screamed, strangers embraced, fans fell to their knees before their televisions.

The Motor City Miracle was complete. The FIU story of turning the impossible into the inevitable was written in the X’s and O’s of a dazzling comeback and stunning victory. The Four Horsemen’s football campaign to win the hearts and minds of all FIU alumni got a whole lot easier that night.

“You are no longer Eddie”

You might assume the Four Horsemen have been friends forever. Not so. It was FIU football that brought them together. Maher and Padron first met while huddled in a tunnel at the Orange Bowl watching the FIU football team practice in the rain. It was 2007, Head Coach Mario Cristobal’s first season, and the team was getting ready to play Penn State. Both wanted to see the new coach in action.

They didn’t talk again for two years. Then in 2009, Hondal invited Padron to a small meeting called by Maher to talk about football. When Padron walked in, Maher said, “Wait, I know you. Penn State? Orange Bowl?” The brotherhood of the Four Horsemen was coming together.

Maher told the group, “I am not sitting in another football game with the stands empty.”

“I was sipping the Kool-Aid hard,” said Maher, an IT consultant. “I said, ‘Cristobal is doing everything he can to build us a winning program. We have to help him.’”

Three others were ready to roll up their sleeves for football – Peña, Hondal and Padron. They agreed: A successful football program isn’t built on the field alone. You have to build success in the stands too.

“It was like *The Bourne Identity*,” Maher said. “Are you ready to commit yourself? You are no longer Eddie. You are Papa Panther.”

All had been regulars at FIU football games since the program began. Hondal served as FIU’s Alumni Association director from 1993-’98 and then director of football development from 1998-2002. Before FIU even had a team, he hired a plane to fly over the Orange Bowl during a UM-FSU game with a banner that read: “FIU Football Still Undefeated.”

To this day, they’ve rarely missed a game and often travel to away games on their own dime. The Four Horsemen came together with an entrepreneurial determination to make something positive happen, Peña said.

“That’s what FIU is all about,” said Peña, a Miami businessman. “No other institution has opened a medical school, a law school, Division I football and an on-campus stadium in less than 50 years.”

“We have mad love”

It was Alumni Association Executive Director Bill Draughon who started calling them the Four Horsemen, a reference to four football players who are part of American football lore. A sportswriter coined the name for the four

star players of the 1924 Notre Dame team. A famous publicity photo shows them on horseback, each with a football tucked under his arm.

The image of four football stalwarts carrying the ball for the university isn’t too far off. After the 2009 meeting, the foursome got to work on an outreach plan focused on winning the hearts and minds of FIU’s disinterested graduates.

They met continually through early 2010, putting in hours for FIU after leaving work. Soon enough, they were invited to join the Alumni Association Board and serve as its Athletics Liaison Committee.

“We do this because we have mad love,” said Maher. “That’s the only way I can put it.”

Each will tell you: This is personal. Hondal has a love of FIU that’s infectious. Maher remembers how FIU gave him a shot and changed his life. As an undergraduate, Peña served on the Student Government that approved a fee increase for football.

“There is a personality to FIU being young but full of promise,” Padron said. “There is proof of performance in our accomplishments, but everyone knows our best days are ahead. A lot of alumni would describe themselves with the

Continued

same set of adjectives. FIU is us, and we are FIU.”

Every new football program needs a corps of devoted alumni who build the fan base, says Cristobal.

“It means everything when alumni like them find the time to spread the word and create awareness of the program, to be the catalysts of excitement,” Cristobal said. “They can see into the future of what the program is going to be. They know the rewards and the great moments are going to be there. They get it. That’s the best way to put it.”

“The secret sauce”

From the start, their objective has been to build university pride through athletics. The barrier: In a trendy city, FIU is not fashionable. The fix: Get passionate alumni to advocate for FIU. Back then, of course, they dared to dream: A big bowl win would certainly help.

“We can’t expect everyone to be fanatical like us,” Hondal said. “But in this city, as finicky as fans are, now that we are winning, we have to take advantage of this sentiment and say there is plenty of space on the bandwagon.”

The power of football to build university pride is well documented. “In the stadium for that three hours, you are one,” said Draughon. “It is a bonding experience.”

Cristobal often describes football as a window into the university. Says Padron, “I am euphoric about what people are going to see when they look into that window. They are going to see a vibrant university and say, ‘How come I didn’t know about this place?’”

The Four Horsemen launched a “Meet the Coach” series last spring to introduce Cristobal and show off the new Landon Fieldhouse.

“We felt the secret sauce was in granting alumni a degree of intimacy with this program,” Padron said. “Once we granted access, Coach Cristobal didn’t disappoint. We had to have Coach Cristobal’s dynamic

leadership to really pull it off.”

Each tapped his network of friends and colleagues to attend the gatherings with Cristobal. For the true football fan, it was a glimpse behind the scenes of a Division I football program. For others, it was exciting to witness the program FIU was building.

Nearly 1,000 people attended a Meet the Coach session leading into the 2010 season. Eventually the FIU Division of External Relations began assisting with the events as they grew in popularity.

“What people took away from these was seeing how real Mario is,” Maher said. “He leaves a lasting impression.”

“Awaken the Panther within”

When pre-season was over, it was time to light up the grill.

The Four Horsemen were among the first to sign up for a corner spot in the new Alumni Association Panther Pit Tailgate Village. The elaborate setup with televisions streaming the day’s games and mounds of sizzling food became a crowd magnet. Peña orchestrated colorful menu choices like:

“No Stopping TY Hilton Wings” – These ultra-hot chicken wings soon enough will be consuming endzones on Sundays.

“The Four Horsemen 24 Masitas de Puerco” – These pork fried chunks are guaranteed to awaken the Panther within you.

The menu names reveal a lot about these friends. For all the seriousness of their mission, the Four Horsemen are having fun. Lots of fun. And their M.O. is simple: FIU is part of everything they do.

FIU President Mark Rosenberg says the Four Horsemen are a perfect example of how alumni are “a lifeline for a lifetime.”

“They make it a priority to help FIU reach the next level by giving of their time and hard work,” Rosenberg said. “They are proud of FIU and they carry that pride with them everywhere they go. I would love to see more

alumni follow their lead.”

They’re the guys wearing FIU T-shirts in Publix and calling up *The Miami Herald* when FIU Football gets short shrift. They preach the gospel of FIU Love on Facebook and Twitter. They take issue with fellow FIU alumni cheering for the other team in town and not their alma mater. With 170,000 alumni, the Four Horsemen figure every home game should be sold out.

“We have to teach people it’s OK to cheer for FIU,” said Padron. “From a math standpoint, if we only convince 10 percent of us, we are at standing room only in the stadium.”

“Come and join us”

When Maher arrived at the Sports Exchange Dec. 26 to watch the Little Caesars Pizza Bowl, he bumped into a number of FIU alumni who didn’t know FIU was about to play in a bowl game. Maher prodded them to stay. At halftime, he told everyone, “Listen, this team is coming back.”

When Griffin’s kick squeezed through, the place went crazy. “I’m hugging strangers and slapping high-fives with guys who said, ‘Man, I’m glad you told me the game was on!’”

Peña’s cell phone lit up like a scoreboard. Dozens of text messages streamed in from friends who had watched on ESPN. Peña welcomes the new believers.

“A lot more people became Panther fans that night,” Peña said. “It’s a big tent. Everyone is welcome. Come and join us. If they come out to our first game this year they are going to see what a great university they belong to and they are going to have a wonderful time.”

Lately, the Four Horsemen have been taking the opportunity to talk up the 2011 home opener. The tailgate should be the biggest ever. The menu is sure to feature a Motor City Miracle.

HIGH TOUCH LEADERSHIP

President Mark Rosenberg uses athletics and a personal touch to build university pride during his first year

By Dan Grech
Photo by Ivan Santiago '00

IT WAS JUST AFTER 8 A.M. ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6: HOMECOMING DAY. MARK ROSENBERG, FIU'S FIFTH PRESIDENT, WORE A SHARP BLUE SUIT, READY TO BEGIN WHAT WOULD BE AN 18-HOUR DAY OF HAND-SHAKING, PHOTO-POSING, SCHOOL-RALLYING. HE WOULD GIVE FOUR "OFFICIAL" TALKS AND DOZENS MORE INFORMAL ONES. HE WOULD MEET WITH ALUMNI, STUDENTS, PARENTS, FACULTY, STAFF, DONORS, COMMUNITY LEADERS. HIS DAY WOULD CULMINATE, OF COURSE, WITH THE BIG GAME.

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Rosenberg called Homecoming the most important day of his year-and-a-half-old presidency. The day encapsulated everything Rosenberg had worked toward during his first year – building school spirit, activating alumni, engaging the community, inspiring faculty and staff, telling the FIU story of overachievement. “I’m pumped,” he said as he began his day. “I’ve been waiting for this.”

Under Rosenberg’s direction, university leaders had planned the grandest, most festive homecoming in school history. The tailgate featured a live concert by Lifehouse; the parade had more floats. The university hosted reunions for past student government presidents, former athletes, retired professors and parents. Some 17,000 people filled FIU stadium for the football game.

At 8:30 a.m., Rosenberg went to a breakfast for the Student Government Alumni Association Advisory Council. He struck up a conversation with Miami attorney Roberto Pardo ’81.

“Every time I come here I can’t believe it,” Pardo said, “From three little buildings in a field to this. I don’t even know where I am.”

“This is the house you built,” Rosenberg reminded him.

A few minutes later, Pardo introduced himself as student government president of 1980. Rosenberg interjected, “I thought you were 81?” Rosenberg pulled out the RSVP list – it was, indeed, 1981. Rosenberg studies these details – a spouse’s name, birthdays, grades – because he wants everyone he meets to know they matter to him. They matter to FIU.

“This guy is amazing,” Pardo said later. “I think he’s the right president for where we are going. He’s got ideas. He wants to integrate the community. It’s an awesome time. Finally you can have some pride to be an FIU graduate.”



Rosenberg spent 29 years at FIU as a professor, dean and provost before moving to Tallahassee to become chancellor of the State University System for three years. He returned to Miami in August 2009 as president of FIU.

He’s made relationship building, on and off campus, a central focus of his presidency. The first meeting of his presidency was with the Alumni Association. Since then, FIU organized more than a dozen community receptions to introduce Rosenberg to more than 500 business owners, educators, ministers, elected officials and community leaders from Kendall to Hialeah to Key Biscayne. He’s hosted more than 40 meetings with groups of faculty at the president’s



“I bleed blue and gold, and I know a lot of faculty and administration and alumni do too. That’s a point of pride.”

for the football game?”

Rosenberg says his emphasis on Homecoming is not really about football. “I don’t view athletic events as athletic events, but as university events,” he said. “Where else can we bring 20,000 students together to cheer for the university? I bleed blue and gold, and I know a lot of faculty and administration and alumni do too. That’s a point of pride.”

“The whole point of Homecoming is to inspire people about the institution.”

FIU nursing student Brooke Lowy was happily surprised when Rosenberg remembered her by name at Homecoming. She’d met him only once before. The former member of the Dazzlers, now a Miami Dolphins cheerleader, was at the Alumni Association tailgate signing posters.

Rosenberg stopped by to say hello, pose for a photo and ask her how classes were going.

“He’s awesome,” Lowy said. “It’s really cool that he actually gets involved and talks with students.”



residence, the Reagan House.

Rosenberg convened these gatherings to hear what faculty and people in the community have to say about FIU.

The president’s role is to be approachable, says Rosenberg. “People want a president they can have a conversation with,” he said. “The president personifies the institution.”

Truth is, Rosenberg is more than approachable; he often does the approaching. When he spotted a group of parents taking a campus tour on Homecoming Day, he walked right over with a big smile.

“Hi! Is this a tour? I’m Mark Rosenberg. Welcome to FIU!” He spent a couple of minutes chatting with the group, ending with a question: “Are any of you going to be here

For FIU’s home opener in September, the football team played one of the country’s oldest football schools, Rutgers. FIU’s news staff captured the spirit of the day on film. The rousing video showcases the excitement Rosenberg is cultivating at FIU. There are smiling Dazzlers, cheering students with blue and gold face paint and crowds chanting “FIU! FIU!” Out on the field with a pumped-up football team is FIU’s brand new marching band.

The band had been eliminated due to budget cuts that have rocked FIU in recent years, forcing it to shutter programs, lay off faculty and staff and raise tuition. One of Rosenberg’s first acts as president was to find the money to reinstate the band. He did that by bringing together the Student Government Association, the Division of Student Affairs, the Division of External Relations, the College

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FIU First Lady Rosalie Rosenberg, School of International and Public Affairs Director John Stack and President Rosenberg arrive at FIU Stadium for the homecoming game.



President Rosenberg participates in the lighting of the Torch at the Homecoming Game.

Continued

of Architecture + The Arts and donors. The band made its comeback sporting new uniforms donated by Perry Ellis.

On Homecoming Day 2010, the band was featured on the front page of *The Miami Herald*.

“You can’t give a great experience to the students and fans without a band,” Rosenberg said. “Now, you see kids and alumni screaming their heads off, painting their bodies. That kind of enthusiasm can’t happen exclusively in a classroom. And it’s our obligation to provide it.”

Rosenberg’s philosophy of university leadership can be summarized in two words: high touch. “High touch is homecoming. It’s the relationship between students and faculty, between alumni and staff. It’s face-to-face contact.”



Rosenberg says a high touch university is a spiritual place. “Universities are communities of memory and hope. That’s what homecoming is about,” he said. “It’s an opportunity to remind our graduates about the educations they got in and out of the classroom. And to challenge them to help us ensure that future and current students are able to get the same high-quality education that they got.”

At a time when students can log onto a computer and get a college degree, Rosenberg says FIU has to offer more than an education. “Homecoming is part of a survival strategy. Homecoming is what we can offer that online universities can’t: a sense of belonging, an identity.”

Rosenberg has taken to showing the video of the Rutgers game to alumni. He recalls with pride the response of one alumnus, class of 1981. “Mark,” the man told Rosenberg, “I’ve never seen anyone cheer for FIU before.”

In September, the FIU Board of Trustees unanimously gave Rosenberg a mark of “superior” during his annual evaluation, the highest possible rating. Among the accomplishments he highlighted for the board: strengthening and expanding partnerships with the Miami-Dade Public Schools, increasing financial aid to students and obtaining \$4.6 million for the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine.

Trustee Cesar Alvarez, chair of the committee that evaluated the president, praised Rosenberg’s leadership style. “He’s a man who listens, engages, encourages, motivates and rewards,” Alvarez said.

Rosenberg has laid out an ambitious growth plan called “FIU 2020.” Over the coming decade, Rosenberg plans to grow the university by 20,000 students and spend \$10 billion dollars on instruction and research and \$500 million in additional construction.

“To grow like that is a response to demand,” he says. “We’re not going to turn our backs on eligible students in this community. And as our brand value grows, we’re going to draw in more people from outside of this community and around the world.”

Rosenberg relies on a sports metaphor – a “four-front funding offensive” – to explain how he plans to raise money to support that growth: from federal, state, local and private sources. Alumni giving is a key pillar of growth.



It was the late afternoon of Homecoming day. The parade had ended, and kickoff between FIU and the University of Louisiana Monroe was still a few minutes away.

Rosenberg had a small gap in his schedule, so he spent it walking around the tailgate area outside the stadium. He was repeatedly stopped by parents, alumni and students. They wanted to pose with the president of FIU.

“In the old days before football, that would never have happened,” Rosenberg said. “Emotionally, I wasn’t planning for that. It was humbling and gratifying. I found it inspirational. It was a marker that I was on the right course.”

The game went into double overtime. It was a Cinderella finish. FIU won. The game ended at close to midnight, and Rosenberg had earned a rest. But he had one more appointment to keep.

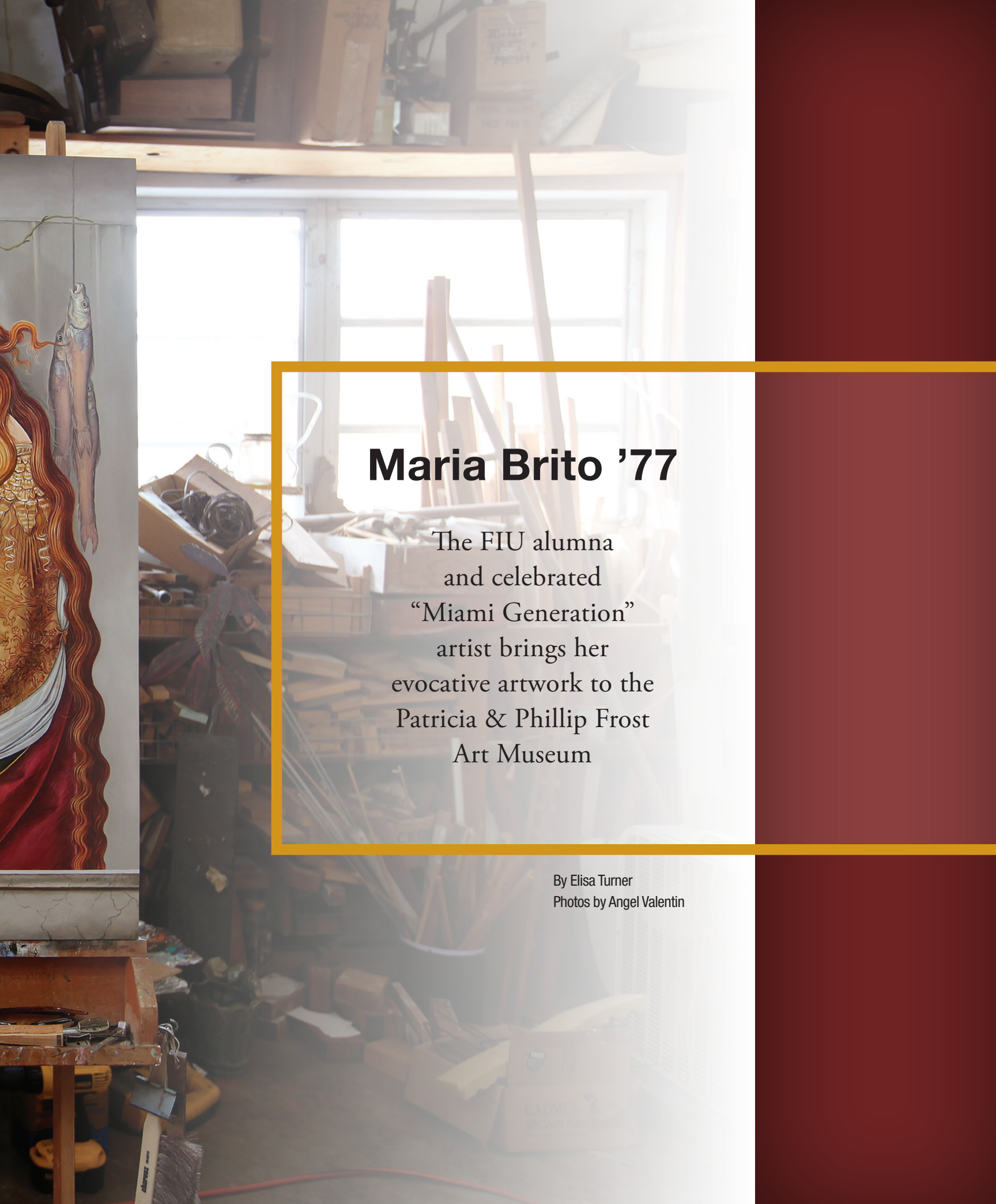
He hosted a group of former FIU athletes and their loved ones in his presidential suite in the stadium. It was the first time the founders of the FIU football team had been formally invited back. Rosenberg toasted them with bottles of champagne. Then he began a more serious conversation. He told them he wanted to talk about Homecoming for next year.



Dan Grech is radio news director of WLRN Miami Herald News and co-hosts *Under the Sun* on WLRN. He last profiled Mark Rosenberg after he was selected as FIU’s new president in Fall 2009.



A Veri:



Maria Brito '77

The FIU alumna
and celebrated
“Miami Generation”
artist brings her
evocative artwork to the
Patricia & Phillip Frost
Art Museum

By Elisa Turner
Photos by Angel Valentin

Maria Brito



Your first encounter with Maria Brito's show at the Frost Art Museum could be confusing. You may even wonder why it's there. If so, you'll please Brito, a rebel at heart who is unafraid of controversy.

A celebrated artist of "The Miami Generation," the FIU alumna traces her defiant spirit to the long-ago moment when she concealed gold jewelry in her clothes on a Pedro Pan flight from Havana to Miami. Everyone knew doing this risked terrible consequences, but she couldn't leave the beloved bracelet behind knowing it was a serious financial effort for her parents to buy it for her 12th birthday. Decades later, Brito still cherishes the bracelet.

Her longstanding aversion to doing what's predictable, as well as considerable talent, has led to "As of 24/03/07," Brito's mixed-media installation at the Frost that runs through April 24. A small shrine—dedicated to a mysterious figure and recalling saints' altars—is an ominous part of the work. The shrine recalls the conservative Cuban Catholic upbringing, especially for girls, of the Cuban community transplanted to Miami in the early 1960s.

In her artwork, Brito endows simple, familiar objects with disturbing symbolism. This installation evokes a modest scientific laboratory where human forms are created in a clandestine manner. "It has to do with social, ethical issues related to the manufacturing of human life," said Brito, who is intrigued by

news reports about biological experimentation.

This will be the first solo exhibit at the Frost Art Museum for the FIU graduate, although her art has been in group shows at the previous museum space. The Frost also holds two Brito sculptures in its permanent collection.

Brito's art has been shown in every major exhibition of Cuban-American artists and in venues around the world: the Second Iberoamerican Biennial of Lima, Peru; the Olympic Sculpture Park in Seoul, South Korea; *Cuba Twentieth Century: Modernism and Syncretism* at the Centre d'Art Santa Monica in Barcelona, Spain; and in *The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity* in the 1980s in New York City at various venues including Studio Museum in Harlem. Her art was part of the traveling exhibit, *Arte Latino: Treasures from the Smithsonian American Art Museum*.

Frost Art Museum director and chief curator Carol Damian has known Brito for more than 20 years. As a professor, Damian includes Brito in her art history courses, especially given her own interest in women artists. Brito is "an artist of great complexity that can be inspirational to my students," said Damian, "especially in South Florida with all her references to growing up here as a child of exile.

"María has long represented herself and her life experiences in multi-media works that combine ceramics, painting, sculpture and installation in constructions that embody



issues of loss, femininity, women's roles and identity," Damian explains. "She has never wavered from her commitment to create works that are dense with serious personal symbolism and yet can be quite humorous."

In 2009, FIU art history professor Juan Martínez wrote the book *María Brito*, published by the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press of Los Angeles. A year later, at Book Expo America in New York City, his book was awarded "Best Arts Book – English" by Latino Book Awards.

This exquisitely illustrated volume about Brito belongs to the series "A Ver: Revisioning Art History," which explores contributions Latina and Latino artists have made to American and world art history. It highlights Brito's signature installations – mixed media interior spaces imbued with symbolism and emotion – as well as her paintings and sculptures.

"As Brito and her art have broken cultural, social and artistic barriers," Martinez writes, "they have made a notable contribution to the diversity and dynamism of contemporary art."

His book looks at Brito's artistic career in the context of recent Miami history, touching on how interest in Latin American culture increased significantly in the 1980s in the United States. This cultural shift, along with growing opportunities for women, coincided with her career.

Brito juggled roles of wife, mother of two sons and art teacher as she built her career. "For me getting married and having a family was what I was supposed to do," Brito says.

Still, she says, her father emphasized the importance of being educated so that she could support herself. She eventually earned four

degrees in education and art from FIU and UM.

"I had my children, but I just kept on going to school," she said. "Honestly, I never thought I would be creative enough to become an artist."

Martínez notes how Cuban culture has transformed Miami since the early 1960s,

"I hope to leave them with more questions than answers, which is what I love to do with my work."

when Brito came to the city along with thousands of other Cuban exiles. Miami was much smaller, with fewer opportunities for artists than exist today. Early on, Brito gained attention as a member of "The Miami Generation," several Cuban-American artists featured at the Cuban Museum of Arts and Culture in Miami. She was the only woman included. Brito's breakthrough came in the 1980s, Martínez writes, "in the context of multiculturalism and the growing recognition of women artists."

Brito and some Cuban-American artists of her generation are inspired by Renaissance and Baroque painting, Martínez said. Perhaps this is because Catholic imagery in this art is so familiar to these artists. "They were raised Cuban Catholic in a time that was very intense," he said. "But notice her relationship

to Catholicism is complex. If you look at some of the mixed media that deal with Catholicism, Catholicism is seen as kind of oppressive and overpowering."

These complex themes are present in Brito's installation at the Frost Art Museum. But don't look to Brito for interpretations of her shrine-cum-laboratory. As viewers

enter her single-room installation, she says, "I hope to leave them with more questions than answers, which is what I love to do with my work. I want to get people to think."

Elisa Turner is a freelance art critic and writer in Coral Gables. For many years she wrote about the arts for *The Miami Herald*. She is the Miami correspondent for the magazine *ARTnews* and columnist for *Art Circuits*, a print and online guide to the visual arts in Miami.





CAUTION
EAR AND EYE
PROTECTION
REQUIRED

Interview by Deborah O'Neil
Photo by Angel Valentin

ARVIND AGARWAL

Professor of Mechanical and Materials Engineering
2010 President's Council Outstanding Faculty Award Recipient

MY VISION

I develop new materials and coatings for biomedical, aerospace and defense applications. My main lab is called the Plasma Forming Lab. **Our plasma gun creates temperatures of 12,000 to 15,000 Kelvin, which is twice the temperature of the sun's surface.** Everything in my lab is done by students. They are the technicians, engineers and researchers. The students are maintaining things at an industrial level of operation. I have been working with a material called carbon nanotubes. **They are 1,000 times smaller than the thickness of a human hair.** You can't see them without an electron microscope. But these materials are very, very strong, 100 times stronger than steel. **My vision has been to translate nanotechnology into a real-life application.** There could be three or four different applications — orthopedic applications, like a new, much stronger bone for hip replacements or knee replacements or **next-generation thermal protective aerospace space coatings.** I also have a project with biology professor Lydia Kos, who works on skin cancer. She has a theory that cancerous cells and healthy cells have different hardness and stiffness, but it was a challenge for her to measure the hardness of cells. I don't know anything about the physiology of those cells, but I know how to measure the hardness. **We are measuring the hardness and stiffness of those cells hoping one day this will become a very nice diagnostic tool for skin cancer and other diseases.** After the end of my bachelor's program I realized I wanted to have a career in research. I didn't want to have a boss. I wanted to do what I like. Research gives me that independence. **I am my own boss.** There cannot be a better job than this.

Donor Honor Roll 2009-2010

Florida International University is grateful to those who support the university with their donations. This list includes individual donations of \$100 or more and organizational donations of \$1,000 or more received July 1, 2009 through, June 30, 2010. To learn about donor opportunities, please contact the FIU Office of Advancement at 305-348-6298.



Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim

As leading donors, Dr. Herbert Wertheim and his wife Nicole have been longtime partners with the university. Their \$5 million donation is part of their historic \$40 million naming gift to the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. Below, FIU President Mark Rosenberg (center), Dr. Wertheim (left of center), College of Medicine Dean Dr. John Rock (right of center) with the deans and incoming class of medical students at the 2010 White Coat Ceremony.



Benjamín León Jr. Family

The Benjamín León Jr. Family's \$2 million contribution is part of their generous \$20 million gift to the College of Medicine. The gift established the Benjamín León, Jr. Family Center for Geriatric Research and Education. The gift also established the Leon Medical Centers Eminent Scholars Chair in Geriatrics. Shown here are FIU Board of Trustees member Albert Maury, president and COO of Leon Medical Centers; FIU medical students Diana Morlote and Hanadys Ale; Benjamín León, Jr., chairman and CEO of León Medical Centers, Inc.; and Benjamin Leon III.



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Jim Zimbardi
Caryn Zinn ■
Vladimir Zlatkin
Monty Zullo
Gary Zwerling ■



FIU President Mark Rosenberg and U.S. Century Bank President and CEO Octavio Hernandez '74 celebrate the "Pantherization" of U.S. Century Bank. Photos by Ivan Santiago '00

PANTHER TERRITORY

As FIU "Pantherizes" the areas around its campuses, U.S. Century Bank leads the way by partnering in this community development initiative

By Martin Haro '05

Walk into the U.S. Century Bank's Tamiami branch and there is no mistaking that you are in Panther Territory.

Signage in the branch at the corner of S.W. 87th Avenue and 8th Street declares U.S. Century is now a partner in education with FIU. An FIU logo is prominently displayed inside and blue-and-gold athletic schedules may be found near deposit slips. Casual Friday has given way to FIU Pride Day, with bank staff – especially those who attended the university or have family currently attending – donning their FIU gear.

Octavio Hernández '74 is the Torch Award-winning vice chairman, president and CEO of U.S. Century Bank. In 2002, he co-founded the bank, which, like FIU, has grown by leaps and bounds to become a community leader. Today, the bank employs more than 20 FIU alumni at its 25 South Florida branches. They include Executive Vice President of corporate lending George Bermudez '03, Executive Vice President of global banking Oscar Gomez '75, and Brickell branch Vice President Ruth Jimenez '01.

Hernández has remained a loyal supporter of his alma mater, most recently with a

naming gift to FIU Athletics, which helped fund improvements to the university's arena at Modesto A. Maidique Campus. He is also featured in FIU's new Worlds Ahead commercial, which aired on local television this spring.

When FIU Senior Vice President Sandra Gonzalez-Levy approached Hernández and U.S. Century Senior Marketing Director Ileana Carrera Portal '99 about showing their pride in FIU in a big, bold way, they agreed to make U.S. Century Bank a torchbearer in FIU's Pantherization initiative, an effort to dress up the university's neighborhoods in blue and gold.

"The histories of FIU and our community are intertwined – they have changed enormously over the years," Hernández said. "The two reflect each other, and U.S. Century has very strong ties and has made a very strong commitment to both."

The Tamiami branch was the first to be Pantherized last fall due to its proximity to MMC. Since then, three other branches have been brought on board, with the bank's Doral headquarters and Aventura branch coming soon.

"We have a claim on the word 'Panther' –

we've taken ownership of it in this community," Gonzalez-Levy said. "By partnering up with U.S. Century Bank, which is led by an FIU alumnus, we let people know visually that our reach goes beyond the four corners of our campus."

U.S. Century Bank employees have welcomed Pantherization.

"People are excited and happy to see FIU's presence at the bank," said Tamiami VP branch manager Raquel Benitez, whose son is pursuing an education degree at the university. "We've gotten a lot of new FIU business... students who think this is cool."

With U.S. Century Bank leading the way, FIU is pursuing Pantherization efforts with other area businesses and organizations.

FIU banners are flying along the main roads in the city of Sweetwater, just to the north of FIU. The Publix store across from MMC sells FIU gear and has FIU posters. Also, last fall FIU hosted its first FIU Shopping Day at the Dolphin Mall to promote FIU gear sales and give shoppers a chance to have their photo taken with Roary and the Dazzlers.

If you're interested in Pantherizing your business, call the Division of External Relations at 305-348-7235.

FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT



Dear FIU alumni family and friends:

FIU had a tremendous year in 2010. The end-of-year football bowl victory was a perfect way to usher in a great 2011.

I've known Mario Cristobal for more than 20 years, and I was ecstatic when he joined FIU as our head football coach. He brought with him a team of dedicated coaches, including Alex Mirabal, whom I've also known most of my life. Having seen Mario's passion for the game and knowing his work ethic, I knew that combination would be perfect for FIU. I

never lost faith in the first years of Mario's tenure, believing that a great team isn't built overnight. The success the football team experienced this past season demonstrated the tangible example of what is yet to come.

As an alumnus, I feel tremendous pride in our football team. It's so good to see their hard work be rewarded. For all alumni, this upcoming season should be seen as a call to action, a call to return to FIU. Be part of the pride.

In March, we will be recognizing the accomplishments of some of our most distinguished alumni at the 10th Annual Torch Awards Gala. Their accomplishments and leadership will be celebrated as they join the prestigious group of previous Torch Awards recipients. As the Alumni Association president, I would love to see you there to celebrate with us.

In the Spirit of Blue and Gold,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joaquín González".

Jack González '97

FIU 2010-'11 Alumni Association Board

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ALUMNI CELEBRATE FIU WEEKEND IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

By Adriana Pereira '05
Past President, Capital Panthers Alumni Chapter

When the Capital Panthers Alumni Chapter Board chose D.C.'s swanky Donovan House Hotel rooftop as the venue for a cocktail reception, we did so thinking fondly of the crisp autumn weather that falls over the nation's capital right around mid-September.

We selected a menu reflective of FIU's diversity, decorated the modern space with FIU paraphernalia and dropped items like rum cakes and domino sets in the gift bags. It was all done with one goal in mind: to transport alumni home, right back to FIU.

From Sept. 23-25, FIU hosted its Weekend in Washington. And we got more than we bargained for because the weather was just like in Miami -- hot and humid. The weather did not stop more than 200 alumni, university officials, FIU supporters and some of the White House and Capitol Hill's finest from kicking off football weekend by celebrating in true Panther style.

The FIU Weekend in Washington began Thursday when a delegation of alumni and university administrators and faculty met with members of the U.S. House of Representatives' South Florida Delegation, the U.S. Senate, federal agencies and President Barack Obama's administration to advocate for FIU and engage in advancing the FIU federal agenda. Even Roary made it to the Capitol steps.

On Friday, hundreds gathered by the pool of the Donovan House Hotel rooftop overlooking D.C.'s Logan Circle to network, engage and celebrate FIU. President Mark B. Rosenberg addressed the packed house, encouraging alumni to do their part in telling the FIU story and inviting them to come

“From undersecretaries, chiefs of staff and press secretaries, to small business owners, attorneys, non-profit managers and military personnel, FIU’s alumni in our nation’s capital truly are worlds ahead.”

home and experience today's FIU. After watching the video FIU in 2020 there was no convincing left to do. Alumni, many of whom had not been on campus since graduation, were shocked to see the university's growth and future plans.

Just as surprised was FIU's delegation of administrators, faculty and staff, who quickly realized the diversity and star power of D.C.'s alumni. From undersecretaries, chiefs of staff and press secretaries, to small business owners, attorneys, non-profit managers and military personnel, FIU's alumni in our nation's capital truly are worlds ahead.

The D.C. Chapter was established in 1997, making it the oldest out-of-state chapter of the Alumni Association. Kirill Reznik '95,

now a delegate of the Maryland General Assembly, began efforts in the late 1990s to charter the chapter and serve as its founding president. Ricardo Lasso '92, of Lasso and Lasso Attorneys at Law in Washington, D.C., continued Reznick's work and served as the chapter's second president.

Today there are more than 1,200 alumni in the Maryland, Virginia and Washington, D.C. area and the chapter has a board of directors and more than 100 active members.

The weekend ended on Saturday at the University of Maryland Byrd Stadium as the Panthers took on the Tarps for

one of the football season's first games. The FIU section was packed and loud as alumni got to watch their beloved Panthers front and center.

Special thanks for making the weekend a success go out to FIU Athletics, FIU Federal Relations, FIU External Relations, FIU Donor Relations, FIU Alumni Association, South Beach Wine and Food Festival, Frank Pena '99 of The FJP Group, Maria Aguado '05 of Barceló Hotels and Resorts, Monique Hamaty-Simmonds '96 of Tortuga Imports and Geico Auto Insurance.

To get in touch with the FIU DC Capital Panthers, email: DCCapitalPanthers@gmail.com or contact your FIU Alumni Association at 1-800-FIU-ALUM.



FIU alumni and friends of the university gathered on the steps of the U.S. Capitol last fall during the FIU weekend in Washington, D.C. Front row: Elena Balsinde '06, FIU Alumni Relations; Taylor Prochnow '10, FIU Federal Relations intern; Alina Gonzalez, MMC SGA vice president; Lori Ann Cox '97, MBA '01, FIU Community Relations; Carlos Becerra '98, FIU Federal Relations; U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen '75, MS '87; U.S. Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. Middle row: Adriana Pereira '05, FIU Governmental Relations; Jacqueline Penalver '09; Frank Pena '99, Alumni Association Board; Nick Autiello '11; U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz; J.C. Alexander '04; Duane Wiles, FIU Alumni Relations. Top Row: Cesar Gonzalez '97, chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart; Bill Draughon, FIU Alumni Relations; John Stack, Director of FIU School of International and Public Relations; Alex Rodriguez '07; Alberto Padron '98, MBA '09, Alumni Association Board; professor David Twigg and Roary.

Photo courtesy of FIU Office of Governmental Relations



By Deborah O'Neil MA '09

Silver Pride Reunion stirs memories of yesterday and excitement about the future

more than 100 people gathered at this year's Alumni Association Silver Pride Reunion to remember their time at FIU and celebrate the university's progress. The day-long reunion took place during the largest Homecoming celebration in FIU's history and ended with a thrilling FIU football victory.

FIU alumnus Nelson Mendez '81 traveled all the way from Norway to attend the reunion, which honored alumni from 1985 and earlier. "We had four buildings at the time," he said of his days as a student. "It's beautiful, but it's going to be more beautiful in 10 years. You have to remember where you are coming from and where you are going."

The 25 inductees into Silver Pride were given a warm welcome by FIU Board of

Trustees Chairman Al Dotson. "It's always good to go home, isn't it?" he said. "We've tried to keep the home fires burning so you have a place to come back to."

President Mark Rosenberg briefed alumni on the growth the university will see in the coming decade. FIU will spend \$10 billion on instruction and research and \$500 million on new facilities, he said.

"We will graduate another 100,000 students who are going to be leaders in this state, who are going to be leaders in this nation," he said.

Rosenberg reminded the group of the important role they have as alumni. "You are critical to FIU. You were critical then because you were students. You are critical

today because you are graduates, and you are critical tomorrow because you are going to help us tell the story of what has been accomplished here."

Each year, a number of the attendees at Silver Pride are alumni who haven't visited campus for many years. That was the case for husband and wife Joan Kittridge '78 and David Kittridge MBA '79. Neither has been to FIU since they graduated.

"I got an email saying, 'Isn't it time you came back? It's been a long time,'" said Mrs. Kittridge. "It came to my heart."

The couple said they were glad they came. "From the two buildings and runway we used to park on, it's definitely changed for the better," Mr. Kittridge said.

CLASS NOTES

1970s



Ana M. Guillen '75, the vice president of the Florida Society of Enrolled Agents, received the group's Excellence in Public Awareness Award last summer in recognition of her significant contributions to the

organization and outstanding service in the area of public awareness.

1980s

Cynthia J. Dienstag, Esq. '83, a marital and family law attorney with more than 22 years of experience, was recognized by Florida Trend magazine as a member of the Florida Legal Elite for the fifth consecutive year. Dienstag is a member of the FIU Alumni Association board of directors.



Stephanie E. Petrosky '87 has been named executive director for A Classic Residence by Hyatt in Plantation, Fla. Petrosky recently completed a master's in health care administration at

Capella University.

1990s

Juan C. Martinez, Esq. '91, an attorney with GrayRobinson, saw his "hard work, dedication and professionalism" recognized by the South Florida Legal Guide, which named him one of the 2010 Top Lawyers. Martinez specializes in commercial and real estate litigation.

Maria Yip, CPA '91, recently expanded the operations of her Yip Associates, a South Florida-based forensic accounting and corporate restructuring firm, into Jacksonville. Yip is a member of the FIU School of Accounting Advisory Board.



Peter Stanham MBA '93, a 17-year airline veteran, was named American Airlines' managing director of finance for Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America. He is responsible for financial

management, business planning and procurement and accounting in 34 countries.

He previously served as senior manager of business planning. Stanham is a founding member of the FIU College of Business Administration's Career Management Services Advisory Board.

Alex Perdomo '92, MS '94, a longtime FPL employee, was recognized with the company's Volunteer of the Year award for his work as volunteer soccer coach and his efforts on behalf of the Alpha Kappa Psi Business Fraternity.

Ivan J. Parron, Esq. '94, JD '05, an attorney and principal of Parron & Associates, P.L., a Miami Beach entertainment, media and sports law firm, was elected to the executive committee of the Florida Bar's Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law Section, serving as officer and treasurer. He also was appointed to the Miami-Dade County Film and Entertainment Advisory Board and the City of Miami Beach Film and Entertainment Production Industry Counsel.

Toshiyuki Goto '96 joined the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort & Spa, located between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, N.M. Goto, who has spent 12 years in sales in the travel and tourism industry, previously

was part of the Hyatt Summerfield Suites El Segundo in Los Angeles.



Nestor F. Mendoza '96 and Michelle Nunez-Mendoza '03 welcomed a baby girl on Aug. 27. Camila Marie, who weighed 6.11 lbs. and measured 19.5 inches, joins big sister Zara Michelle, 4.



Jose Antonio Hernandez-Solaun '98 is president and founding member of the Mango Consulting Group and chairman of the Hernandez-Solaun Foundation. He recently was appointed to the board of directors of the American Diabetes Association and the MIT Enterprise Forum of South Florida. Hernandez-Solaun is married to his wife, Aubrey, and is father to Jose Antonio Jr., a.k.a. "Joey, 2.

Brian J. Rynott '99 was promoted to vice president of risk management with AWAS, a large commercial aircraft leasing company with more than 200 aircrafts. Rynott remains based at the company's global headquarters in Dublin, Ireland.



Former FIU Athletes **Amanda '05, MS '07 and David Tabor '05, MS '07** say FIU helped shaped their future personally and professionally.

"FIU laid the foundation for two former athletes to marry, have dependable careers, a lovely home, great friends, two dogs and a precious little daughter," Amanda said.

David, a football player, and Amanda, a soccer player, met in the FIU student-athlete weight room in 2002. He remembers turning to one of his friends and saying, "She's going to be mine," and walking up to Amanda on the incline

bench press and asking her if she needed a spot.

"From that point we dated and now, nine years later, we are married and have a beautiful daughter, Nevaeh Grace," she said. "We now live in the Tampa Bay area and both work in public service."

David is a Hillsborough County Sheriff deputy and Amanda is an ESE teacher.

"We miss our days living at the University Towers and all of the campus activities," they wrote. "We would never trade our time at FIU for anything. We made such great friends who we now call our FIU family and feel blessed to have found each other during our collegiate years."

2000s



Mireya I. Bender '00 gave birth to a baby girl named Mia Chase Bender on May 14.

Jeffrey Elliott '00 recently published his first book, *Complete Book of Knife Skills*.

Jorge V. Grossmann '00 received a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. Grossmann is an assistant professor of composition at Ithaca College in New York. For more information on the composer, visit shadowofthevoices.com.

Allan G. Phipps MS '00, the 2011 Broward County Teacher of the Year, won the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and recently was recognized for his achievements at the White House. Phipps, a South Plantation High School environmental science teacher, was the only teacher in South Florida to receive the honor.



Naida M. Torres '00, a fully licensed health, life, disability and variable annuities agent from the Florida Department of Insurance and a partner with AM Insurance Services, was elected to the

Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce board of directors. Torres is president of the Business Networking International, Coral Gables Chapter and a member of the board of directors and treasurer of the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Miami-Dade.



Manuel Rodriguez '01 joined Avila Rodriguez Hernandez Mena & Ferri LLP, a Florida business and litigation law firm, as an associate in the corporate and financial services practice areas.

Rodriguez counsels domestic and foreign clients in complex matters relating to general and asset-backed finance, cross-border and domestic mergers and acquisitions and corporate governance matters.

Photo by Maloman Photographers



Christine Denton '06 and Robert Barrueco '99, MBA '06 went on a first date to Gibraltar at the Grove Isle Hotel a little more than two years ago. Theirs was a blind date, set up by a mutual friend. They quickly fell in love, and the resort is where he proposed and where the couple tied the knot on Feb. 12. FIU, though, also

played a part in the wedding planning: The proud Panthers could not think of a better place than their alma mater when it came to finding the perfect location to take their engagement photos. Christine, a former SGA president, Homecoming Queen, peer advisor and president of Alpha Xi Delta, is a successful regional director for Mary Kay, and Robert is owner and president of his own full-service Web solutions firm, Yuca Productions. Congratulations!



Tae Y. Shin '01 has joined the Orlando office of Roetzel AS as an associate attorney. Shin's practice focuses in corporate law, mergers and acquisitions, business taxation and business

succession planning. He has represented closely held companies, individuals and corporations in transactions ranging from \$200,000 to \$40 million. He also handles matters involving executive compensation and estate planning. In 2009, Shin was named a "Rising Star" by Florida Super Lawyers magazine.



Adrian Alfonso '02, MS '03 was named tax director at Perez-Abreu, Aguerrebere, Sueiro & Torres, P.L., a certified public accountants and consultants firm. Alfonso specializes in medium-to-

large corporate and individual high-net-worth clients and family-owned corporate and partnership entities.



Victor Romano Ph.D. '02 is an assistant professor of sociology at Barry University. Romano recently was elected secretary of the executive committee of the HOPE, Inc., board of directors. HOPE's

mission is to fight housing discrimination in Miami-Dade and Broward counties and to ensure equal housing opportunities throughout Florida.

Benny J. Gonzalez '03 has joined the Chase South Florida middle-market banking team as vice president, covering the Miami-Dade and Monroe markets. Prior to joining Chase, Gonzalez was a vice president at Wachovia/ Wachovia Securities.

Sandra Rodriguez Barron MFA '03 joined a number of authors, including Salman Rushdie, Naomi Klein, Jennifer Egan and Rosanne Cash, in the lineup of the 2010 Brooklyn Book Festival last September. Fellow Panther Dennis Lehane '01 also participated in the one-day event.

Jose L. Roces '03 a member of the FIU Alumni Association board of directors, recently became director of Sales & Marketing at Corporate Caterers.

Alma M. De Rojas MA '04 recently was promoted to director of Writing and Editorial Services at FIU's University Advancement.

Sean P. Gazitua '04 and Emely Gazitua welcomed their first child, a son named Gavin Mateo Gazitua, on July 15. The baby boy weighed 7.4 lbs. and measured 19.2 inches.



Andrea R. Carcamo, MD '05 graduated from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine with a doctorate in osteopathic medicine last May.

A. Sheila (Janati) Oretsky, Esq. '05 was recently married.



Hatzel A. Vela '05 is a reporter at KNXV-TV, the ABC affiliate in Phoenix, Ariz. Vela made an 85-market jump from WCSC-TV, the CBS affiliate in Charleston, S.C., where he worked for four years. While at FIU, he was twice named editor-in-chief of *The Beacon*, the student newspaper.

Andrew Carbon '06, MS '10, a Jackson Health System Ira Clark Jackson Graduate Scholarship recipient, graduated top of his class with a 3.95 GPA and a master's in human resource management in the FIU College of Business Administration's Chapman Graduate School. During graduation, Carbon was voted by his classmates as the best all-around student and recognized with a Citizenship Award. He works at Miami-Dade College as the supervisor of admissions and registration at the North Campus.



Krista Casazza Ph.D. '06 received the 2010 Huddleson Award. The Mary P. Huddleson Memorial Award recognizes an outstanding article published in the *Journal of the American*

Dietetic Association. Casazza is an alumna of the FIU Dietetics and Nutrition Ph.D. Program.

Justin R. Cohen '07 recently completed U.S. Navy basic training at Recruit Training Command in Great Lakes, Ill. During the eight-week program, Cohen completed a variety of training that included classroom study and practical instruction on naval customs, first aid, firefighting, water safety and survival and shipboard and aircraft safety.



Juan C. Cuba '07 has been a member of the Office of Urban Affairs in the White House, where he currently serves as assistant to the director, since June 2009. Before joining the

administration, Cuba worked for then Sen. Obama's presidential campaign as regional field director for Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

Janet Dacal '07 will play the lead role in Frank Wildhorn's Broadway-bound *Wonderland, A New Alice* this spring. The show, a re-interpretation of the Lewis Carroll classic, begins previews on the Great White Way on March 21 and opens on April 17.

Elizabeth Pena '07 and **Alex Madrigal '05** were married on June 19, 2010.



Elizabeth A. Madrigal '07, MS '10 and **Alex Madrigal '05** were married on June 19, 2010.



Danai Pestana '07 was named Teacher of the Year from Somerset Academy Elementary for the 2009-'10 academic year. Pestana currently is pursuing a Ph.D.

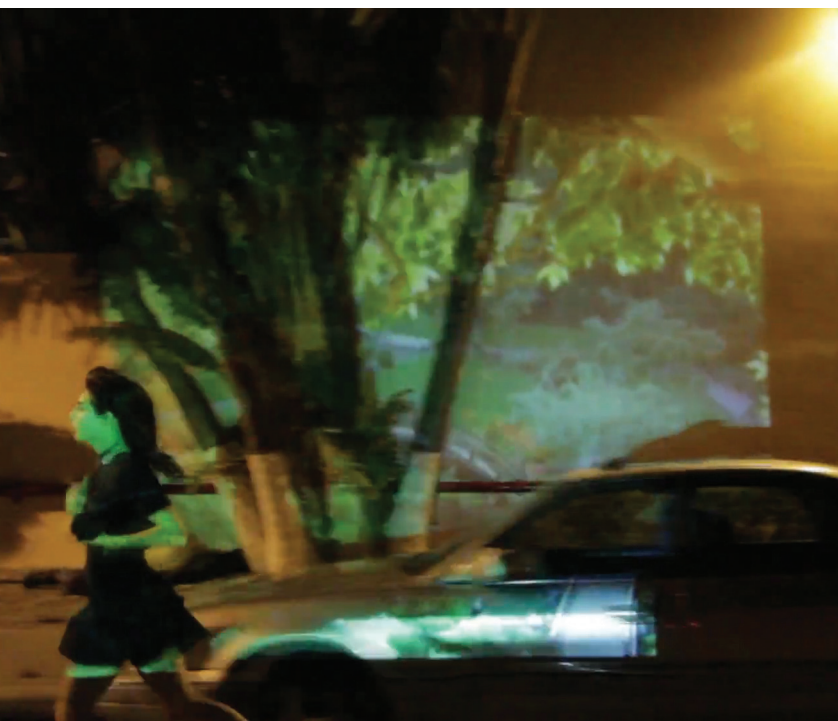


Joseph J. Figel '08 is in the Conservation Biology Ph.D. Program at the University of Central Florida. Figel recently was awarded a Wild Felid Legacy Scholarship and continues to help lead jaguar conservation efforts in Latin America.



Jorge E. Murillo-Zuluaga EMBA '08 recently launched Blue Water Journeys, a company specializing in small-ship expedition cruises to Central and South America.

 Alumni Association Member



Fine arts alumna **Jillian Mayer '07** took the Big Apple by storm recently when her "Scenic Jogging" short was featured as a Top 25 selection for the first-ever YouTube Play: A Creative Video Biennial at the Guggenheim Museums. The rising performance artist's 79-second video was chosen by a panel of judges from a pool of more than 20,000 international submissions that arrived over the summer.

The videos were present at the Guggenheim Museums in New York, Bilbao, Berlin, and Venice in October 2010.

"Getting picked to be in the Top 25 out of all these submissions by YouTube, Google, Laurie Anderson, Animal Collective, Darren Aronofsky, Ryan McGinley, Marilyn Minter, Takashi Murakami and Guggenheim chief curator Nancy Spector can make one feel extremely special and excited to be alive," Mayer said. "Video art is a pretty new medium and I am looking forward to seeing how it will be pushed."

Mayer's video sees her "sprinting down a desolate Miami street at night, racing to keep up with naturalistic imagery projected onto passing buildings."

Efrain F. Reyes '10 works for the Department of Defense at the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Virginia where he interacts with the House and Senate Armed Services Committee on program management projects for research and development at the center.

Donna Goldstein Ed.D. '92 recently received the Spirit of Excellence Award from the Broward Chapter of the American Business Women's Association. "Dr. Donna" is a psychologist, author, entrepreneur and community activist. A regional director and certified health coach with Take Shape for Life, a comprehensive health program, Goldstein has helped hundreds of people lose thousands of pounds by sharing her own 65-pound weight-loss story and leading a team of more than 90 health coaches across the nation.

Stephen J. Temple '76, an independent private equity fund manager living in Hong Kong, was a member of the FIU Sunblazer men's tennis team under coach Bill Fleming. After graduating from FIU, Temple played professional tennis reaching the 280th spot on the ATP world ranking list and representing the New Zealand national tennis team. Temple says the diverse cultural backgrounds of FIU's students and staff, and the study of international relations prepared him well for his current work managing investments in the emerging markets of Asia.



A new invention by FIU engineering graduate **Salim Nasser '04, MSME '06** could help millions of manual wheelchair users increase their mobility while decreasing upper body, repetitive stress injuries. His breakthrough design called Rowheel Wheelchair Propulsion System captured the \$20,000 grand prize in Global Design at the 2010 Create the Future Design Contest.

Nasser's design was selected from nearly 1,000 product ideas from engineers and students in 51 countries. He created the Rowheel system for his Senior Design class project while he was an undergraduate at FIU. The original design took four-and-a-half months from concept to prototype.

"I thought it was a great design that someone would be able to use for their own health," he said. "I polished it up and submitted it. I wasn't expecting to win."

Nasser is an engineer at NASA's Kennedy Space Center where he performs structural and dynamic analysis for flight hardware and ground support equipment. Since the award announcement, he's begun collaborating with Georgia Tech's Rehabilitation Engineering and Applied Research Laboratory to bring the product to market.



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Photo by Roldan Torres

VIP: Very Important panther

Monique Hamaty-Simmonds '96

Profession: President and CEO of Tortuga Rum Cake, Inc.

FIU degree: Bachelor's in Business Administration

FIU affiliations: I am a Lifetime Member of the Alumni Association and remain in contact with a few of my professors. I always support FIU both financially and through product donation for the many galas and functions that are held by the College of Business Administration and the Alumni Association. I will continue to support FIU in any way I can. I believe strongly that education is the foundation for your life. Knowledge is power and nobody can ever take your knowledge away.

Q. What are your fondest memories of FIU?

A. My fondest memory was my Entrepreneurship course. I remember professor Martin Luytjes Jr. well – he had a profound impact on the path I chose for myself. Professor Luytjes inspired me to be creative and unique. The objective of this class was to create an idea for a business and present both oral and written business plans. I actually had an invention and refused to share my idea until the class and the professor signed a non-disclosure agreement. I was that serious, and so was professor Luytjes, who commended me on my work. His words inspired me to become who I am today.

Q. What advice would you offer your fellow Panthers?

A. Having an education is of paramount importance to your future. Continue to work toward obtaining your degree and, if possible, try to expand upon that degree. In addition, I would like to offer this bit of advice: It is not always easy to sit back and listen, but I find that I learn so much more by doing less talking and more listening. More importantly, perseverance is the answer to achieving any goal you desire. Never allow anyone to tell you that you can't do it! "Can't" is not a word I take kindly to; in fact, I believe it should be removed from our vocabulary.

Q. Why is it important to be involved with the Alumni Association?

A. Every student should want to give back and create a better place for the next generation of students. After all, it was the generation before us that created a better place for us. Today, when I walk around the campus, I feel proud of the growth of FIU. The sky is the limit for FIU and I encourage the young alumni to get involved and support the university. I'm doing my small part and I hope to be able to do much more in the future.

Q. What is your proudest accomplishment?

A. My family. Yes, I am a proud entrepreneur, but without the love and support of my dear husband and our three children none of this would matter.

10th Annual
TORCH
Awards Gala



Saturday March 19, 2011

6:30 p.m. Cocktail Reception

7:30 p.m. Dinner

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