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FIU MAGAZINE

FALL 2016 VOLUME 35

MENTORING

Faculty guide students outside of the classroom



THE MENTORSHIP ISSUE

ON THE COVER:



Professor Naphtali Rishe fosters the talents of sisters Shalisha (left) and Shonda Witherspoon '16 in his high-tech computer lab.



Junior Eshrat Nikrooye-Asli runs an after-hours enrichment program for children at a local elementary school.



As a student, Jonathan Williams '15 (left) benefited from the experience and advice of John Farias '99 EMBA '16

Cover photos by Ben Guzman

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Who needs a mentor anyway?

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Professors step out of the classroom to push students to greatness.

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A diving coach imbues collegiate sport with life lessons.

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Fellow students rally on behalf of those new to campus.

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Those who received as youngsters now help kids in the community.

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FIU MAGAZINE

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MENTORING

Students nurture local youth through targeted outreach



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THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

is revolutionizing
treatment for childhood
mental health and
behavior disorders.



FIU SHOWS ITS SCULPTURE PARK

SOME TLC as it tends to
an impressive and growing
collection of outdoor art.

READ MORE STORIES, ONLINE OR VIA APP, AS PART OF OUR SPECIAL ISSUE ON MENTORING

- From the heart: LGBT students find mentors to help them soar
- A needed boost: Professor helps student land a competitive job
- Five easy steps: How to find your perfect mentor

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FIU MAGAZINE

FALL 2016 VOLUME 35

MENTORING

Alumni impact the next generation



FIU at a glance

55,000 Fall 2016 enrollment

9,700 Employees
(faculty, staff, administrators)

137,000 Alumni who live and work in
South Florida

194 Bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs

\$1.3B Annual budget

\$9B Annual economic impact

\$163M Total research expenditures in
FY 2014-2015

96 Percent of faculty who hold doctoral degrees
or highest degree attainable in their field

11 Colleges and schools including Medicine,
Law and Architecture

18 Division 1A sports teams



U.S. News & World Report ranks seven of FIU's graduate programs—among them international business (15), nursing (58), public affairs (67) and occupational therapy (69)—within the top 100 on its list of the Best Graduate Schools 2016.



The Obama administration recognizes FIU as a top institution for providing accessible, affordable education to lower-income students.

Forbes

FIU ranks second in Florida on the Forbes 500 list of America's Best Employers and 34th among all employers nationally.



The U.S. State Department recognizes FIU as a top producer of Fulbright U.S. Scholars for 2015-2016.



Washington Monthly ranks FIU 17th of 277 higher education institutions in social mobility, research and service. FIU ranked No. 1 in Florida.

Florida Board
of Bar Examiners

FIU College of Law graduates consistently dominate the Florida Bar Exam, with FIU earning the top passage rates on the three most recently administered tests.



The Chronicle of Higher Education ranks FIU one of the "Great Colleges to Work For" in its 2016 annual report.

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GO PANTHERS

FROM THE EDITOR



"Feeling supported and having deep learning experiences during college means everything when it comes to long-term outcomes after college. Unfortunately, not many graduates receive a key element of that support while in college: having a mentor. And this is perhaps the biggest blown opportunity in the history of higher ed."

—Brandon Busteed,
executive director of Gallup Education

When the magazine team began discussing this issue, we knew early on that we wanted to write about mentoring. We didn't set out to create a mentoring issue, but the more we spoke about it, the more we realized that the advising and mentoring that goes on at FIU—and in our community on behalf of our students—could not be contained in a single article. Ultimately, we committed to what you hold in your hands, an entire magazine focused on mentoring.

In this issue, we highlight several types of mentoring relationships. Operating under the notion that no one type of mentoring is more important than the other, our team had lively exchanges when discussing which mentoring relationship should be reflected on the cover. Around the time these discussions were taking place in May, *Time* magazine came out with its annual 100 Most Influential People issue. And there it was, literally right before our eyes, an option we hadn't considered and one *FIU Magazine* had never employed: multiple covers. As you've discovered, we opted for three front covers—one representing students as mentors, one representing the faculty-student mentoring relationship, and one representing the alumni/community-student mentoring relationship.

What we found was heartening. FIU is very much an institution where students can still get meaningful, one-on-one mentoring experiences. That's no small feat at a university the size of FIU—more than 55,000 students strong and one of the 10 largest public universities in the United States. Research shows that the meaningful relationships students develop as mentees contribute to an overall positive university experience, a greater likelihood of their graduating and better job prospects. FIU faculty, alumni and administrators remain committed to providing these intensely rewarding, fruitful experiences to students.

Now for the disclaimer: This issue is not meant to be inclusive of every mentoring effort at FIU. I'm happy to say that would be impossible; we could never afford to print a magazine with so many pages. Rather, we focused on relationships that are representative of the thousands of Panthers who mentor or are mentored in one way or another, day in and day out.

Always Blue and Gold,

Karen A. Cochrane
Karen Cochrane

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Alumni, please include your degree and year of graduation.
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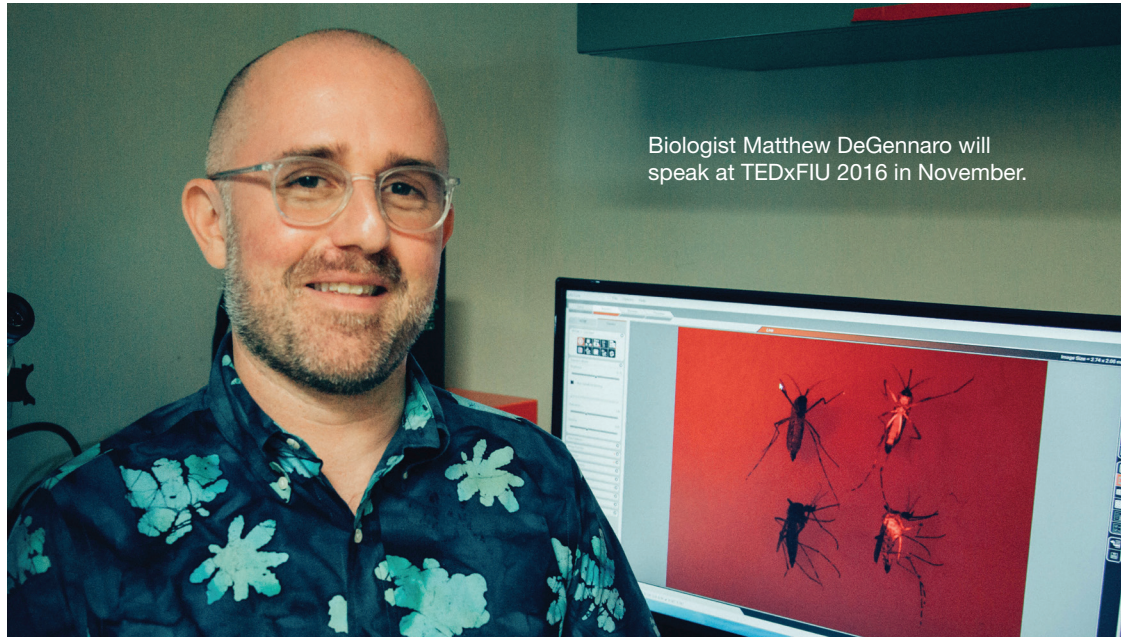
ON THE PROWL



Support for young entrepreneurs in Cuba

Fifteen budding entrepreneurs from Cuba gained critical skills during a six-week summer program at FIU. Participants, each of whom had at least a year of experience operating a small company in an area such as media, apparel manufacturing or hospitality, took basic business and intensive English classes on campus and received mentoring from local business leaders.

"This program was designed specifically to meet the needs of entrepreneurs who have had little support or business instruction and yet are running very promising enterprises under difficult conditions in Cuba," said Jorge Duany, director of the Cuban Research Institute within the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs, which coordinated the privately funded program.



FIU professors on the frontline of fighting Zika

When South Florida became the first place in the United States to report locally transmitted Zika cases, FIU professors stepped up to the plate to help the community navigate the outbreak. World-renowned expert in infectious diseases Dr. Aileen Marty of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine went door-to-door. She led teams of Florida Department of Health officials, along with members of the Medical Reserve Corps and volunteer medical students, in Miami neighborhoods to test residents for the virus. Their work helped confirm that local transmission had occurred.

All totaled, FIU professors have conducted more than 100 media interviews about the disease and how to prevent infection. Biologist Matthew DeGennaro, who genetically modifies mosquitoes in his lab to study their behavior, extolled the virtues of using the most popular insecticide to combat bites. "DEET," he said, "should be Miami's new perfume."

Promoting local economic development

FIU has partnered with community-oriented think tanks to propel economic prosperity in South Florida. The university's Metropolitan Center teamed up with Citi Community Development to launch a "prosperity agenda" for Miami-Dade County with the goal of improving opportunity for low-income families. The university also unveiled a report, co-written with the Creative Class Group, that suggests leveraging the region's role as a global hub for Latin America and its growing startup ecosystem.





Educational partnership grows

A local philanthropist's \$2 million donation has made possible the expansion of a groundbreaking partnership between FIU and Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Called the Education Effect, the program aims to improve student achievement in inner-city schools by leveraging community and business engagement to provide greater access to

student experiential learning opportunities and professional development for teachers.

The program, considered a national model, already has seen graduation rates at one of its two participating high schools jump from 64 percent to 82 percent. The recent gift from Rose Ellen Greene, a longtime volunteer at Jesse J. McCrary Jr. Elementary School, marks the first foray into the primary grades and will bring together students, parents and the community with researchers and staff from FIU's Center for Children and Families, a nationally recognized clinical center.

NSF funds new aquatic chemistry center

FIU has launched the Center for Aquatic Chemistry and the Environment with a \$5 million grant from the National Science Foundation. The goal: to improve understanding of contamination of water resources—such as occurs during large oil spills and incidents involving pesticides and industrial chemicals—and design remediation strategies.

The center brings together students and researchers from the College of Arts, Sciences & Education, the College of Engineering & Computing and the Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work. They will undertake environmental monitoring and data analysis in support of policy recommendations that will help mitigate damage to fragile natural ecosystems and public health.



Treasure: Journey's End

A new version of an old favorite has docked at MMC. A gift of the Martin Z. Margulies Family Collection, the original "Journey's End" arrived on campus in 1997. Over the years, weather wrecked the ship's wooden elements. So the university commissioned Israeli-born, New York-based artist Ilan Averbuch to recreate his work using steel. Installed in August, it measures 12 feet by 40 feet and stands near the Wertheim Performing Arts Center.

Averbuch hopes viewers will see a narrative in the piece, be it one taken from the Bible—Noah's ark—or from popular novels or movies that speak to "dislocation," of objects appearing in unexpected places. "My hope is that it tells each student a story that he wants to hear," Averbuch says. "The idea is to steer people's imaginations and minds."

FIU success earns more state funds

FIU's efforts to improve graduation rates and prepare students for high-paying 21st century careers have translated into \$25 million in performance funds for the 2016-2017 year.

The state money recognizes FIU's upward movement in key areas. FIU has created new support programs and invested in enhanced academic advising to help students graduate "on time"—which is defined nationally as within six years—and actively assist students in securing internships and jobs. The university also redesigned 17 prerequisite courses, infusing many of them with technology, and introduced the Mastery Math Lab, a tutoring center that has dramatically improved the pass rate for college algebra.



ON THE PROWL



FIU study: Get your Zs or risk Alzheimer's

FIU researchers have made an important discovery in the fight against Alzheimer's disease: Don't skimp on sleep. Their recently published study suggests that lack of sleep may increase the chances of developing the disease later in life—even for individuals with no genetic predisposition to the illness.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia and affects nearly 40 million people worldwide.

Another important finding: People who don't seek help for their depression also run a greater risk of getting the disease.

The study was the first to identify sleep deprivation and untreated depression as risk factors independent from genetics, said principal investigator Shanna L. Burke, an assistant professor of social work at the FIU Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work.



Quick response for medical disasters

If disaster strikes, the FIU-Florida Advanced Surgical Transport (FAST) team is trained, ready and equipped to evacuate and treat the most critically affected.

The all-volunteer squad officially joined the FIU family—and gained important additional resources—through a partnership with the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOC) and FIU's Department of Emergency Management. The highly trained medical professionals—doctors, nurses and emergency medical responders—comprise the only civilian team of its kind in the nation. FIU-FAST has the ability to set up a 10-bed intensive care unit to perform life-saving surgeries as well as transport critical care patients to and from hospitals following a terrorist attack, natural disaster or other major incident.

"We can do this at a moment's notice," HWCOC professor Dr. Aileen Marty says. She explains that the level of personnel and high-tech equipment far exceed what standard medical transport can offer. The result should be greater survival rates among the most seriously affected patients. "These are people whose level of injury or disease is so severe," Marty says, "they cannot make it unless stabilized by critical care specialists."



TOP 20

The Chronicle of Higher Education named FIU to its Honor Roll of "Great Colleges to Work For" in its ninth annual report on The Academic Workplace. The report recognizes institutions that earn top ratings from their employees based on a survey of 281 American colleges and universities.

A man with glasses, wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a colorful patterned bow tie, stands on a balcony with a large window in the background. He is smiling and has his left hand on the railing. The window shows a view of greenery outside.

5 Questions

for the vice provost

By Clara-Meretan Kiah '15

Jaffus Hardrick worked 40 hours a week while putting himself through college. The first in his family to earn a degree, he has looked to mentors for support and guidance throughout his career. As vice provost for Student Access & Success, he oversees more than a dozen strategic programs that cater to underrepresented students. These include the Golden Scholars Bridge Program, which provides academic summer experiences to help incoming freshmen get ready for college; Fostering Panther Pride, which offers tailored academic and other support to former foster and homeless youth; and the McNair Achievement Program, which prepares undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue doctoral studies.

1. Many of your programs have a strong mentorship component. What are the benefits?

Success is built on relationships. The reality is none of us have gotten where we are on our own. We've always had people in our lives to help us get there. Mentors are instrumental in encouraging students so that they can succeed. Mentors teach them to think critically, to ask questions and to solve problems. Mentors are giving them skills for the workplace and for life.

2. How have mentors impacted you personally and professionally?

Everywhere I've been, people saw potential in me and invested in me. My uncle and aunt pushed me toward college and supported me even as I worked 40 hours a week while taking a full load of credits. In the workplace, many of my supervisors began to bring out the best in me, positioning me for greater opportunities within the organization. You need people in your corner who will help you keep your eyes on the prize.

3. Is having a mentor essential for underrepresented students?

When you look at individuals coming from low economic backgrounds, or first-generation college students, many are coming from environments where they have never seen success. I love the slogan of the 100 Black Men organization: "What they see is what they will be." Underrepresented students in particular need to see successful people who look like them.

4. What has motivated you to mentor others?

The greatest joy in life is being able to help bring out the best in other people and see them excel. And because it was done for me, I have an obligation to do it for others.

5. What does it take to be a successful mentor?

It takes an individual who is genuine about making a difference in the lives of others, someone who is committed to the process. It's more than just a quick phone call. It's an investment of quality time.

Guiding the Way

Not quite a partnership, not strictly a friendship, the mentoring relationship—in any of its various forms—feeds the drive to succeed

Mentors have existed since the beginning of time. The first person to show another how to throw a rock or craft a spear to catch dinner certainly qualifies for the title. And so history repeats itself daily as humans share knowledge and advice, one on one, with those who seek the same.

Mentors today still aid others in securing dinner—now it's called “finding a job”—but they do so much more. In addition to opening doors, making introductions and going to bat, they help mentees develop skills, cultivate contacts and build networks, understand their own strengths and weaknesses and even map out a path to leadership.

Famous examples abound. The late poet Maya Angelou early on took Oprah Winfrey under her wing. She guided the future celebrity and media maven in many important decisions over the course of more than three decades. The late Steve Jobs counseled Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, one innovative entrepreneur explaining to another what worked for him when the going got tough. Obi-Wan Kenobi expertly coached Anakin Skywalker and, later, more fruitfully, Luke.

At FIU, as at other universities, the aspirations of young people run thick. You can feel it in the air: untapped potential ready to explode in the interest of doing something great. Harnessing that energy becomes the job of mentors: faculty, advisors, alumni, community members and even peers, all ready to steer, push and champion.

“Student learning in and out of the classroom is essential for 21st century competitiveness,” President Mark B. Rosenberg says. “Mentors provide know-how and how-to skills that complement formal learning and give an additional edge to our students.”

Alumni, too, can take advantage of such concentrated

support. Plenty see the value in consulting with professionals such as certified counselor Maria Tomaino. She heads career development activities for FIU's Office of Alumni Relations—which offers webinars, networking experiences and more for graduates, at no charge—and has met individually with hundreds of alumni grappling with the question, “What's next?” As they look to change jobs or re-enter the workforce, she holds their hands and walks them through the paces: self-assessments, resume updates, cover letter reviews, LinkedIn profile tweaks. (Appointments can be scheduled at fialumni.com/career.)

It's never too late to find a life sherpa, says Casandra Henriquez '04, MPH '06. A certified life coach, she runs a business counseling clients in the arenas of wellness, business and, most recently, love relationships. Henriquez has herself sought out individuals to guide her both personally and professionally. She suggests identifying a potential mentor based on his or her success in an area in which one wishes to improve. “Find somebody who's doing well and choose to spend time with them,” she says. “Greatness rubs off just by being in good company.”

And it's not just mentees who benefit from the huddle. Those who do the mentoring likewise get something in return. “It's really a rewarding feeling to know that you made an impact on somebody and that their life is better because of you,” Henriquez says. And almost anybody can help another. “You don't need any big qualifications,” she says of serving as a mentor, “other than to be yourself and to share your story.”

—Alexandra Pecharich

Read about life-changing mentoring relationships on pages 12-27 and 32.

Students report having developed skills and behaviors needed for professional success.



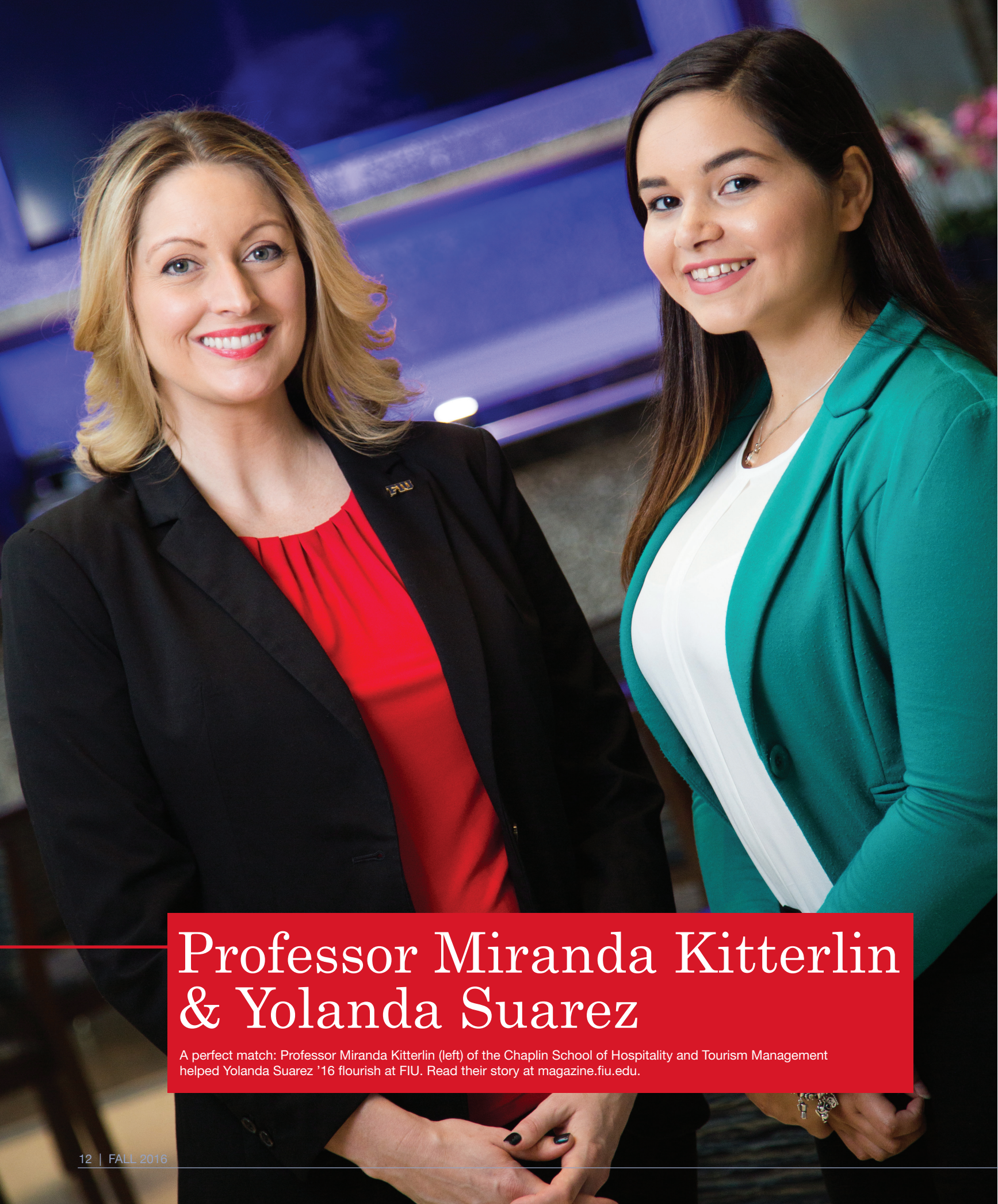
Students who receive mentoring graduate at a faster pace than those who do not receive mentoring.

Graduates were 1.9 times more likely to be engaged at work and agree that their education was worth the cost if they had a mentor who encouraged them to pursue their goals and dreams.*

After one year, mentored students have higher GPAs than their non-mentored peers.

**Interested in
mentoring a student?
Go to [fualumni.com/
volunteer](http://fualumni.com/volunteer)**

Sources: Institute for Higher Education, Gallup-Purdue Index Report 2015 and National Bureau of Economic Research



Professor Miranda Kitterlin & Yolanda Suarez

A perfect match: Professor Miranda Kitterlin (left) of the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management helped Yolanda Suarez '16 flourish at FIU. Read their story at magazine.fiu.edu.

The art of faculty mentoring

Student-professor relationships benefit both parties

By Gisela Valencia '15

As an undergraduate, Shonda Witherspoon '16 co-published an article in a scientific journal. Her identical twin Shalisha '16 led the development of a multifaceted software system.

The sisters reached these incredible heights thanks to mentoring from Naphtali Rishe. The eminent professor of computer science holds five U.S. patents and directs several acclaimed university and community research centers. He is the principal investigator on numerous projects, many of them funded by the National Science Foundation.

So when an instructor suggested that Rishe meet the Witherspoons—first-generation college students who went on to graduate this past summer with the highest GPAs in the College of Engineering & Computing—busy Rishe jumped at the chance to hire qualified help. Impressed by the sisters' assertiveness and enthusiasm, he offered them jobs, and the three soon dove into an important symbiotic relationship: The students contributed to the cutting-edge research coming out of Rishe's lab—the two mostly created and maintained specialized collections, or datasets, of geographical and related information for access on the web—and the professor helped the two deepen and refine their skills by providing direct feedback on their activities.

"They have done spectacular work. It is a privilege working with them," says Rishe, who has appreciated the chance to support two young talents in a meaningful way—something he continues to do as the women

pursue graduate degrees at FIU. "This is an old-fashioned apprenticeship," he says of what has resulted in both a productive collaboration and a close bond.

Creating researchers

The payoff for the Witherspoons is undeniable. "In our case, the exposure learning from someone who has been doing this a long time is something you can't quite learn in a classroom," Shonda explains. "You can actually become a research scientist."

The opportunity to conduct scientific investigations as undergraduates adds volumes to their competitive edge as future job candidates, Shalisha adds. "It makes us stand out, especially [working] with someone that is held in such high esteem as Dr. Rishe."

The Witherspoon-Rishe alliance exemplifies the value of faculty mentoring. Such connections significantly impact students on several fronts, from graduating on time to finding internships and jobs, establishing networks and earning admission into graduate school. At FIU, these mentorships have become increasingly common and reflect the importance of having a seasoned educator work directly and deliberately with young people brimming with potential.

Modeling success

Art education master's student Abdiel Acosta gives credit for much of his success to his mentoring relationship with nationally renowned artist and art education professor David Chang.

"Here's someone who has been teaching 30-something years, that is a practicing artist, who came from a great lineage of schools in Europe, and he just lays it all out," Acosta says. "It's just incredible to have someone that is that focused on helping you climb those steps and will really push you."

Katharine Lawrence MD '16 likewise found strength in a mentor who models what she hopes to accomplish in her career. Dr. Pedro "Joe" Greer is an associate dean in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine. His work on behalf of the indigent earned him a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009, the highest recognition given to civilians by the United States.

"I look at him and I see success in the intersection of medicine and social justice," says Lawrence, who earned her medical degree this year. "It's hugely important to have mentors who embody in their work and their passion this thing that you like to do," she says, "because then you know that your goal is achievable."

With a lifetime of insightful anecdotes to tell and plenty of lessons to share, Greer clearly has much to teach aspiring physicians about the world. All that means little, he stresses, if the mentoring relationship does not start from a place of mutual respect.

"Mentorship is not telling people how to do things," he says. "It's guiding, supporting, teaching people not about your success, but teaching people where you messed up, and letting them know they are not by themselves out there." ■

Coaching the whole athlete

Diver and trainer develop a bond in and out of the pool

By Joel Delgado '12

A lot can go wrong in 33 feet. FIU diver Lily Kaufmann knows that well. No matter how many times a diver stands atop the platform and looks down at the tranquil water below, the worry that something will go awry still rattles the nerves.

"In diving, there's a lot of room for failure," says the junior psychology major. "You're more likely to screw up than get it right. But it feels so good when you do get it right."

Dealing with the fear is half the battle, and with the help of her coach and mentor Rio Ramirez, Kaufmann has been able to face it again and again with great success. Under his guidance, she claimed bronze medals in two diving events at the Conference USA Championships last season and participated in the NCAA Zone B Diving Championships, where she set a personal best.

The greatest battles for any diver are in the mind, and Ramirez has been able to provide both a listening ear and words of wisdom to help Kaufmann and her teammates push past the anxiety and take the plunge.

"When you're on top of the tower," Ramirez says, "it's just you. You and your fears, your strength and your power. Every time you do a dive, you are reinforcing that you can overcome those fears."

Helping student-athletes work through those challenges gives Ramirez an opportunity to break the barrier between sport and life to instill lessons that his divers, like Kaufmann, can use both in and out of the pool.

"Sharing my experiences with them is what I like the most about coaching—that human

element," Ramirez says. "Every chance I get, I try to make a regular moment into a teachable moment and a learning experience."

International Connection

Kaufmann came to Miami from Winnipeg, Canada, and faced acclimating to a new city in a new country and balancing a schedule that is filled with diving practice, competitive meets and demanding college classes. She is one of 18 international students on the current FIU swimming and diving team roster.

In the course of helping athletes adjust to their new environment—and teaching them such skills as how to manage time and combat stress—Ramirez has shared both the trials and triumphs of his own journey.

He defected from communist Cuba in 1993 and enrolled three years later at the University of Miami, where he won four NCAA individual diving championships and earned three All-American titles. After graduation, he landed a spot on the USA Diving Team, competing in the Pan-American Games and the 2000 Olympic trials. He even spent three years, from 2004 to 2007, in the entertainment world as a lead character in the Cirque du Soleil production O, performing acrobatic rolls and high diving as part of the show.

After several years of pursuing other interests, a desire to return to diving led Ramirez to forge a new career path in coaching and FIU proved to be the perfect fit. Swimming and diving Head Coach Randy Horner hired him as the program's first full-time diving coach in August 2012.

Kaufmann was part of Ramirez's first

recruiting class. Almost immediately, the two had differences of opinion on the way practices should be conducted and they clashed personally.

"She's very driven and determined to be a part of the decision-making process and that's a great gift, but sometimes it's a little extreme," Ramirez says. "She's a leader, and I've learned to recognize that and help her be the leader that she wants to become."

Working through those difficulties proved a valuable lesson for Kaufmann.

"He's helped me learn to focus better and to be patient with the process," she says. "Frustration doesn't solve anything. He's helped me learn how to channel that energy toward making the changes I need to make and to make the best of situations, even when it's not exactly what you want."

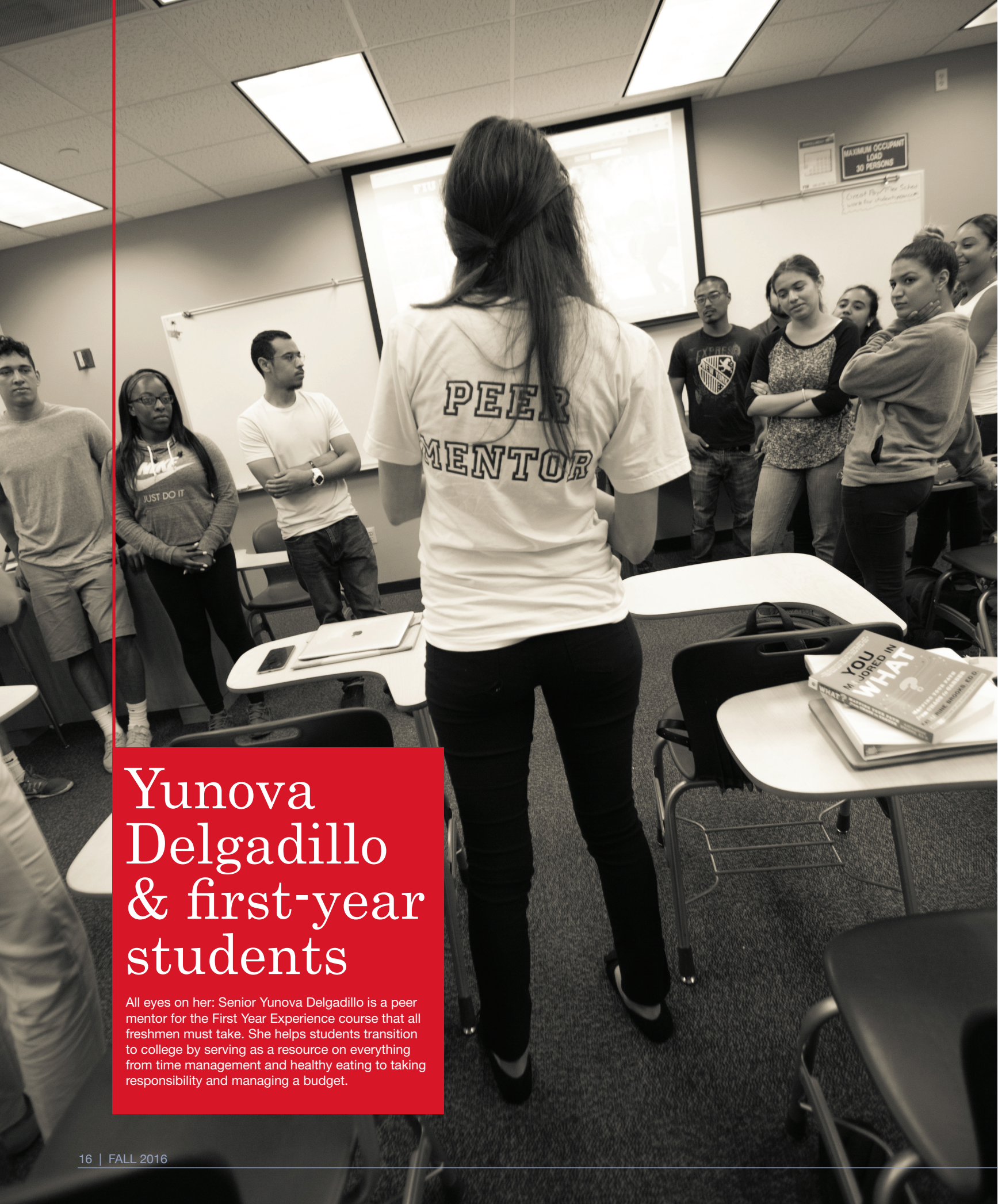
The two have developed mutual trust and respect that has overflowed into discussions about everything from post-college goals and personal issues to politics and religion. With counsel from Ramirez, Kaufmann says she plans to pursue a master's degree in physical therapy and hopes to pass down what she's learned from Ramirez and her collegiate experience to others.

"He cares about me as a person and not just as an athlete," says Kaufmann, who is now a team captain and has worked with Ramirez to welcome and help integrate new divers into the team. "The coaches I've had in my life, especially Rio, are going to be mentors I look to for life. They are there for the best moments of your day and the worst moments." ■



Coach Rio Ramirez & Lily Kaufmann

Reaching new heights: Lily Kaufmann excelled with the help of Rio Ramirez.



Yunova Delgadillo & first-year students

All eyes on her: Senior Yunova Delgadillo is a peer mentor for the First Year Experience course that all freshmen must take. She helps students transition to college by serving as a resource on everything from time management and healthy eating to taking responsibility and managing a budget.

Peer-to-peer mentoring

Young people empower their contemporaries

By Alexandra Pecharich

The word “mentor” typically conjures an image of someone older, an individual in a leadership position who shepherds a young person.

Leave it to FIU students—and their counterparts at institutions around the country—to break the mold. Increasingly, they are assisting peers through organized programs. The goal: help newcomers navigate university life and stay the course.

“What better mentor than someone living that experience right now?” asks Claudia Biscardi. She runs a program in the Office of International Student & Scholar Services that matches seasoned international students with those just coming in. The students’ similarities in age and life experience, she says, make the arrangement ideal. “They are on the same page.”

A hand to those who follow

Sherwin Hilton Jr. turned his difficult adjustment into a positive for someone else. “There were a lot of things I didn’t understand about the differences between the Bahamas and America,” says the civil engineering major, “and I had to stumble along and figure it out myself.” That rocky start prompted him to volunteer as a sophomore to assist an incoming fellow Bahamian. He gave her a campus tour and shared a few meals out. He explained how to get a Florida driver’s license and suggested she de-stress with free chair massage at the Student Health Center. Remembering the questions and loneliness he once faced, he says, “I just wanted to help in any way I could.”

As with Hilton and his mentee, students in mentorship programs often get paired around

a shared background—country of origin or racial or ethnic heritage—and less frequently around a common major. Usually the mentor is not much further along in his or her studies than the mentee. That fact alone can inspire students who find starting at FIU daunting, particularly those who are the first in their families to attend college.

“They get that role model that can work with them and show them what they can be doing in the next two to three years,” says Jeffrey McNamee MA ’03. He sponsors a program begun by African-American young men who saw many of their brothers exit the university without degrees. The group aims to provide successful examples to those who don’t always see others like themselves on campus. Simply put, McNamee says, “They need a little encouragement and guidance to maximize their potential.”

Leave no soldier behind

Army veteran Israel Najarro, 28, looked to a peer to help him transition to university life. Once responsible for gathering intelligence in Iraq and Afghanistan, he found FIU a challenge after eight years in the military. Difficult courses in programming and advanced math gave him trouble. (He has since switched his major to public administration.) An older student, he felt discouraged about his career outlook.

“It made me at peace to have someone to talk these issues out with, a fellow veteran who knows the types of things I’m going through,” Najarro says. He relied on Alma Rosario ’15, MA ’16. The former Air Force logistics technician, sidelined by injury in Iraq, already had an undergraduate degree

from FIU and was completing a master’s in disaster management when the two met at FIU’s Veteran and Military Affairs center.

“If I was feeling a certain way about a situation, or school was dragging me down, she was always there. She would be the sounding board,” Najarro says. “I believe her when she says she understands.”

Mentored by vets herself, Rosario took up the mission of helping other soldiers-turned-students forge their paths when she became president of FIU’s chapter of the national Student Veterans Association.

“Every veteran is unique. Some have all these ambitions, and you just have to stop and say, ‘You have to take care of yourself first,’ make sure they’re in the right state of mind to take on school,” Rosario says. She impresses upon peers that lessons learned in the military can transfer to educational, career and leadership goals. Her passion comes in part, she says, from wishing her own brother had received such support. He committed suicide upon returning from Afghanistan.

And while veterans have mentored one another informally for years, the SVA recently started a bona fide program. Any former or active duty soldier enrolled at FIU can sign up. The organization tracks participants, but the type and frequency of interaction will remain up to those involved.

“In the grand scheme of things, that’s what mentorship really should be,” Najarro says. “You don’t have to have set times or do all these [scheduled] things. It’s just when your mentee needs assistance, you help him to the best of your ability. If you can be there, you’re already a great mentor.” ■

Coming full circle

Once on the receiving end, students now make a difference for local youngsters

By Joel Delgado '12

Aaron Armbrister knows the challenges that children in underserved communities face. For many years, he was one of them.

"I've always lived in a poor neighborhood," says Armbrister, who started life in the Goulds area in southwest Miami-Dade County and later moved to West Coconut Grove. "A lot of kids will do what their friends are doing in their communities, which for the most part is not much. There aren't many opportunities there."

But in seventh grade, Armbrister was recruited to take part in a six-week summer enrichment program offered by Breakthrough Miami, an organization dedicated to preparing motivated youngsters to go to college.

"It was the first time I had contact with other academically driven students my age," Armbrister says. That summer of learning set Armbrister firmly on a path toward academic achievement, and today he is a biomedical engineering major at FIU.

Equally important to Armbrister's success, Breakthrough Miami offered him a chance to help others—and learn about himself in the process. Armbrister was enlisted to serve as a mentor and role model for younger students, something he has done now for several years. This past summer he used what he has learned at FIU to create a biomedical engineering curriculum for ninth and tenth graders and worked with the students to build an electrocardiogram device.

"I wanted to contribute back to the program," Armbrister says, "because

I gained a lot from it—opportunities to discover what I like to do and to be myself." That example of someone coming full-circle is exactly what the Breakthrough Miami leadership looks to create.

"He's been in those students' seats and is very relatable for them," Nichelle Haymore, the organization's director of college access, says of Armbrister. "They see someone who went through the program and sets an example for what the future could be like for them. Aaron is a great ambassador for what we do."

And the payoff is there. An eighth grader whom Armbrister has mentored for three years sought him out this summer to express his appreciation.

"He thanked me for helping him realize how much he likes math and told me he was doing so much better in school now that he has confidence in himself," Armbrister recalls. "It's very rewarding to know that you were able to impact someone's life and help build their confidence."

Shaping the future

Eshrat Nikrooye-Asli arrived at FIU with a big decision to make.

She had been running an after-school tutoring program for elementary-school children that she had created with several friends. Now faced with the challenges of attending college, she had to choose whether or not to keep it going.

Rather than let the kids down, she made the program even bigger. She and a few other students in the Honors College together

established EAST (Elementary, Arts, Science and Technology), an after-school enrichment program at Sweetwater Elementary.

In the spring, Nikrooye-Asli—now a junior triple majoring in political science, international relations and Asian studies—worked with the school's fourth graders on a collaborative book project to introduce them to creative writing. Nikrooye-Asli and her colleagues are working to publish the students' short stories in a book.

And during the current school year, they are students to gardening and theatre. She and her colleagues look to fill a gap for kids whose school has seen a discontinuation in after-school arts and science programming, and they want to provide youngsters with role models to look up to. Nikrooye-Asli herself recalls how much such mentors impacted her own life.

"I remember in elementary school they would come, and they would be like a big brother or a big sister to me," she says. "When you go into a school, you are a role model for these students and can inspire them to go to college and be anything they want to be."

Sweetwater Elementary Principal Janet Olivera likewise recognizes the power of what Nikrooye-Asli has helped establish.

"It's important for our students to develop those educational and emotional connections with college students like Eshrat who are really passionate about working with them," she says. "They really help give our students a vision of what they can be in the future." ■

Aaron Armbrister & Breakthrough Miami

Returning the favor: Aaron Armbrister was once in a program for underserved youth and has since given back by acting as a mentor.



Alumni sharing life lessons

Successful graduates counsel students on achieving goals, attaining dreams

By Gisela Valencia '15

WANTED: A professional with demonstrated success in his or her industry who exhibits humility and a down-to-earth sensibility to serve as a role model to a young person in search of self-actualization.

Sounds like a tall order. But in 2014, student Jevon Howell found a mentor who met all of his criteria when he sat next to alumnus John Farias '99, EMBA '16 at a dinner designed to bring students together with thriving FIU graduates.

Programs like the "Dining with 12 Panthers" event at which the two connected and the annual Panther Alumni Week, which has graduates going into classrooms to share real-world stories, lay the groundwork for incredible opportunities. By spending quality time with students, alumni inspire them to persevere through college and earn their degrees.

"Networking, learning about career paths and finding a mentor that bleeds blue and gold are just a few life-changing benefits of connecting with alumni," explains Duane Wiles, executive director of the Alumni Association, of the special bond between students and alumni. "What's important is the fact that students get to meet with people that were in their shoes and have made it."

A world of possibilities

Howell agrees that having access to exemplary alumni can change everything. "You don't know something is possible," he says, "until you see success in the flesh. Meeting them and hearing them is proof." Both he and fellow student Jonathan Williams,

finance majors who studied in the Honors College, sought out Farias on the same evening because they recognized a potentially powerful mentor.

"They were hungry for knowledge and guidance," says Farias, a leader within the mortgage industry. "I was not going to refuse two ambitious young minds," he says of the first-generation students. Soon he began meeting with the pair weekly in the Graham Center. Together they talked about, among other subjects, the students' potential to lead a campus business organization to which they both belonged, and which internships might provide the best learning opportunities and boost their resumes. Today, two years later, Howell, a senior, knows he can call Farias at any time. "John's part of my life," Howell says.

Williams, who graduated in 2015, credits Farias with helping him land a job. He recalls how Farias asked a recruiter to come to campus and host a mock interview for himself and Howell. Williams said the feedback he received during that practice session set him up for success.

"We're going with more foresight into different situations," Williams explains of what a mentor can provide to someone just starting out. "And it just makes the learning curve and how to navigate this great thing called life much easier."

Like Williams, Saad Ali '16 got a boost in that direction thanks to his mentor, Peter Koltis '87, a managing director for the Florida branch of a global professional services firm. The pair were matched through a College of Business program, and Ali, now a recent

graduate, says Koltis helped him define his career path and demystify the "real world" of work. Koltis explained what different careers could look like and helped Ali weigh options for internships and jobs.

"I have an amazing job," Ali says. Today he is a price analyst at a global transportation company. "If it weren't for Pete, I'd still probably be lost." Recognizing just how much he got out of the relationship, Ali plans to return the favor by providing that same level of guidance to another FIU student.

Contributing to the "virtuous cycle"

This points to a bigger picture: Through mentorship, alumni deliberately foster a strong network of Panthers ready to pull up the next generation, a so-called "virtuous cycle."

"Getting involved at FIU was natural," Koltis explains. He was already giving back to FIU through the President's Council, a group that advocates for the university within the community, but he wanted to do more. Working directly with students gave him that opportunity. "Mentoring is essentially extending that Panther pride into something tangible," he says. "Investing my time in FIU is great. Investing it in a student at FIU is even more rewarding."

Likewise, Farias couldn't wait to encourage students on their journey.

"It feeds my soul," he says. "I enjoy it, it makes me feel fulfilled and I don't feel like it's an obligation to give back. I recognize they are the future, and it's refreshing to see younger generations today that truly want to make an imprint on the world." ■



Peter Koltis & Saad Ali

Preparing a future business leader: Peter Koltis '87 (right) helped Saad Ali '16 on his career path.

A photograph of two men, Willy Bermello and Antuhan Gonzalez, in a modern office. Willy, on the left, is an older man with grey hair and a goatee, wearing a white shirt and a dark blazer. Antuhan, on the right, is a younger man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a white shirt and a dark blazer. They are both smiling and looking at a large set of architectural plans spread out on a wooden table. The office has a large window in the background that looks out onto a harbor filled with many sailboats. The ceiling has a large, circular, modern light fixture with three small lights. The overall atmosphere is professional and collaborative.

Willy Bermello & Antuhan Gonzalez

Sharing a lifetime of knowledge: Willy Bermello (left) and Antuhan Gonzalez review a project Gonzalez designed for class.

Local professionals filling a need

Members of the community offer students unique insights into their chosen fields

By Clara-Meretan Kiah '15

Having a professional architect help with your master's project can take your work to another level.

Students get just that opportunity in professor Jaime Canaves' graduate architecture course. Their mission: to research and redesign the naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

For each of the past two years, Canaves' students have worked side-by-side with professional architects employed at Bermello Ajamil & Partners, Inc. They present their research and design models to principal Willy Bermello and his partners at various points throughout the process to gain feedback. They also have direct phone and email access to design experts and specialists within the firm who offer guidance and advice.

Antuhan Gonzalez '16, who designed a cruise terminal for his project, says the opportunity to gain a level of real-world experience by consulting with someone already in the field proved invaluable to his career development.

"By receiving advice and guidance from the professional team, we were able to turn our theoretical ideas into functional realities and practices," Gonzalez says. "The contact with the working reality gave us more interest in and love for architecture."

Bermello says, "It prepares them for real-world situations with practical experience, where theory is important but takes a definite back seat."

And it gets students jobs. Bermello and his associates have been so impressed by the quality of work produced by Canaves' class

that the firm has offered students positions at the conclusion of the course. Gonzalez went straight to work as an architect in the Miami office after graduation this year.

student could explore a variety of career options and build her professional network.

"She told me, don't pick a specialty because of money. Go into something

"By receiving advice and guidance from the professional team, we were able to turn our theoretical ideas into functional realities and practices."

—Antuhan Gonzalez

"We have had excellent experiences with FIU graduates," says Bermello, who is a member of the President's Council, FIU's community relations board. "They are talented with a good work ethic, and ambitious, too."

Sneak peek at the future

Acquiring insight into the medical profession, especially early in their studies, gives medical students an understanding of the commitment they're making to years of schooling and the challenges within a lifetime of service to others.

Fourth-year medical student Layla Cavitt got an insider's view from Dr. Susan Dombrowsky. The two met through a program in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine that pairs first-year students with doctors in their specialties of interest.

Dombrowsky, a family practitioner who began her career at a time when female doctors were not common, introduced Cavitt to her colleagues in other specialties so the

you really love that gets you up in the morning," Cavitt says. "And don't burn any bridges. It's a small world and relationships really matter."

Dombrowsky suggested meaningful reading material about the profession to Cavitt. And the two watched a TED Talk together on the value of doctors' taking into account not just patients' health histories but their unique lives and circumstances. "She reminded me," Cavitt says, "to focus on the humanistic aspect of medicine."

Dombrowsky died at age 72 earlier this year, but not before inspiring Cavitt to participate in the medical school's peer mentoring program. She is now helping a third-year student map out her own future.

"I think it's just easy to get overwhelmed looking ahead at courses and wondering how you're going to get through this," says Cavitt, who ultimately decided on family medicine. But leaning on someone else helps, she adds. "It gives you perspective that we're all going to get through this." ■

Preparing women and minorities to lead

The founding director of a transformational program for faculty and staff helps the underrepresented tap into their potential.

By Karen Cochrane

Barbara Bader knows each of the 170 faculty and staff members who have participated in the Educational Leadership Enhancement Program (ELEP). She knows who is job hunting and who is content. She knows who loves their job but not their supervisor—and vice versa.

ELEP participants know Barbara Bader. They know she has a loving husband, Jerry, two daughters and four grandchildren.

she has received calls from Dubai and cities across the United States from alumnae who were considering career opportunities. Bader listened and asked questions, providing input.

Her central message to ELEP participants: “If you want to get ahead, you have to know more than your job.” She challenges them: Who is FIU’s CFO? How is our budget funded? Are you financially savvy? You need to be, she tells them. When must you write a

pairs them with an FIU mentor, facilitates conferences (including a visit to Tallahassee) and assigns readings. Participants conceive of and implement a project that will benefit their professional development. They also bring what they’ve learned back to their jobs.

ELEP alumna Consuelo Boronat, director of operational analysis in FIU’s Office of Analysis and Information Management, is one of many program graduates who come back and participate in the curriculum at Bader’s request. She leads the financial literacy workshop and welcomes the chance to give back.

“Barbara’s program was the single best professional development opportunity of my life because it brought me into contact with a wide range of senior leaders,” she says. “It gave me the opportunity to see the university from a different perspective. Before my perspective was limited to the day-to-day functioning of my unit. Now, I feel that I’m looking at the university from the 30,000 foot level.”



"She's a great reality check. She helps me see all sides of an issue, not just my point of view."

—Suzanne Minor (left) on her mentor, Mary Helen Hayden

They know she believes in the power of a handwritten thank-you note or typed business letter. Most importantly, they know she believes in *them*.

The familiarity is built on dozens of out-of-town conferences, hundreds of group meetings and thousands of phone calls, emails and one-on-one meetings. For 23 of her 43 years at FIU, Bader has worked with women and minorities to imbue them with the knowledge and self-assurance needed for senior leadership positions. Graduates have gone on to such posts at institutions around the world, including FIU.

At the center of it all is Bader, her gravitational pull impossible to ignore. Time and again, ELEP alumni reference Bader’s ability to make people feel special. Many ELEP alumni keep in touch years after completing the program. Through the years

letter, and when will an email suffice? Are you a good negotiator? What’s going on outside FIU? Bader recommends buying the Sunday New York Times and reading one section each night. She says, “Be aware. Know things beyond your specific discipline.”

Filling A Need


ELEP was created in 1993 by former Florida senator, Florida Education Commissioner and University of South Florida President Betty Castor, who saw a lack of women and minorities in senior positions. When state funding ended after seven years, most of the state universities eliminated the program. Not FIU. Bader credits President Mark B. Rosenberg, then-provost, with protecting it then and now.

The yearlong initiative offers mid-level staff and tenured faculty access to senior leaders,

Mentoring Across the Disciplines

Suzanne Minor, director of clinical faculty development and assistant professor in the Office of Medical Education in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, participated in the program five years ago. Her mentor was Mary Helen Hayden, director of the School of Social Work in the Robert Stempel College of Public Health and Social Work. The relationship continued after the program ended and today they enjoy a “real relationship of mutual respect,” says Hayden. They meet on campus once a month, sharing personal and professional news.

“She’s a great reality check for me,” says

A close-up portrait of Barbara Bader, a woman with short, wavy blonde hair, smiling and looking slightly to her left. She is wearing a dark blue blazer over a white blouse with a colorful floral pattern. A pearl necklace and a gold brooch are also visible.

Minor. "She helps me see all sides of an issue, not just my own point of view."

Hayden, who has served as a mentor many times, believes passionately in mentoring. "As you move up, it's important to pull someone up with you."

A New Era

Bader retired from full-time employment in 2003. In August, she stepped down completely from the program that evolved from an assignment to a labor of love.

ELEP alumna Elizabeth Bejar, vice president for Academic Affairs, now leads the program.

To those who say there's no need for such a program in 2016, Bader says just look at the statistics on women and minorities in leadership roles. "We've made some progress," she says, "but we've got a ways to go." ■

Barbara Bader & future university leaders

Promoting success: Barbara Bader has ushered countless individuals up the ladder.



Professors Geoff Potvin & Kathy Quardokus Fisher

Paying it forward: Geoff Potvin enjoyed his own mentoring experience so much that he is now a mentor to new faculty member Kathy Quardokus Fisher.

Professor to professor

Faculty mentor their colleagues in a newly expanded program

By Karen Cochrane

Kathy Quardokus Fisher was finishing her post-doc studies at Oregon State University in readiness for a move to FIU, where she had accepted an assistant professorship in the Department of Earth and Environment. Shortly before she and her husband embarked upon their cross-country trek to Miami, she received an email from her soon-to-be boss. Chair René Price was encouraging her to join FIU's Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP), a voluntary program for junior faculty members.

"I'd participated in workshops as a post doc, so I knew that finding a mentor, especially one outside of my own department, was important," says Quardokus Fisher. "For me it was a no-brainer."

She was matched with Geoff Potvin, a senior assistant professor coming up for tenure in the Department of Physics. Both colleagues are in the College of Arts, Sciences & Education (CASE).

"While we are in different disciplines, we're in the same field and both affiliated with the STEM Transformation Institute, which makes for a great fit," says Potvin. He was a mentee himself and found the experience worthwhile. "Mentors give you a fresh perspective that's really helpful," he says. He signed on to become a mentor this year.

The program's goal: to prepare young faculty to take on increased responsibilities and meet expectations. Teaching. Research. Securing funding. Forging collaborations. And doing it all, in many cases, in a completely new setting. It can be overwhelming.

Proven Track Record

Then an associate dean, Suzanna Rose had already spent 20 years consulting nationally on the issue of faculty development by the time a 2010 survey found that FIU

faculty considered mentoring inadequate. In response, then Provost Douglas Wartzok asked the colleges to create their own mentoring programs. Rose volunteered to create one in CASE.

"I thought I should take what I'd been doing consulting and bring it home," she says.

Her mentoring program has been so successful the last five years that Provost and Executive Vice President Kenneth G. Furton recently created the Office to Advance Women, Equity and Diversity. Under the direction of Rose, who is now associate vice

collaboration has translated into greater interaction with them. More new faculty are participating in informational meetings as well as internal and external reviews prior to preparing grants, thereby increasing the competitiveness of grant applications.

Participants in the faculty mentoring program also attend mentor-mentee luncheons, book publishing and summer planning workshops and workshops on writing testable hypotheses and National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health grants.

"Participating in the Faculty Mentoring Program is a wonderful way to become part of the broader university community."

—Suzanna Rose, founding associate provost of the Office to Advance Women, Equity & Diversity and professor of psychology and women's studies



provost, FMP has expanded to include all university faculty and post docs.

"People were so enthused about the program [when it first began]," she says. "It's not that departments weren't providing mentoring, I just think the experiences were uneven across departments." Rose spends hours matching mentees with mentors who are different enough to provide "a fresh perspective," as Potvin puts it, yet similar enough in disciplines or fields to understand the challenges particular to that mentee. Many participants stay with their mentors for years.

Recently, the FMP program joined forces with FIU's Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED) to support young researchers. ORED already offers workshops to faculty, but this new

The Future Looks Bright

The 2016-17 cohort is the largest one yet: 85 mentee-mentor pairs, including 18 new assistant professors and 65 assistant professors in their pre-tenure years.

"FIU is so big that sometimes we get insulated in our own departments," Rose says. "This gives faculty an opportunity to meet people outside of their discipline, which leads to some really interesting collaborations."

This year she hopes to introduce faculty writing groups, and next year she's planning on rolling out a faculty mentor program for instructors. The driving force behind all of it is to bring faculty together to draw upon each others' strengths to create a more positive career experience and, ultimately, a stronger FIU. ■

6 Panthers to watch during 2016 and beyond



By Joel Delgado '12



JONNU SMITH

Despite injuries piling up on the Panthers last year, the team still found a way to remain in the hunt for bowl eligibility late in the season. But the final straw may have been losing Jonnu Smith for the last four games due to a sprained knee.

The 6-foot-3-inch, 232-pound tight end enters his senior season as arguably one of the best receiving tight ends in the nation and has built a reputation for being one of the most difficult receivers for opposing defenders to bring down after making a catch.

He has been a key weapon in the Panthers' offense the past three seasons and could attract the attention of NFL scouts this fall.

"He creates a lot of problems for defenses and to have him back and healthy has been great for us," says pass-game coordinator and wide receivers coach Kort Shankweiler. "He's become a very good leader for us. Having a guy like him on the field, he commands a lot of respect."



ALEX WINT & TREYVON WILLIAMS

FIU's linebacker corps enters the 2016 season as the most experienced group in the Panthers' defense, and leading the way will be junior Alex Wint—the team's top tackler in 2015—and senior Treyvon Williams.

"They're the ones running the show out there. They are taking pride in being leaders," says interim Head Coach Ron Cooper. "They are very talented, very tough and they stop the run really well."

Throw in senior Davison Colimon, who missed nearly every game last season after suffering a season-ending injury in the 2015 opener against UCF, and the Panthers' linebackers could be a force to be reckoned with in Conference USA.

With the defensive line losing most of its starters from a year ago, the linebackers could play a bigger role in the pass rush and stopping the run at the line of scrimmage.

The 2016 FIU football season has been one of ups and downs (no pun intended). With the departure of Head Coach Ron Turner, changes in the athletic department's leadership slated for 2018 and a number difficult early season losses—followed by some welcome conference wins—fans have experienced a bit of a wild ride. Lucky for the Panther nation, the team's roster of players bears close attention. Eyes remain on several who will continue to make an impact in the coming years.



THOMAS OWENS

Last year was a breakout season for wide receiver Thomas Owens, known as “T.O.” by coaches and teammates.

He led the team in receiving yards (638) and tied the school record for touchdown catches (8) in a season, emerging as one of quarterback Alex McGough's favorite targets. A prototypical possession receiver with steady hands, he may be able to build on those numbers in his junior season as he continues to build chemistry with McGough.

“He's improved his route running and having that added dimension makes him a guy who Alex can trust to be where he needs to be and put the ball in his hands,” says pass-game coordinator and wide receivers coach Shankweiler.



ANTHONY JONES

Sophomore running back Anthony Jones showed potential as a playmaker during his freshman season. This year he may have an opportunity to shine more, particularly on special teams.

In a limited role, Jones averaged 23.3 yards on nine kick returns last season, and this season he will most likely be called upon to take over a bulk of the kick return duties that mostly fell to former player Richard Leonard '15 over the past few seasons.

As a rusher, he may also see more action behind lead running back Alex Gardner. With the kind of speed he possesses, it's not a stretch to think 2016 could be a breakout season for Jones.

“His understanding of the offense has picked up tremendously and that's helped him play a lot faster,” says running backs coach Tim Harris Jr. “With the playmaking ability that he has, we're excited to see what he can do for us this season.”



ALEX GARDNER

Establishing the run game will be critical for the Panthers' success in 2016, and running back Alex Gardner will be key to doing that.

Behind an offensive line that returns plenty of experience, including all-conference center Michael Montero, Gardner will try to build off his numbers from last season: 760 rushing yards and nine touchdowns on 186 carries.

“He's gotten a lot stronger and that will help him run with a lot more physicality and protect the ball,” Harris said.

He is also steadily climbing in the FIU record books. Gardner entered the 2016 season sixth in all-time rushing yards, 853 yards shy of the record held by Rashod Smith (2,195 rushing yards from 2002-2004). By the end of the season, he may be within striking distance of becoming the Panthers' all-time leading rusher.



Panther Getaway Tours 2017

See the world and make new memories in the company of FIU Panthers.

Jan. 25 - Feb. 4:

Sparkling South Pacific Cruise
(French Polynesia)

Feb. 23 - March 4:

Chile Wine Tour

April 29 - May 6:

Timeless Treasures Cruise (Athens to Rome)

May 21 - May 31:

Budapest, Vienna & Prague

May 27 - June 4:

European Collage Cruise (Barcelona to Rome)

June 16 - June 21:

San Francisco & California Wine Country

June 24 - July 1:

Romantic Rhine River Cruise
(Zurich to Amsterdam)

June 25 - July 2:

The Grand Canyon to Zion

July 13 - July 23:

Canadian Rockies Glacier & Yellowstone

July 21 - July 28:

Alaska Charms Cruise

Aug. 11 - Aug. 20:

Oregon & Washington

Sept. 14 - Sept. 21:

Oktoberfest (Munich)

Oct. 6 - Oct. 17:

Albuquerque Balloon Festival and U.S.
National Parks

Oct. 7 - Oct. 17: Mediterranean Radiance
Cruise (Rome to Monte Carlo)

Dec. 4 - Dec. 11: Christmas in the Heart of
Germany River Cruise (Frankfurt to Prague)

For full tour details, visit
fialumni.com/travel



Panther Alumni Week — Feb. 6-10, 2017

Panther Alumni Week (PAW) brings to campus successful FIU graduates to inspire students and share career advice with the next generation of leaders.

PAW draws upon the talents and experiences of alumni who are making an impact locally, nationally and globally. By fostering mutual respect and creating connections between current students and those who have gone before them, PAW enhances the growing Panther community.

Alumni speakers will have the chance to visit classrooms and reinvigorate their own Panther spirit. Alumni are encouraged to use the opportunity to visit with a former professor or other inspirational mentor. Learn more and sign up at paw.fiu.edu.

Torch Awards Gala — Saturday, April 1, 2017

@JW Marriott Marquis Miami

The Torch Awards honor successful alumni who have made a positive impact on their profession and the community. These individuals represent the best of FIU and serve as an inspiration to all. The annual event celebrates their achievements while raising scholarship funds. Learn more at torchawards.fiu.edu.



Fishing Tournament and Dock Party — Saturday, June 3, 2017

@Shake-A-Leg Miami

The annual fishing tournament brings together boatloads of anglers for a cause. The contest features fishing for dolphin (mahi-mahi), and prizes are awarded for the biggest catch. A community dock party follows, with proceeds benefiting student scholarship funds. Learn more at fishingtournament.fiu.edu. For a comprehensive list of upcoming events, go to fialumni.com/events.

Join a Panther Network

Wherever you live, work or play, an FIU Alumni Panther Network is nearby! Panther Networks exist to connect Panthers and support the growth and advancement of FIU locally, nationally and internationally. Managed by fellow alumni leaders, Panther Networks provide opportunities to socialize, volunteer in your community, engage with students, show off your Panther Pride and, ultimately, give back to FIU. Find a network near you at fialumni.com/networks.

“Forever Panthers” embody the spirit of blue and gold. The investment of more than 1,500 Forever Panthers—alumni and friends with a never-ending love for FIU—has propelled and supported the work of the Alumni Association for the past 34 years and allowed it to continually grow and serve the Panther community.

Meet the Forever Panthers at fialumni.com/fp

CLASS NOTES

1980s

Georgina Picos '87 was appointed by Attorney General Loretta Lynch to serve as a federal immigration judge. She was one of 15 sworn in earlier this year by the U.S. Department of Justice's Executive Office for Immigration Review. She began hearing cases in June.

1990s

Aida Fernandez Brena '92 was featured recently in *Modern Luxury Interiors Magazine* for her remodel of a Dominican Republic home.



Dorothy Negrin '93 was hired as commercial litigator at the law firm of McGlinchey Stafford PLLC's Fort Lauderdale office in July.



Ann Justiz '94, the vice president and director of sales and marketing at Safe Fuel Systems, was featured with her husband on the cover of 145 Magazine, in which she discusses their growing company.

Joe Madera '96 was appointed manager of the new SpringHill Suites by Marriott in Jackson, Wyoming.



Mireidy Fernandez '98 was promoted to senior planner in Miami-Dade County's Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources, where she serves as project manager for amendments to the county's Comprehensive Development Master Plan.



Elizabeth Garland '99, MA '08 and husband **Douglas Garland '10** welcomed their first child, Adeline Katherine, on April 15, 2016. Adeline loves the Dixie Chicks and her daddy's goofy faces.

2000s



Charo Oquet '00, an interdisciplinary artist who creates installations, videos and live performances, received the 2016 Here & Now Commission Award. Here & Now is an initiative launched in 1999 by the Miami Light Project to promote South Florida-based performing and multimedia artists.



Steven Harper '01, JD '06, a partner at Harper, Meyer, Perez, Hagen, O'Connor, Albert & Dribin LLP, was elected treasurer of the Inter-American Bar Association's executive committee.

J. Patrick Redmond '03, who for years taught English at George Washington Carver Middle School in Coral Gables, published his first novel, "Some Go Hungry," in 2016.



Marcia del Rey JD '05 created a \$25,000 scholarship for first-generation students. When matched by the College of Law's First-Generation Scholarship, awardees will receive near-full tuition.



Claudia Dominguez '08, an attorney in the Deerfield Beach office of ROIG Lawyers, will participate in the 2016-2017 Leadership Fort Lauderdale Program.



John Ellis "Jeb" Bush Jr. MS '09 was appointed to the board of directors of the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy.

2010s

Nelson Bermudez '10, MBA '15 is the workforce program supervisor for Transition Inc., a Miami-based nonprofit providing job training and placement services to ex-offenders and others facing significant barriers to employment, including at-risk youth, military veterans and persons with disabilities.



Tyler Schwartz MA '11, a landscape designer, received the 2016 "Green Means Green" award from the Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce for promoting sustainability in his company, Tyler Schwartz Design, Inc.

Marcelle Taha MS '11 joined High Street Retail USA as a design specialist.



Ryan Benson MBA '12 was appointed to the board of directors for the Boys & Girls Club of Collier County, an organization dedicated to providing a safe environment in which to promote the education, vocational leadership and character development of children.



Claudia Gonzalez '12, MPA '16, assistant chief of staff in FIU's Office of the President, and her husband **Anthony Gonzalez '12, '13**, a student in FIU's College of Law, welcomed their first child, Sofia Leonor, on April 14, 2016. Both parents and family are thrilled at the arrival of the newest little Panther.

Shantavia O'Bryant MBA '12 welcomed the birth of her second child, Gia Madison, in June 2015.

Simone Cook '14, a social media manager and account coordinator at Sonshine Communications, received an award of distinction at the 22nd Annual Communicator Awards.

Chanel Rowe JD '14 was appointed to the Florida Bar's "Student Education & Admissions to the Bar" committee. She is an attorney with Shook, Hardy & Bacon in Miami.



Natalia Zuluaga MFA '14 was appointed artistic director at Art Center South Florida.

Jennifer Lacayo '15 was hired as a junior public relations associate in FIU's Office of Media Relations.

In praise of a mentor

An assistant U.S. attorney recalls the friendship of a pivotal professor.

By Clayton Solomon '05



Everyone warned me that Professor Stack's undergraduate courses would be brutal. His hardcover textbook was over a thousand pages. His "case method" homework was relentless. His Socratic teaching style, combined with his heavy New England accent, was the stuff of poli-sci legend. His grading scale had crushed the dreams of many aspiring honors students. In the end, Constitutional Law I and II were among my lowest grades at FIU, rattled my self-confidence and resulted in many sleepless nights. They are also among the best courses I have ever taken.

Almost 14 later years, John remains my most enthusiastic cheerleader and closest mentor. He has coached me through almost every major professional decision and has written countless letters of recommendation on my behalf.

Our friendship developed outside of the classroom, mostly in the evening, when I would seek his counsel on all kinds of personal dilemmas. Early in my tenure as the student member of FIU's Board of Trustees, the board held a vote on whether to raise undergraduate tuition to account for declining state funding (times haven't changed). The resolution was going to pass overwhelmingly regardless of how I voted, so I had to decide whether it was better to be pragmatic and vote with the rest of the board, or to vote with my conscience and as most students would have wanted me to—against the increase. John remarked, "If your vote is an ornament, then hang it on the right tree!" Not only is his advice always sound, but he usually delivers it with flair. I was the lone vote against the motion.

By May of my senior year, I had yet to be admitted to any of the dozen or so law schools to which I had applied and felt down on my luck. John sat with me outside the DM building until well after dark, strategizing with me and reminding me how much I already had accomplished. I wasn't certain whether I'd ever become a lawyer, but I left assured that everything would work out fine one way or another. I hope I'll be able to instill that kind of confidence in the students and young lawyers that I mentor.

When I applied for a federal clerkship with U.S. District Judge Cecilia M. Altonaga—one of FIU's most accomplished graduates and, not coincidentally, also one of John's former students—John recommended me for the highly competitive position, but I had a logistics problem: I was studying in Australia at the time (on a scholarship for which John had written one of my letters of support) and I couldn't interview with the judge in person. I suggested to John that I interview by telephone or videoconference, but he thought the interview was too important to do remotely. He and another FIU colleague offered to personally pay for my flight back to Miami. I was floored by the gesture but declined.

Like so many students who ignored their better judgment and took his classes, I am a better lawyer and person on account of his teaching and friendship. ■

Clayton P. Solomon '05, is an assistant United States attorney in Brooklyn, New York. From 2003-2004, he served as SGA President of what is today the Modesto A. Maidique Campus and as the student member of both the FIU Board of Trustees and the State University System Board of Governors. A graduate of the University of Maryland law school, he is a member of the advisory board of the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs, of which his former mentor, John Stack, is now dean.

VIP: Very Important Panther

Margarita Villacampa '90

- Senior vice president and private client advisor, U.S. Trust Bank of America
- FIU Bachelor of Business Administration

Q: What are your fondest memories of FIU?

A: My fondest memories revolve around the friends I made while I was there and the professors who taught me. It was a very nurturing environment.

Q: Did you have a mentor at FIU?

A: My mentor came in the way of a fellow student. I had put my schooling on hold while living in Switzerland. When I returned after more than two years, I was feeling lost and not very motivated as my friends had all graduated. Lupe Pimentel [class of 1995] and I met in a finance class and she immediately recognized that I needed help. She quickly became my encouragement, my support and my guide.

Q: Why is it important to find mentors as you make your way in the world?

A: In life we are better connected than alone. There is always something new to learn, some better way to do something and someone out there that may have the answer that we are looking for.

Q: Why do you choose to mentor others?

A: I feel that it's crucial to give back in whatever way one can. I have been very fortunate to have individuals along the way that have guided, encouraged and supported me, and without them my career path would have been much more difficult. So it's natural for me to want to do the same for others. I also feel that we have a responsibility to help guide and teach the next generation because these young professionals ultimately will be our next business and civic leaders.

Q: What do you hope to share as a mentor?

A: I've tried to give others the wonderful advice that I've been given—believe in yourself, speak up, try something new. But I also try to instill in them the sense of responsibility to pay it forward, not only in the business world but in their communities as well. I encourage them to find a cause that they feel passionate about and to become involved. It's important to really know the place one calls home and to be a part of what happens there.

Q: What is your proudest accomplishment, professional or personal?

A: Without a doubt it's my family. My husband Jorge and I have been blessed with two wonderful children, Gabriella and Daniel, who thrill us and challenge us every day. Watching them grow and succeed and start making their own mark in life is humbling.

Q: You contribute locally by serving on several community boards. What diversions do you squeeze into your free time?

A: Traveling with friends and family, and photography, are at the top of the list.



In the fall of 1982 FIU celebrated its first decade with an event billed as the "Tencennial." Professors and administrators wore their academic regalia and a birthday cake took center stage as students gathered in the old University House—today's renovated and renamed Graham Center at MMC—to mark the historic occasion.

To read about Tencennial activities and more, check out the 1982-83 edition of the FIU yearbook at go.fiu.edu/Elan1983.

*Photo courtesy of FIU Special Collections
& University Archives*

