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# Florida International University Magazine Winter 2018-19

Florida International University Division of University Relations

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# FIU MAGAZINE



SNAPSHOT OF A REMARKABLE 10 YEARS





**7 An inventor recognized**  
FIU's top donor is also a Hall of Fame innovator.

**9 The business of art**  
Creative students learn how to thrive in the world.

**12 Expert advice from alumni**  
Grads from nearly every field and background share great tips.

**16 ON THE COVER:**  
**Calculated progress**  
Strategic improvements move FIU's rankings.

**22 Watching out for our water**  
Researchers are safeguarding the Everglades and coastal seas.

**27 Innovation takes off**  
FIU's patent production has expanded exponentially.

**30 Tennis in any language**  
An all-international team of players brings home the wins.

**From the tropics to the tundra:** Against the backdrop of the stunning 700-mile-wide Brooks Range in northern Alaska, biologists Steve Oberbauer (in blue) and Matthew Simon '17 walk along a narrow boardwalk abutting FIU's plant ecology research plot at Toolik Field Station. Veteran professor Oberbauer has made more than 45 trips there since initiating a project in 1994 to study how vegetation is changing in response to climate change. Earlier this year, his team re-installed a mobile sensing system that allows remote recording of plant growth. Dozens of scientists annually travel to the area in support of work that advances an understanding of the Arctic and its relationship to the global environment.

Photo by Tim Long

# FROM THE STAFF

In the short span of the past 10 years, FIU has grown into a top public research university and the fourth largest university in the country. Building upon a strong foundation established over the preceding decades, FIU stands out in both quality and quantity.

Our amazing cover tells the story. Combing through hundreds of photographs, the magazine staff found many to illustrate the powerful forces that have brought FIU to its current height.

Among those forces: research, research, research. In images of a marine biologist exploring the ocean depths and others trolling the waters of the Everglades, we are witness to the impactful work of committed scientists. Across the disciplines, such efforts have catapulted the university to national and even international attention and placed it firmly among the upper echelon of American institutions of higher education.

Another picture references the high-level classroom instruction that transforms lives every day. Our faculty boast strong dedication to the teaching and guiding of young people. Professors' broad availability to students makes the FIU experience a unique one among large universities and contributes to FIU's rising retention and graduation rates.

A few famous faces grace the cover. Cuban social activist Yoani Sanchez and former Secretary of State and Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright both are shown during visits to South Florida under the auspices of the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs. Former Ambassador Green himself is pictured as are major donors Herbert and Nicole Wertheim and alumnus Chad Moss '94. The four are but a few of the generous benefactors who in recent years have helped propel Miami's public university.

Finally, at the center of it all: our students. Hard-working, community-focused and primed to make a difference, they are our future and the reason we're here.

What stands out most to you during the past decade? Write to us at [magazine@fiu.edu](mailto:magazine@fiu.edu).

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17TH ANNUAL GALA

# TORCH AWARDS



2018 awardees, left to right:  
Cristina M. Suarez '02, JD '06  
Maria D. Garcia '05, JD '08  
Fiorella Terenzi (faculty award)  
Teshamae S. Monteith '98  
Armando Diaz II '09, MS '10  
Tariq M. King MS '07, PhD '09  
Francisco Gonzalez '90  
Diane M. Faulconer '74,  
MSM '74  
President Mark B. Rosenberg  
Hanadys Ale '08, MD '13  
Misha Kuryla MIB '04  
Brent A. Spechler '78  
Vivian Z. Dimond '80  
Katie Yahr, accepting for  
the late Alex F. Yahr '95  
Marcel L. Navarro '93  
Iris A. Elijah JD '11  
Duffy Keys '75

Photo by Margi Rentis '17

## Torch Awards highlights the best and brightest

The 2018 Torch Awards Gala attracted a record-breaking 1,000 attendees to make it the largest in FIU history.

The November event, held at the Modesto A. Maidique Campus, honored 15 alumni and one faculty member who are each making a difference in their professions, in the community and at the university. Proceeds from the event benefit the First Generation Scholarship Program, which supports students who are the first in their families to obtain college degrees, and the future construction of the FIU Alumni Center.

“Each new class of Torch Awards recipients joins an elite group of FIU torchbearers, leaders who exemplify the best of the university and serve as an inspiration to all,” said Duane Wiles, executive director of the FIU Alumni Association. “The Torch Awards celebrate their many achievements while supporting the next generation of Panthers.”

The Alumni Association named Diane M. Faulconer '74, MSM '74 the 2018 Alumna of the Year. Faulconer was a nurse administrator and health care consultant

for more than 30 years. The author of dozens of professional journal articles, she traveled extensively to developing countries to share her expertise in surgical services, operating room management, post-anesthesia care, emergency medicine and ambulatory services.

Joined by her late husband, Prentiss Faulconer, Diane Faulconer has dedicated her later life to philanthropy. The couple have supported scholarships for students in the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences as well as other areas of need.

“[Receiving] this award means that I have led a very blessed and meaningful life,” Faulconer said from the stage. She encouraged other alumni to consider giving to their alma mater, just as she has done in recognition of FIU’s pivotal role in helping her achieve her life goals.

“We all have it within us to be compassionate futurists,” she said, “because each one of us can appreciate the people and circumstances that have contributed to the lives we lead today.”

For more about the 17th Annual Torch Awards Gala, go to [magazine.fiu.edu](http://magazine.fiu.edu).

73

Percent of FIU faculty and staff who contributed to the employee Ignite campaign, which last year raised \$8.6 million for scholarships, athletics, academic programs and more

### 45 hospitality students surprised with scholarships

Gathered for a ceremonial pinning event days before starting at FIU in August, the entire class of incoming students at the Chaplin School of Hospitality & Tourism Management learned they would each receive a \$500 scholarship. The same will be given to all future freshmen.

The Lee Brian Schrage Aim Higher Scholarship, named in honor of the founder and director of the Food Network & Cooking Channel South Beach Wine & Food Festival®, is funded by proceeds from the annual gourmet gathering on Miami Beach. The multi-day event brings together students with celebrity chefs, local restaurateurs and others in the hospitality industry to organize and present wine tastings, special dinners and after-hour parties. More than \$28 million has been raised for the school to date, and student volunteers from across the university have gained hands-on experience in event management and marketing. The 2019 version takes place Feb. 20-24.

### Journalism students now embedded in D.C. and NYC



The School of Communication + Journalism has launched news bureaus in Washington, D.C., and New York City. The student-run, faculty-led programs provide aspiring professionals with real-world opportunities to hone their skills in fast-paced environments.

The Washington bureau focuses on the intersection between politics and journalism. Student participants explore the relationship between politics and the media and gain a thorough understanding of the responsibility of the news

industry as the “fourth estate.” The New York bureau focuses on the fundamentals of solutions-based reporting, which aims not only to report the news but to find potential ways to respond and resolve the pressing social issues it exposes. Students will participate in workshops, conduct investigative fieldwork and publish articles online.

The new bureaus are a complement to the existing South Florida News Service, the student-run news outlet based at the Biscayne Bay Campus that covers local news. Created in 2009 in partnership with the McCormick Foundation and local papers, the service makes its stories available for publication by the *Miami Herald*, the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and *The Palm Beach Post*.



#### Examining toxic metals' impact on Alzheimer's

An ongoing study funded by the National Institute on Aging aims to discover if environmental toxins are contributing to the alarming increase in the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Robert Stempel College of Public Health & Social Work Dean Tomás R. Guilarte has spent decades researching the effects of environmental lead exposure on children. Now he is examining how exposure to lead, as well as environmental manganese, could factor into the onset and progression of cognitive decline, neuroinflammation and Alzheimer's.



## Treasure: Art Deco vase with a history

This stunning vase with a lid started life in 1932 in the Sèvres porcelain factory in France. The famed designer and painter Henri Rapin was studio director throughout the 1920s and '30s, and he is credited with its shape. The limited-edition piece measures 23.5 inches high with a 17.75-inch diameter at its widest, and illustrates the overseas voyages of European explorers. Today it belongs to The Wolfsonian-FIU, purchased years ago by the Miami Beach museum's founder, Mitchell Wolfson Jr., and is on display through 2019 as part of the exhibit "Deco: Luxury to Mass Market." Learn more at [wolfsonian.fiu.edu](http://wolfsonian.fiu.edu).

## Professor's rock collection goes national



More than 500 pounds of rocks collected by geologist Stephen Haggerty have landed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. A professor in the Department of Earth and Environment, he amassed his treasure during a 47-year career and just months ago was asked to make his collection a part of the nation's largest.

"He's super famous in the field for his work on mantle xenoliths—rocks that have rocketed from depths in the Earth greater than 200 miles to the surface," said Elizabeth Cottrell, curator-in-charge of the national rock and ore collections at the National Museum of Natural History.

It's not every day the Smithsonian makes the kind of call it did to Haggerty, Cottrell adds. The institution is interested in material that has been heavily researched. In some cases, Haggerty's work is the primary source of geological data for the locations he studied.

## A potential lifeline for manatees

Manatees exposed to red tide are dying at an alarming rate. FIU researchers have teamed up with the nonprofit Mote Marine Laboratory in hopes of saving them.

With a three-year grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the marine biologists are looking at various antioxidants that could be administered to keep manatees from succumbing to illness. Red tide is believed responsible for 10 percent of all manatee deaths.

Florida coastal waters this year have experienced the worst case of *Karenia brevis* in more than a decade, and the toxic microscopic algae can be harmful not only to marine life—through contaminated air and food sources—but to humans as well.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service just two years ago upgraded the manatee's status from endangered to threatened, a positive sign. The current research, if ultimately applied successfully to veterinary care, may further improve the manatee's prospects for survival. And, if the study treatment shows promise, it also could be used for dolphins, turtles and birds.

## ON THE PROWL

### New medical school dean takes over from founder



Dr. Robert Sackstein has been named dean of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (HWCOC) and senior vice president of health affairs.

Sackstein comes to

FIU from Harvard Medical School, where he has served as professor in the departments of dermatology and medicine and co-director of the Glycoscience Center.

Sackstein's research has been recognized internationally. He has focused on developing glycoscience, a branch of science concerned with the role of sugars in biological systems, and his work has yielded strategies to optimize cell-based therapeutics to regenerate damaged tissue and combat cancer. An active educator, he has taught medical and graduate students, interns and residents, and post-doctoral fellows as well as offered a course on the scientific method to undergraduates.

Sackstein was born in Havana, Cuba, and came to South Florida at the age of 4. After high school in Miami, he earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Harvard University that he followed with an M.D. and Ph.D. (in immunology) from its medical school. He completed his residency and two fellowships at Jackson Memorial Hospital/University of Miami, where he has served as faculty.

Sackstein said he feels privileged to return to a community he loves and praised the work of the medical school's founding dean, Dr. John A. Rock, who helped establish the school with a commitment to exceptional clinical education grounded in social consciousness. "We will safeguard this legacy," Sackstein promised, "and will also develop world-leading integrated medical research initiatives across FIU and our hospital affiliates to both prevent and eliminate human suffering."



# Five Questions

## with the Jewish Museum director

Susan Gladstone can do it all. The alumna earned a bachelor's degree in social work in 1976 (which she followed with a master's degree in the same field from Yeshiva University in New York) and has spent a lifetime planning events, raising funds and teaching in support of the community and the education of young people. In addition to running her own business, she has served as a fundraiser and planner with United Way of Miami-Dade. She has worked for the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, organizing fundraising events and teaching both locally and at the school's Tianjin, China, campus. And most recently, she headed fundraising and sponsorship activities for various initiatives at the university as well as the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU on Miami Beach, to which she was named executive director in 2017.

As the cultural attraction looks toward its 25th anniversary in 2020, Gladstone's enthusiasm has everyone around her likewise excited by the prospect of planned upgrades to the physical building—a pair of adjacent former synagogues on the United States National Register of Historic Places—as well as an already-solid record of innovative exhibitions and programming.

### **What is your top priority as museum director?**

To keep the museum relevant and interesting to a wide variety of people. We want everyone asking, "What's happening at the Jewish Museum?" In addition to our core exhibition, we have three temporary galleries that we change every four months with an eye to attracting the attention of those with different interests, whether traditional art or local history or something else.

### **"Jewish" is in your name. So how do you speak to a general audience?**

Our core exhibition chronicles Jewish history within Florida and in doing so really showcases the universal immigrant experience in all its struggles and successes. So even though we are the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU, we cater to groups of schoolchildren and others in multicultural Miami who are either direct immigrants or the next generation. They can relate to the stories the museum tells.

### **How do you capture that diverse audience?**

One way is through comprehensive programming. This includes such things as a children's corner where youngsters can try their hand at an art activity and workshops for adults and the entire family. People see the exhibits and then return for tours, lectures and other activities.

### **In this digital era, why does a physical museum even need to exist?**

Like most museums, we are working to digitize the permanent collection because sometimes all someone needs is a photograph or a piece of information for a research paper. But the museum's buildings have a very special feeling and beauty. As the world outside gets more and more computerized, there's that much more value to a place of peacefulness. You can't experience it by looking at it online. You have to walk in and feel the light coming through the stained glass.

### **How are you bringing the museum and the rest of the university together?**

Being part of a university increases the things we can do. For example, we have hosted an exhibition by an architecture professor and another by his master's students. Our academic director, Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies Tudor Parfitt, runs a wonderful Monday Nights at the Museum series in which he brings in scholars from all over the world as well as faculty from FIU. There's just a wealth of possibilities. ■

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a bright red suit jacket and skirt, stands next to a man wearing a dark suit, a red hat, and glasses. They are standing in front of a wall with a large mosaic of a bird. The woman has her hands clasped in front of her, and the man has his hands clasped in front of him. The background features a large mosaic of a bird, possibly a phoenix, with green and white tiles. The man is wearing a red hat, a blue shirt, a patterned tie, and a dark suit jacket. The woman is wearing a red suit jacket and skirt, and black high-heeled shoes.

## University benefactor inducted into **Florida Inventors Hall of Fame**

A top donor, Dr. Herbert Wertheim  
is also a leading innovator

By Clara-Meretan Kiah '15 | Photo by Doug Hungerford MBA '14

**D**ecades ago, Dr. Herbert Wertheim turned his early ideas for inventions into prototypes using Maxwell House coffee cans as chemistry beakers. An optometrist and the founder and CEO of Brain Power Inc., he was the first to discover and produce ultraviolet light dye absorbers for eyeglass lenses, an innovation that has helped millions avoid cataracts and other eye diseases.

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He and his wife, Nicole, built their company from scratch, spending their nights mixing product by hand and their days bottling and shipping it out themselves in their business's infancy. Today the company manufactures more than 4,000 products for eye care professionals and optical laboratories at its facilities in Miami.

In September 2018, the longtime FIU benefactor was inducted into the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame, which recognizes

a difference in our world thanks to an FIU education made possible by their generosity.”

Their names grace the university's Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences, Wertheim Conservatory, Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center and Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Concert Hall.

Herbert Wertheim served on FIU's Board of Trustees from 2000 to 2006 and is now a trustee emeritus. He also served on and

for by the Dr. Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Family Foundation Scholarship each year. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, the median amount owed by graduating medical students in the United States is \$190,000, but those benefitting from the couple's largesse will graduate with zero educational debt.

In addition to their support of FIU, the Wertheims and their foundation have contributed a total impact (which includes state matching funds) of \$100 million to Florida public universities. Their philanthropy includes significant support for the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering at the University of Florida and the University of California at San Diego Herbert Wertheim Program in Public Health and Human Longevity. In keeping with their giving philosophy, the Wertheims seek to advance preventive health practices and, ultimately, the well-being of people across the country.

A gardening enthusiast in his spare time, Wertheim sees a parallel between his beloved hobby and his support of higher education.

“I just love having my own earth—the joy of planting a seed and watching the first leaves come up, and then nurturing that plant until it gives fruit, or it gives a flower,” he said. “And the same thing [happens] in education. You plant a seed... and you watch it grow to become something beautiful... and other people will wind up, in many cases, receiving the crop. But that's my joy.”

The Wertheims have planted seeds at FIU over the past 30 years, and they have helped the university grow stronger. FIU, and the community as a whole, will enjoy the fruits of the Wertheims' investment in education for generations to come. ■

**“The Wertheim family's impact on FIU has been transformational. Their contributions over the years have helped us prepare health care professionals, entrepreneurs, artists and many other specialists who have made a difference in our world thanks to an FIU education made possible by their generosity.”**

**—President Mark B. Rosenberg**

those whose work has advanced the quality of life for people in Florida and around the world. Wertheim holds more than 100 patents and trademarks.

“Discovery is who I am,” Wertheim said. “I like to create things that have never been created before.”

Aside from making a mark in medical innovation, Wertheim and his wife have dedicated their lives to philanthropy. Among the top donors to the university, the Wertheims have given more than \$33 million to FIU and have created exceptional opportunities for students and faculty across the university.

“The Wertheim family's impact on FIU has been transformational,” said President Mark B. Rosenberg. “Their contributions over the years have helped us prepare health care professionals, entrepreneurs, artists and many other specialists who have made

chaired the FIU Foundation board and served as chairman of FIU's first capital campaign, begun in the 1990s, during which he led the successful effort to raise \$200 million in support of fellowships, scholarships and new buildings.

Wertheim took an active role in establishing the college of medicine, which welcomed its inaugural class in 2009. In total, 429 doctors have since earned their medical degrees from FIU. Previously the university granted him an honorary doctorate of science for his dedication to the university and to his profession.

The Wertheims remain actively involved at FIU by attending events such as the college of medicine's white coat ceremony and the college of nursing's pinning ceremony, where they meet with the students.

Ten medical students, whom Dr. Wertheim personally helps select, have their tuition paid

# creative

## Feeding Miami's <sup>✓</sup> renaissance

FIU is educating artists and designers to improve the world

By Patricia Cardenas '18 | Photos by Doug Garland '10

It is easy to see, in the picturesque murals that decorate Miami's Wynwood Art District, and to feel, in the excitement leading up to the annual Art Basel fair in December on Miami Beach: Over the past 15 years, South Florida has blossomed into a cultural mecca that attracts tourists to its flourishing arts scene.

Just as the city has embraced its awakening, FIU has kept pace right alongside it by supporting arts students and making possible their participation in the colorful transformation.

The nonprofit advocacy organization Americans for the Arts stresses that "the arts are uniquely equipped to solve many of our community's toughest problems and also bridge our nation's cultural, political and economic divides." And the National Endowment for the Arts reports that the arts contribute more than \$760 billion to the U.S. economy and employ 4.9 million workers. All of this points to the increasing need for academic programs and curriculums that blend creativity and economics—and FIU is answering the call.

The College of Communication, Architecture + the Arts (CARTA) has invested in South Florida's future artistic leaders by establishing a variety of dynamic facilities for creative production. These nurture the practice and development of students' talents and will contribute to Miami's growing innovation economy.

"CARTA is pushing some of the boundaries of what it means to be an art or design student in a state public university," said Brian Schriener, dean of the college. He is overseeing programs and spaces that redefine the role of the artist by offering students the chance to build, print, paint, design and engineer whatever lives in their imaginations.

### MIAMI BEACH URBAN STUDIOS

Miami Beach Urban Studios (MBUS) on Lincoln Road serve as a collider for innovative people and ideas, a home to classrooms, labs and other maker spaces where artists,

musicians, scientists and technologists can collaborate and present their work. Opened in 2011, MBUS has since become a cultural anchor in the city of Miami Beach, annually offering 125+ art exhibitions, lectures, public discussions and concerts.

As a student, photo-based artist Jose Garcia MFA '18 hosted four exhibits at MBUS. He says the intermingling of disciplines and mindsets one finds there pushes students to expand upon their talents even as they gain invaluable professional skills.

"It was a safe bubble to experiment and practice exhibition design," said Garcia, who appreciated learning how to stage a successful show as well as



Continues

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Both newcomers and veteran artists alike need an environment where they can fully commit themselves to their art. For that reason, FIU launched the Academy of Portrait & Figurative Art, the first of its kind at a public university

Master of art education student Laura Garcia in the Academy of Portrait & Figurative Art

the chance to network with those in the local arts community. He currently works as an instructor of photography at Miami Dade College.

The CARTA Innovation Lab at MBUS provides another opportunity for students to harness their creativity, this time through 3D printing technology. Student technicians run the space—which features 70 printers, making it one of the largest 3D printing labs in the nation—and young designers can create whatever they desire, at no charge, so long as their individual projects feature an innovative twist.

The requirement that they do something new and different encourages entrepreneurship, explained John Stuart, executive director of MBUS. He notes that many visitors to and even residents of Miami Beach look specifically for such novelty, and already some students have sold their creations to passersby on the spot.

“When you walk outside of MBUS, you see potential clients,” he said. “This real-world component to being here is quite special.”

Matthew Wasala '17 couldn't agree more. A graduate of FIU's master's program in architecture who now works at Berenblum Busch Architecture, he successfully

peddled several of his unique ice buckets—each printed using a pattern inspired by the curvature of sand dunes—for \$200 a pop. The lab, he says, is “a playground for the mind,” and he credits MBUS with helping him and fellow students keep up with new technologies and integrate them into their art.

#### THE ACADEMY OF PORTRAIT & FIGURATIVE ART

What does it take to be a professional artist? David Chang, professor and chair of the Department of Art + Art History, says it boils it down to three principles: passion, patience and perseverance.

Both newcomers and veteran artists alike, however, need an environment where they can fully commit themselves to their art and apply said principles to their work. For that reason, last year FIU launched the Academy of Portrait & Figurative Art, the first of its kind at a public university.

The academy functions like a classical *atelier*—a studio where artists work intensively under the supervision of a “master.” Its courses in drawing and painting focus on the traditional techniques of two-dimensional representational art.

As many as 15 students gather for each class, with easels and canvases perched before them and charcoals and pencils at the ready. Sessions feature either a live model or an element of still life, such as fruit or a plaster replica of a classical sculpture. Students are required to put in a minimum of eight hours weekly at the studio, a commitment that Chang says reinforces patience and dedication.

Undergraduate Kiara Hernandez, who outside of the academy has an interest in abstract and contemporary art, says the techniques required for representational art—such as precise proportionality—have strengthened her conceptual work and now figure into everything she does.

Others are perfecting their technique in hopes of becoming art instructors. “To be an effective art teacher, you need to know how to create art, but it's hard to teach if you can't do,” student Ariel Alfonso said. “This class teaches you how to do.”

Chang, who founded and runs the studio, concurs. Through the careful study of centuries-old techniques and approaches, students learn the nuances of a genre that dates back thousands of years that they can apply to their work.

## **THE RATCLIFFE ART + DESIGN INCUBATOR**

Whether through selling their art, building an audience or opening a gallery, every artist is a creative entrepreneur. Founded in 2017, the Ratcliffe Art + Design Incubator at the Biscayne Bay Campus expands upon traditional studio training and courses by providing mentorship, instruction and funding to students who are designated “fellows.” The goal: turn talented artists into businesspeople.

“We knew that art students were probably perceived as the most vulnerable when dealing with the outside world in the business sector,” said donor Carole Ratcliffe. “For us, that was a perfect opportunity to help them get that training on the outside world in business.”

Professionals with expertise in economics, branding, graphic design and emerging technologies work with the fellows. The young people learn that many of the traits and skills they already hold as artists—emotional intelligence, creative problem-solving—have value in business endeavors as well.

The curriculum guides them in developing the mindset of an entrepreneur whether they eventually want to work as independent artists, small business owners or directors of social impact projects. Among their assignments, students must research the costs of producing their art, understand exactly how much they need to charge to turn a profit and where their work fits into the marketplace.

Ideas alone do not cut it, explained Dimitry Chamy, a graphic designer and web developer who serves as a mentor at the incubator. “They have to gather evidence about the market they’re trying to enter and explore it in a very deliberate way.”

An example of someone who met the challenge: a student who is an experienced ceramicist documented every aspect of her work, both creative and practical, to identify the costs of gathering materials and operating

her kiln furnace so that she could factor in her labor and appropriately mark up her pieces.

“She went from being a passionate creator to an absolute expert on the entrepreneurial and business aspects of making art,” Chamy said. “She became the queen of databases,” he added of her newfound skills in creating the all-important spreadsheet.

Building that type of financial literacy remains critical to eradicating “starving-artist” syndrome, say the students who today feel empowered to treat their artwork as the basis for viable businesses.

## **ROBOTICS & DIGITAL FABRICATION LAB**

Across the programs and facilities available to CARTA students, disciplines overlap, with a significant emphasis on technology.

The movement to broaden the prevailing academic focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM—borne out of U.S. concerns that professionals in such fields are not being educated in large enough numbers to meet future demand—to encompass the creative disciplines has resulted in a push for STEAM, the “A” representing “art.” CARTA is committed to fostering integrated, interdisciplinary creative activities and research solutions, and the newly opened Robotics & Digital Fabrication Lab advances this goal.

The state-of-the-art facility is a collaboration between CARTA and the College of Engineering and Computing. Equipped with robotic arms, laser cutters, 3D scanners and more, it offers courses and workshops on robotics and other innovative technological design while encouraging students and faculty in engineering and the arts to interact on shared projects. Such cooperation across academic lines takes advantage of talents that might previously have been overlooked.

“We need to be able to think about and solve problems in ways that are

multidisciplinary, engage the creativity of the arts with science, math and technology,” said Stuart, the executive director of MBUS.

“Artists and art students are needed now more than ever because of their lack of conformity to established norms,” he added. “They and their creativity hold the key to helping us forge the best future we possibly can for ourselves.”

## **COMING SOON: CARTA @ MANA WYNWOOD**

Miami developer Moishe Mana has set aside 15,000 square feet in his 30-acre Mana Wynwood art and design center for FIU classes, exhibitions, studios and labs. Additionally, the businessman has donated millions in scholarships to support students as they pursue creative and research activities in a vital and growing arts environment. “Our main focus is to nurture Miami’s cultural scene through quality and innovation,” Mana said, “to become Miami’s hub for the arts and culture, and to continue to bring international recognition to the city and the Wynwood Art District. We see this investment as the start of a mutually beneficial collaboration that will bring in more partners from around the world.” ■



*The Robotics and Digital Fabrication Laboratory allows for high-end visualization and automated manufacturing.*



# How to do eve



Work



Family



Community



Communication

FIU alumni share their advice for finding love, entertaining with

## COMMUNITY

### Deepen your civic engagement

Volunteering on a municipal board or committee provides an ideal opportunity to serve your community. Boards and committees make recommendations to elected officials about decisions that will benefit the greater good. To get involved, visit your municipality's website to see available positions—these can range from budgeting and finance to historic preservation—and figure out what you're passionate about. Next, reach out to your elected officials. They're always looking to fill vacant spots. Getting involved at the local level is a critical investment in your family and your community. Your contribution serves everyone.

**Alfredo Riverol '98 MPA '00 MST '03** is chief financial officer for the City of South Miami and an adjunct professor of public policy and administration at the Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs.

### Find meaningful volunteer experiences

Volunteering contributes to personal and professional development and builds new relationships. Find opportunities at FIU by looking for student groups that need help or inquiring with the Alumni Association. Use social media to seek recommendations and make connections. Finally, volunteermatch.org can pair your interests with a local nonprofit. Once you agree to an assignment, always show up and never put personal gain above the work at hand. Be patient and kind, especially while waiting for direction and, when appropriate, jump in with something specific by asking 'Can I help you with X?' Most importantly, have fun! Positive energy supports everyone.

**Marly Q. Casanova '06 MS '08** is the founder of a nonprofit, volunteer-driven movement called PARK (Perform Acts of Random Kindness) Project and has delivered a Ted Talk on the topic "Kindness is your Superpower."

## TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT

### Land affordable flights to (almost) anywhere

Anyone can find cheap flights in three easy steps. First, sign up for email alerts to be notified whenever there's a last-minute price drop or error fare. Next, fly with budget airlines like WOW Air, Norwegian, JetBlue, Ryanair and Allegiant Air—you'll have a no-frills journey but save hundreds in the process. Finally, consider becoming a travel hacker. With the right credit card and targeted spending, you can earn enough points or miles to redeem for a free flight to the destination of your choice—you'll just pay the taxes and fees.

**Jen Ruiz '09** is founder of Jen on a Jet Plane and the bestselling author of "The Affordable Flight Guide."

## WORK AND FINANCES

### Stay relevant in a fast-paced economy

Unless you continue to expand your skills, moving ahead professionally will be difficult. New jobs and knowledge are constantly emerging. If you don't evolve—sometimes even "unlearning" approaches that worked previously—you will not be successful long term. So block time weekly to learn something new, either in your current area or an entirely different one, to keep abreast of changes and stay ahead of the curve. This might include watching appropriate YouTube videos, participating in webinars, reading articles or picking the brain of someone at the cutting edge. And don't discount the value of continuing education or an advanced degree.

**David Van Rooy '03 '05** is vice president for talent and organizational capability at Walmart Canada.

# rything better!



Personal



Home



Diet



Travel



Hobby

ease, connecting with a trustworthy financial adviser and more

## Improve your restaurant experience

Increase your odds of a great night out with a little homework. Research newly opened spots on [eater.com](#) and then visit the web sites of the places you've selected to preview their menus. Look for items you want to try and, if on a budget, pay attention to price points. As most new restaurants are busy, make a reservation and arrive on time. Otherwise, you're pushing someone else's table reservation back. Lastly, don't make assumptions about anything on the menu. When in doubt about a dish, ask your server.

**Andreas Schreiner '00** is co-founder of Pubblely Restaurant Group.

## Throw a killer party without killing yourself

It's important to interact with your guests. Too often, at the end of an event, a host will say, "I barely got to see you." The trick is to keep everything as simple as possible so you can talk to people and enjoy their company. For example, don't have too many food options, and always keep an item or two in the refrigerator that you can just pull out and set on the table. Do whatever else you can ahead of time so you can actually have fun at your party.

**Jessyca Perez Canal '11** is owner of Events by Jess.

## FAMILY

### Raise imaginative kids

A healthy imagination is the foundation for learning, problem-solving and creativity. To spur that, make sure your child has access to toys that encourage inventive play, such as building blocks and dress-up clothes, as well as a wide range of books. Allow children to explore play that is based on their individual interests and not on a parent's or caregiver's gender stereotypes. And finally, allow them to get bored. That should encourage resourcefulness as they seek unstructured "free play" opportunities.

**Gabriela Brown '96** is founder and CEO of I Know Science Toy Store & STEM Center.

### Look like you mean business

People don't realize how much color influences perception, whether on a website, logo or product packaging. The same goes for one's clothing. Color subliminally affects how others view your authority and intelligence. Project a strong image by wearing high contrast, such as a dark suit with a white shirt. This carries over to accessories such as eyewear, shoes and jewelry. Finally, know which color is best for you based on the hue of your eyes and hair and the underlying tone in your skin—blue, yellow or pink. Once you find what suits you, stick to it.

**Wyleen Ma '98 EMBA '07** is founder and president of International Image Consulting.

### Secure a financial adviser you trust

People look for someone they like and trust. After all, this is about relationships. But consumers don't know what they don't know. I suggest vetting an individual financial adviser on [brokercheck.finra.org](#) to make sure he or she doesn't have any industry violations. Personal bankruptcy and criminal activity also show up there. And look for credentials, the letters that follow a name. While some don't mean much as they require only a simple test, one that does matter is CFP—certified financial planner. It is comprehensive and requires passing a big exam.

**Gustavo J. Vega '98** is a certified financial planner and co-founder of WealthEngage.

### Preserve your mother tongue

Adopt practices that work for your family. For example, at home I only speak in Portuguese, and my sons have to answer me back in complete sentences. Switch the default language on mobile devices so you can communicate with family members in the familial language. Build a home library of books, magazines, games, DVDs and CDs that reflect your heritage. Teaching kids your native language keeps it from being lost.

**Ivian Destro Boruchowski MS '14** is a bilingual education and curriculum specialist.

Continues



## HOBBIES AND RECREATION

### Get started with backyard beekeeping

If you have two square feet of outdoor space and about an hour and a half of time to spend twice a week, you can get into beekeeping. (Note that even a balcony is a fine spot, but your neighbors will probably freak out!) The best way to begin is to learn everything you can by reading books and watching YouTube videos. A search for “Beekeeping 101” will answer all your questions and prepare you for honey farming. So long as there is a nearby source of freshwater and nectar, bees will thrive. Really, anyone can do it.

**Andrea Saladrigas '17** is founder of *Master Honey*, which trains beekeepers, and an account representative for Procter and Gamble.

### Plan your personal art collection

Before you buy your first piece, look at 10,000 works of art. That isn't hard. There are thousands at an art fair, and the number available online is almost limitless. The reason to look at so many is to build context and create a mental inventory of objects that you can use as benchmarks against items that you might consider collecting. This practice will allow your taste to evolve quickly and, as your knowledge and aesthetic change, keep you from making purchases you later regret.

**Dennis Scholl '77** is president and CEO of *Art Center/South Florida* and a long-time art collector.

### Keep your pickup game friendly

Unless you're playing with friends you want to bond with, a pickup basketball game should be strictly about your cardio workout—and maybe bragging rights—so have fun and don't get upset. To get the most out of it, focus on your shooting, post-up, pick and roll or whatever skills need work. Don't start calling fouls on others, unless they do something outrageous. And as for trash talk, if you're going to give it, you have to take it. Better yet, if you want to avoid it, don't start it in the first place.

**Tymell Murphy '14** played basketball for FIU and is now with a professional team in China.

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### Make small talk with a VIP

Always greet important people by name and with the appropriate title, and remember to introduce yourself. While you should show respect and proper decorum, never stand in awe of them. Most people want to be treated like everyone else. Watch for cues to determine whether someone is in the mood to engage. If yes, then knowing something about current events in the country he or she comes from or something of his or her work provides the basis for a nice little conversation.

**Moraima Meijard '87** is a protocol officer with Miami-Dade County and meets diplomats and other dignitaries daily at Miami International Airport.

### Listen actively

We are all so distracted that we rarely pay real attention to one another. To change that, we must make a conscious effort not only to hear but to listen. This will improve our human interactions. Practice active listening by putting down your cell phone and closing your eyes. You won't encounter silence. Instead, the humming of the refrigerator or the whirring of the AC will grow in your ears. Concentrate long enough and you may detect a rhythm. Do this regularly and you will find yourself better in tune with the world and the words of those around you.

**Catalina von Wrangell MM '13** is a composer, performer, educator and arts management professional.

## DIET AND HEALTH

### Transition to a plant-based diet

Make cooking meatless dishes an adventure. It's all about creativity. Get protein from great options such as quinoa, beans, chickpeas, lentils and tofu. Don't tell friends or family about a plant-based meat substitute until they've tried it. That's what I do, and my friends can't tell the difference! For those who don't want to give up meat entirely, or want to move toward vegetarianism slowly, Meatless Monday has become a popular trend. But why not turn that around and do Meatfull Monday instead? Essentially, eat meat once a week and plant-based meals the rest of the week.

**Brian Machovina BS '92 MS '94 Ph.D. '15** is an entrepreneur, an inventor and a scientist.

### Distinguish a migraine from a less-serious headache

Migraines are a leading cause of disability, but how do you tell a migraine from the more-common tension headache? Migraine is often a throbbing headache associated with sensitivity to light, sound and odor and sometimes accompanied by nausea and vomiting. While milder headaches can usually be treated with over-the-counter medications, migraines should be seen by specialists who can sort out possible triggers, suggest preventive measures and prescribe appropriate pharmaceuticals or other options such as acupuncture. If you experience symptoms such as confusion, weakness, speech problems or vision loss, or if your pain interferes with work, school or other activities, seek help.

**Dr. Teshamae Monteith '98** is an assistant professor of clinical neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine and chief of the headache division.

### Stay calm and carry the conversation

People get nervous talking in situations that are rare: job interviews, meeting future in-laws, approaching strangers at a party. The best advice is to trust yourself and not care too much. The more you think, the more you worry, the worse it goes. Lower your expectations and you're likely to succeed. Just treat those with whom you are talking like you do friends. With friends there are no rules, and you generally feel comfortable telling them your story. If you can tell that story with passion, even those who don't know you will be interested in what you're saying.

**Peter Mir '12** is cofounder of Villain Theater in Miami an actor who teaches improvisational skills.

### Ramp up your public speaking proficiency

Listen to great public speakers, in all areas of expertise, as you refine your own style. You might pick up a tone, pace, rhythm, structure or other attribute to incorporate into your own. Focusing on one or more of these as you deliver a speech helps take your focus away from the nerves you may have and helps you deliver your substance more clearly. You may not be a master today, but with enough technique gleaned from those who are, you soon will be.

**Dane Stuhlsatz JD '18** was selected by his peers to speak on behalf of the graduating class at the 2018 FIU law school commencement.

## PERSONAL

### Find the love of your life

Many of my clients are successful women, and the most important thing I tell them is to stop trying to control everything, whether it's where to go on dates or how the other person is supposed to react. That takes the joy out of getting to know someone, and it certainly kills the spark and the spontaneity, not to mention the sex. I tell male clients to make their love life as important as their careers. Too often, in the midst of climbing the ladder, they forget to look for love. I'm convinced there is someone out there for everyone.

**Casandra Henriquez '04 MPH '06** is a life and love coach who owns the consulting firm Inspire Many; she is hosting the Success in Love Summit Feb. 14-16, 2019.

### Live joyfully

As beautiful as life can be, it is also full of ups and downs that can take a toll on your well-being. The best way to achieve a joyful perspective is to extract the positive lesson in every situation, including negative ones, and to be grateful for what you have. At the end of every day, I take a few minutes to reflect on one thing I'm grateful for. Sometimes, it's a person that impacted me or an event that occurred that day that made me happy. Being grateful and acknowledging what's going right in your life has powerful results.

**Avni Parekh '10** is the author of "Be the Bigger Person: Scenarios & Solutions to Better Yourself."

Are you an expert?  
We'd love to hear  
from you.  
[magazine@fiu.edu](mailto:magazine@fiu.edu)

## HOME

### Redecorate on a budget

If your furniture is in good condition and not dated, rearrange it and then go "shopping" for pieces in other areas of your home. It's a fun scavenger hunt! A dining room sideboard, for example, can function as a media console. If you must make a purchase, hit clearance sections and discount home stores to make your decorating dollar go farther. Adding new paint is an inexpensive update, and you can create a feature wall with wallpaper, wood planks or tiles that add texture and a focal point. Complete the makeover with low-cost area rugs and toss pillows.

**Martin Amado '96** is an interior decorator and lifestyle expert who hosts a design show on local South Florida TV and this year published "One-Day Room Makeovers: How to Get the Designer Look for Less with Three Easy Steps."

### Turn your living space into a smart home

First, purchase a smart hub and then determine its compatibility with various brands of smart thermostats, voice assistants, lights and anything else you wish to buy. Why? It's true that individual smart devices, such as a smart lock, may let you do neat things, like remotely turn off the lights when you've already crawled into bed. The real power of home automation, however, comes in the ability to have devices in your home talk not just to you, but to each other. The hub will make that possible.

**Michael Alexander Alan '14 MS '16** is an R&D Electrical Engineer at Sandia National Laboratory.

### Gain control of a messy closet

Instead of shutting the door and ignoring your closet, spend a few hours tackling it. First, empty it out! Give your closet shelves, walls and floors a good cleaning. Then create "keep," "toss" and "donate" piles. Haven't worn it in six months? Donate it. Old and raggedy? Toss it. Finally, organize what is left by article of clothing and by color. In three hours or less, you should be able to look at your closet and feel excited about what you see.

**Maria Arbiol '03** is a life and fitness coach, blogger and founder of Keep It Together. ■

**FIU** rising

# A remarkable decade has proven the university unstoppable

FIU's profile has never been higher nor its record of achievement stronger

By Alexandra Pecharich | Photo by Doug Garland '10



*"FIU was born from a spirit of hope and determination to be a force for good. Every day, we obsess on student success. Every day, we use the blessings of our talent to offer solutions to community challenges. Every day, we seek win-win partnerships to foster well-being and prosperity for our community."*

*—President Mark B. Rosenberg*



**Back in 2008**, the U.S. economy sunk to historic lows as Wall Street and the world's banking system lay in shambles and workers increasingly found their jobs outsourced or lost to automation. Layoffs and student debt soared, and many began to voice concerns that a four-year degree no longer held any value.

Soon after, FIU began taking a hard look at its future. Questions swirled—as they did at universities around the country—about the ways in which 21st-century students preferred to learn, whether schools provided them with the requisite skills to meet industry needs and the role of institutions of higher education in ensuring that new graduates find gainful employment in their chosen fields. These and other issues took center stage as FIU started to shift its thinking on how best to serve students and the community.

Much of the evolution began with the installation of Mark B. Rosenberg as FIU's fifth president. A former FIU faculty member and provost and the then-outgoing chancellor of Florida's State University System (SUS), he took the helm in 2009 with a sense of urgency. It prompted a period of soul-searching that reached into every aspect of university life and included self-studies, data analysis and a hard look at what, frankly, FIU could do better.

Flash forward nearly 10 years, and the payoff of all that introspection and the ensuing changes that followed—based on solid strategic planning—has become clear. On every measure of success—from student and alumni achievement to faculty research to community engagement—FIU has triumphed.

### **Pulling rank**

Perhaps the strongest validation of the university's overall accomplishment came this past September with the news that FIU now

stands among the top 100 public universities in the country. That's according to *U.S. News and World Report*, the gold standard of higher education rankings.

The publication relies on 16 measures that education experts have proposed as reliable indicators of academic quality, such as first-year student retention, graduation rates and the strength of the faculty. The recently added criterion "social mobility" factors in a school's success at promoting upward mobility by graduating needy students who receive federal Pell Grants. (Nearly 60 percent of FIU undergraduates come from households with income of less than \$50,000.) Class size, student-faculty ratio and the proportion of full-time faculty with the highest available degree in their fields likewise count toward the final placement.

*"There's a cohort of major public universities that are really reinventing higher education, and I think FIU is one. Inclusion and education and preparing [students] for careers, all things that traditional exclusive universities have looked down their noses at, can go along with being a high-quality research university."*

*— Anne-Marie Slaughter  
President and CEO, New America Foundation*

Also critical: The magazine surveys top academic officials, such as presidents, provosts and deans of admissions, to have them gauge the academic quality of peer institutions with which they are familiar. As news of its innovative approaches to teaching, high-caliber research and community-oriented problem-solving has reached the far corners of the globe, FIU's profile on the national and international stage has grown.

Those same university leaders weigh in on specific academic areas of which they have particular knowledge. In the latest ranking of academic programs, *U.S. News and World Report* placed 18 of FIU's in the top 100 within their respective fields.

Continues

*"[Charting] a strategic plan for a decade doesn't make a lot of sense because it's going to be a very different world you're operating in before the decade has passed. The concept of a five-year plan, and no time to pause [before implementation], led us to focus on achieving our goals."*

— Douglas Wartzok  
Provost Emeritus, architect of FIU's 2010-2015 strategic plan

## #100

Among the top 100 public universities in the country 2019 U.S. News & World Report

These include areas as diverse as nursing and social work, public affairs and business. Such recognition of excellence speaks directly to the knowledge and skills students take with them on graduation day.

And while national acknowledgement remains a goal for any university, FIU takes great pride in having this year earned second place—behind only the much-older University of Florida—among the 12 institutions in the SUS. That placement is based on some of the same metrics as mentioned above and recognizes the university's year-over-year improvement by the SUS Board of Governors. The success brings with it millions of dollars in additional state funding, money that the university has invested in the latest technology, the hiring of additional faculty and seed money for promising, early-stage research projects.

### Research prowess

The flurry of recent rankings comes more than two years after FIU achieved one of its most important. In 2016, the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education named FIU to its highest tier of research universities, making it one of just 115—or just 2 percent of all institutions of higher education in the United States—to attain the status. The standing puts FIU in the company of prestigious household names

## #2

Among the institutions in Florida's State University System as determined by the Florida Board of Governors based on key performance indicators

such as Harvard, Yale, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Virginia Tech and the University of Michigan.

During fiscal 2016-2017, FIU commanded nearly \$127 million in research funding from the National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Defense, among others. In the same year, FIU awarded 187 doctoral degrees, another achievement that figures into the Carnegie Classification as Ph.D. students are expected to combine the rigors of research, whether their own or in tandem with a supervising professor, with completion of coursework.

And while the national classification does not look specifically at the number of patents that scientists and engineers earn, the Board of Governors does put a premium on such activity. In 2016-2017, the university saw its faculty secure a record 66 patents for their discoveries and inventions. These innovations include a neural-enabled prosthetic hand, a hurricane-resistant roofing system, chemical tests for illicit substances and more. (See patents story on page 27.)

### The "solutions center" approach

Since taking the university's helm in 2009, Rosenberg has insisted that FIU harness the power of its growing body of applied research in support of impactful, real-world change.

To help the South Florida community

achieve its goals of equality and prosperity for all, for example, the university has made a priority of working with underserved populations to lead improvements in health disparities and underachieving schools. Under the direction of physicians in the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, the Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP® program brings together medical, nursing and social work students to visit indigent patients and offers a range of services, among them primary health care exams and mammography, in fully equipped, physician-staffed mobile centers. The Education Effect is a collaboration with Miami-Dade County Public Schools to raise the academic skills of youngsters in under-performing elementary and high schools within the urban core. Both of these initiatives serve as national models.

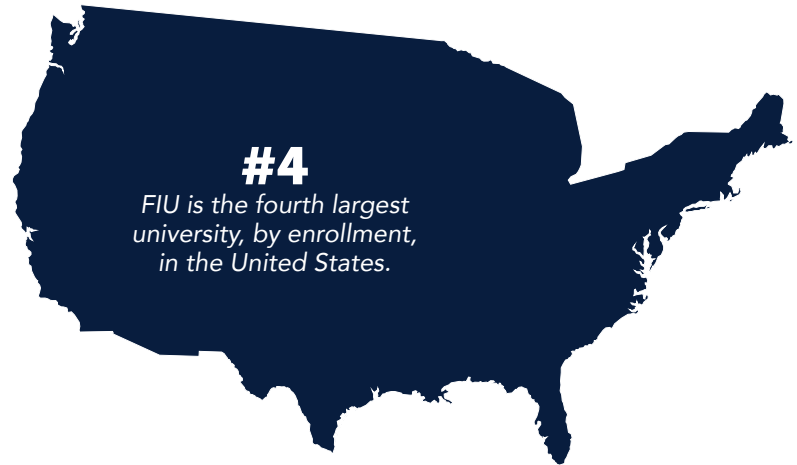
Many of the university's designated preeminent programs—areas called out for their research, teaching and community-engagement potential—are likewise outward facing. These include, among others, the Center for Children and Families, which annually runs intervention and treatment programs for thousands of youngsters with ADHD and other mental health disorders, and the Extreme Events Institute, which educates community leaders around the world about disaster mitigation policies and approaches.

### Bold moves

FIU's impressive climb has everything to do with intentionality. The university unveiled five-year strategic plans in 2010 and 2015 to serve as blueprints for reaching the goals set by both the SUS governing board and FIU leaders. Those critical roadmaps, based on input from every area of the university, mobilized the administration, faculty and staff to undertake methodical, data-driven steps to effect positive, meaningful outcomes.

For example, a renewed student-centered mindset put young people in the driver's seat in efforts to meet retention and graduation targets. For the first time, it was

FIU maintains two South Florida campuses in addition to a free-standing engineering center, two satellite academic centers, two off-campus museums (with a third located on campus), creative studio space on Miami Beach (with others pending), an underwater research lab in the Florida Keys, a fully staffed office with meeting and educational space in Washington, D.C., and a dedicated hospitality-management campus in Tianjin, China.



**\$1.4B**  
annual budget

**\$9B**  
annual economic impact

**\$177M**  
research expenditures in FY 2016-2017



**International Business undergraduate program in Florida**  
U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges of 2018

**International Global Policy and Administration graduate program in Florida**  
U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges of 2018

**Law School Bar passage rate in Florida**

**On the Social Mobility Index in Florida**

**Online Hospitality Management program**  
College Choice



**228,000**  
alumni



**334,000**  
total degrees awarded



**57,000**  
current enrollment



**201**  
bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs

*"So what will it take for FIU to become a next-generation global university? Simply for us to continue to be not afraid to embrace change and leverage technology to the benefit of our students and our community."*

— Provost and Executive Vice President  
Kenneth G. Furton, architect of the 2015-2020 strategic plan and the forthcoming 2020-2025 plan

# A Decade of Progress

	2008	Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum opens state-of-the-art campus facility
The Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine welcomes its first class	2009	
	2010	<i>WorldsAhead</i> strategic plan launched
Recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as a Community Engaged University	2011	
Stocker AstroScience center opens on campus	2012	Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU created in new partnership
Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences named		
Received the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities top award for Most Visible Progress in undergraduate student success and the Council of Graduate Schools top award for Promoting Success in Graduate Education	2013	
	2014	Aquarius Reef Base established as a university-owned laboratory
Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs named		StartUP FIU incubator established
<i>FIUBeyondPossible2020</i> strategic plan launched	2015	Recognized by the Carnegie Foundation as a Doctoral University with Highest Research Activity
Rated among "America's Best Employers" by <i>Forbes</i> magazine	2016	Earned the Institute of International Education Heiskell Award for the Global Learning for Global Citizenship program (started in 2010), which encourages broad perspectives and international experiences for students
Moss School of Construction, Infrastructure and Sustainability named	2017	Named an Ashoka Changemaker Campus for leadership in fostering opportunities that help students impact the world.
Named to the "Great Colleges to Work For" Honor Roll by the <i>Chronicle of Higher Education</i> (repeated in 2018)		
	2018	Designated an Innovation and Economic Prosperity University by Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
		Ranked a Top 100 Public University by <i>U.S. News &amp; World Report</i>

Continued

*"FIU serves as an economic engine for the entire state, providing opportunities for students to better their lives, join Florida's workforce and pursue careers that match their talents and interests."*

— Marshall M. Criser III  
Chancellor, State University System of Florida

mandated that all students identify a major upon enrollment, and a combination of technology and enhanced personal advising were implemented to help undergraduates keep on top of degree requirements by making clear the path to completion. That led the university to offer more sections of required courses each semester—a recognition that students cannot graduate in a timely fashion if they are shut out—and change the way courses with high failure rates are taught. (Peer mentoring and a state-of-the-art math lab in the College of Arts, Sciences & Education, for example, have boosted pass rates in trigonometry, finite math and college algebra by double digits without compromising academic rigor.) At the same time, big data and predictive analytics have allowed staff to identify at-risk students and develop appropriate interventions.

The concentrated activities all speak to new efficiencies as well as support for a unique population of students, nearly half of whom are the first in their families to attend college. (Nationally, the average percentage of first-generation college students is 30 percent.) Many are also the first in their families to be born in the United States or are themselves immigrants. Most work 20 or more hours weekly to defray tuition and expenses. (In 2016-2017, 57 percent of FIU undergraduates received government Pell grants, federal monies made available based on need, and of those, more than half received the maximum award based on a family contribution of \$0.)

Based on findings by the National Association of Colleges and Employers that approximately 60 percent of college graduates in 2012 who completed a paid

internship received at least one job offer, the Office of Engagement has led the charge to connect students to real-world opportunities in industries as diverse as biomedical engineering, finance, hospitality management and information technology. The Division of Student Affairs has created an internship portal through which students and employers can find a perfect match. Those efforts have paid off by making young graduates that much more marketable: New FIU alumni are finding plum positions within their areas of study, and they average among the highest salaries of all recent graduates of the SUS one year after walking across the commencement stage.

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In the months ahead, FIU will begin the work of once again looking to the future and adjusting its practices to the coming challenges. With a growing body of internal data at its disposal and through interaction and consultation with national education think tanks and other organizations, and guided by its own expert faculty, the university remains committed to innovation, and even disruption, in the face of business as usual. Groundwork for the next strategic plan has already begun.

FIU will likewise strengthen its partnerships within the local community as well as with industry leaders around the state when it launches, in early 2019, the public phase of its capital campaign. That massive effort will further deepen FIU's ability to meet the current and future needs of both individuals and the greater society, thereby continuing the central work of South Florida's top public research institution. ■

### Keeping waste out of landfills to save the earth

**U**go Angeletti likes to get his hands on the grimy stuff. The freshman marketing major with a minor in agroecology started rummaging through his neighbors' trash, with permission, for a high school assignment to determine what and how much people get rid of. Surprised by the amount of organic material in a typical family's weekly haul—including such things as fruit rinds, egg shells, coffee grounds—Angeletti alighted on a quest: to keep food waste out of landfills.

His Advanced Placement environmental studies class had taught him that such discards decompose very slowly when covered by other types of garbage and in the process create methane gas that contributes to global warming. (Other negative consequences include the build up of toxic sludge that contaminates groundwater.)

Twelve years after moving to South Florida with his family from their native France, the transplant wanted to coalesce the community around a solution to help ensure the region's future. "Miami is sitting on the frontline of climate change," Angeletti said, conscious of threatening sea level rise, "and very few people are doing anything concrete to fight against it."

Along with his three younger sisters, Angeletti developed the nonprofit back2earth. The organization provides high-grade plastic buckets with heavy lids in which homeowners collect food scraps. In just the first three months of operation, he and volunteers picked up 50,000 pounds of waste from participating families. The group is turning the refuse into compost that will be sold locally to backyard gardeners, professional landscapers and others to enrich soil.

Now expanding into Miami's Coconut Grove neighborhood, Angeletti has refined the process with a central drop-off location. And his business model has also shifted. What he now actively encourages—by making presentations to area middle schools in hopes of growing a groundswell of support—is that individuals do their own composting at home, thereby negating the need for energy-intensive transporting of waste.

"When you think about it, [our] service is not really the solution. It's a fix," he says. "Educating the world is really the best tool." ■

**Watch Ugo Angeletti explain how to start composting at home.**  
[magazine.fiu.edu](http://magazine.fiu.edu)







# BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

By Eric Barton

**T**odd Crowl can remember a time a few years ago when it wasn't so easy to qualify for million-dollar research grants.

An aquatic ecologist, Crowl said funding agencies' requests for proposals often included requirements he just couldn't meet. Sometimes that meant having access to advanced computer analytics or specialists in far-flung fields of research.

Now, though, Crowl rarely has to let one go. Ever since FIU formed the Institute of Water and Environment in 2016, he and his colleagues have access to specialists across dozens of fields. Located within the College of Arts, Sciences & Education, the institute makes collaboration possible among 100 FIU scientists, academics and researchers.

The wide capacity to harness top experts has expanded FIU's influence on issues such as Everglades restoration, sea level rise and more.

"We are trying to empower the decision makers with our ability to share information and data," said Crowl, a professor and director of the institute. "We tout ourselves as being big in addressing problems with solution-based answers."

Over the years, staff who are today connected to the institute have on their own brought in a total of more than \$100 million in research funding from grants and other sources. Now, formally connected to one another, that success is expected to grow exponentially. One recent example: a \$5 million National Science Foundation grant that funds the cooperative work of aquatic chemists, computer scientists and hydrologists.

"That's a proposal we couldn't have written if we hadn't created this breadth of science from many walks of life," Crowl said. "We're in a unique position to change policy, influence decision making and educate the public on how they can work together on water issues."

Continues



Continued

## **Southeast Environmental Research**

The Institute of Water and Environment did not have to start from scratch. For the past 25 years, FIU's Southeast Environmental Research Center (SERC) has been a core solutions center for South Florida's unique environmental challenges.

In the early 1990s, Florida and federal regulators were at odds over the Everglades—specifically, how to fix the imperiled ecosystem. SERC was created with the goal of providing government agencies with unbiased data free of politics. Today, SERC's research and monitoring programs are a core component of the institute.

This includes the Water Quality Monitoring Network and the Center for Aquatic Chemistry and the Environment. The former oversees quarterly sampling from sites stretching between Miami and Marco Island and south through the Florida Keys, providing data that offer a big-picture look at the health of South Florida's coast. The latter looks at how environmental contamination affects water systems.

When the National Science Foundation established the Florida Coastal Everglades Long Term Ecological Research program in 2000 to study sensitive areas within the Everglades, FIU was the obvious choice to serve as host. Today, faculty, students and researchers representing 30 universities, government agencies and other partners are working together.

Since launching, the program has led to groundbreaking research and key discoveries about the fragile Everglades ecosystem, on which a third of Floridians rely for water. Perhaps one of the most important contributions the program has made in its 18 years is the development of a communications tool used to inform the U.S. Congress and other policymakers about the science of Everglades restoration. That has become a model for communicating information about other environmental

projects in the state and as far as away as Shark Bay, Australia.

Today, scientists within SERC have even more access to data and expertise under the Institute of Water and Environment, according to Piero Gardinali, a chemist and the director of SERC.

This includes collaborations with public health experts, connecting scientists studying contamination with those who understand how it will adversely affect local populations.

“Creating the institute was one of the greatest steps we've taken at the university in recent years,” Gardinali said. “Now we have expertise that ranges from freshwater to open seas to the rain forest, you name it.”

## **Coastal Oceans Research**

James Fourqurean has become an international force in the protection and restoration of seagrasses. The marine biologist and director of FIU's coastal oceans research programs is also a member of the Blue Carbon Initiative, a collaborative comprising various international conservation organizations. The initiative's goal is to mitigate climate change through the restoration and sustainable use of coastal and marine ecosystems, focusing on mangroves, tidal marshes and seagrasses. Fourqurean also oversees FIU's marine education and outreach programs in the Florida Keys and the Medina Aquarius Program, which houses the world's only underwater research laboratory.

FIU assumed operational control of the Aquarius Reef Base after federal budget cuts threatened to pull the facility out of the water five years ago. It is the only place in the world where scientists can live and work underwater for weeks at a time. Since the lab's first deployment along Conch Reef in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary 25 years ago, work conducted there has led to the publication of more than 800 research

papers that guide policy and conservation of the world's oceans.

“Not only does Aquarius offer the opportunity to do experiments and answer questions that would be impossible anywhere else, but working there is an adventure of a lifetime,” said Frances Farabaugh, a biological sciences Ph.D. student at FIU who spent time in Aquarius in 2016 for a research project on sharks.

Across the globe, FIU's coastal oceans researchers are leading projects that impact conservation efforts and policy regarding coral reefs, seagrasses, sharks, rays and the overall oceans. This includes Global FinPrint, an international initiative to survey the world's reef shark and ray populations to better inform conservation initiatives. Having received core funding from Microsoft co-founder Paul G. Allen, Global FinPrint has already supported a shark fishing ban in the Dominican Republic and led to the establishment of a national ray sanctuary in Belize.

## **International Program**

Beyond endangered species, people are also direct beneficiaries of research within the Institute of Water and Environment. Its international program is focused on getting clean water to every person on the planet. In Haiti, the FIU team developed solutions to the country's fractured water system, creating a water management plan that could provide a safe, reliable resource.

FIU and UNESCO earlier this year announced the establishing of the UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Water Security, which is housed within the institute and focuses on advancing water sciences and improving sustainable water management in developing countries where water is scarce. Maria C. Donoso holds the chair. Her international track record includes helping successfully improve water management and policy, build local capacity, and implement water supply, sanitation and hygiene services in Africa,

Continues

# THE INSTITUTE OF WATER AND ENVIRONMENT ACTIVE RESEARCH SITES



**30+**

number of countries and island groups in which the institute has active projects

**\$12M**

research expenditures in FY fiscal 2017-2018

**Across the globe, FIU's researchers are leading projects that impact conservation efforts and policy regarding the oceans, freshwater, potable water, sanitation and more.**

# Recognizing Excellence

University leaders have designated six standout programs as “preeminent.” Another seven with high potential are designated “emerging.”

## PREEMINENT

### Center for Children and Families

A nationally regarded center revolutionizing treatments for childhood mental illness

### Extreme Events Institute

A globally involved center for research, education and training in natural hazards and disaster risk reduction and management

### Global Forensic and Justice Center

An innovative resource for education, research, training and policy initiatives related to criminal justice, cyber and emerging forensic sciences

### Institute for Resilient and Sustainable Coastal Infrastructure

A multipronged hub dedicated to developing innovative, economical and sustainable engineering solutions related to aging infrastructure

### Institute of Water and Environment

A collaborative of FIU’s top centers and programs focused on issues related to water and environmental threats around the world

### STEM Transformation Institute

A multidisciplinary cooperative committed to improving educational practices that lead to more and better prepared professionals in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

## EMERGING PREEMINENT

### Brain, Behavior and the Environment Program

### Cybersecurity@FIU

### FIU Topics

### Health Inequalities and Disparities Program

### Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center

### Translational Molecular Discoveries

### The Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab

Continued

Central America, South America and Asia, including a \$21.9 million project to develop an integrated water system in Rwanda.

The chair was formally launched at a conference in September at FIU in which international experts gathered to address regional, national and global water and environmental security issues. It highlighted global challenges and opportunities across the planet at a time when scarcity, quality and accessibility are growing concerns.

## Sea Level Solutions

At the Institute of Water and Environment, many research initiatives focus on decades of damage that have imperiled ecosystems and the people, plants and animals that call them home. But its greatest charge for South Florida may be in its newest addition—the Sea Level Solutions Center. Focused on mitigating rising sea levels, Jayantha “Obey” Obeysekera was named director of the center in May. His call to action is simple: Let’s work together.

Obeysekera believes that by joining university forces with other research facilities and government agencies, meaningful solutions can be found to help Floridians overcome the greatest threat facing their way of life today. Through their work within the Institute of Water and Environment, the faculty affiliated with the Sea Level Solutions Center has been well-versed in how to share data and work with scientists from differing backgrounds.

“My primary goal is to make sure the people who are making the decisions have the science they need to counter sea level rise in the future,” said Obeysekera, who previously served as chief modeler at the South Florida Water Management District.

Aquatic ecologist Tiffany Troxler is the director of science and focused on developing solutions that can be used

today and help plan for decades to come.

On Miami Beach, Troxler worked with local officials to develop plans to solve current-day flooding issues including the raising of streets and installation of pumping stations. She also collaborated on a recent project with FIU’s College of Communication, Architecture + The Arts, hosting a series of community dialogues with historic preservationists, developers and homeowners’ associations on Miami Beach to consider how historic buildings might be impacted, and could be protected, as the seas rise.

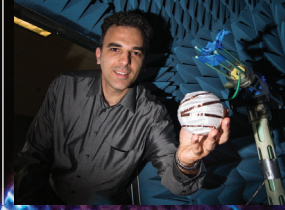
“For some of the people in those meetings, it was the first time they had seen that kind of data on sea level rise,” Troxler said. The result was a “collaboration document” that laid out possible solutions, using the combined prowess of FIU scientists and architectural experts.

## What’s next?

With a diverse team of researchers working all across the globe, the Institute of Water and Environment has a vigorous research agenda. But it is an agenda that must remain nimble. Some environmental challenges can be predicted. Others, such as oil spills and red tide, can occur without warning.

“Collaborative science is the only solution to the mounting environmental challenges facing humanity,” said Mike Heithaus, a marine biologist and dean of the College of Arts, Sciences & Education. “At FIU, we are aggressively pursuing solutions that are already making a difference. We are preparing the next generation of scientists who will develop innovative ways to solve critical challenges in ways we can’t even imagine. And through our outreach and engagement, we are inspiring the generation that will come after to be better stewards of our planet. The Institute of Water and Environment is helping to build a sustainable and inspiring future.” ■

**PATENT**



Foldable, origami antennas—a closeup of a multicolored one is seen here—are an innovation patented by engineering professor Stavros Georgakopoulos.

# A culture of Invention

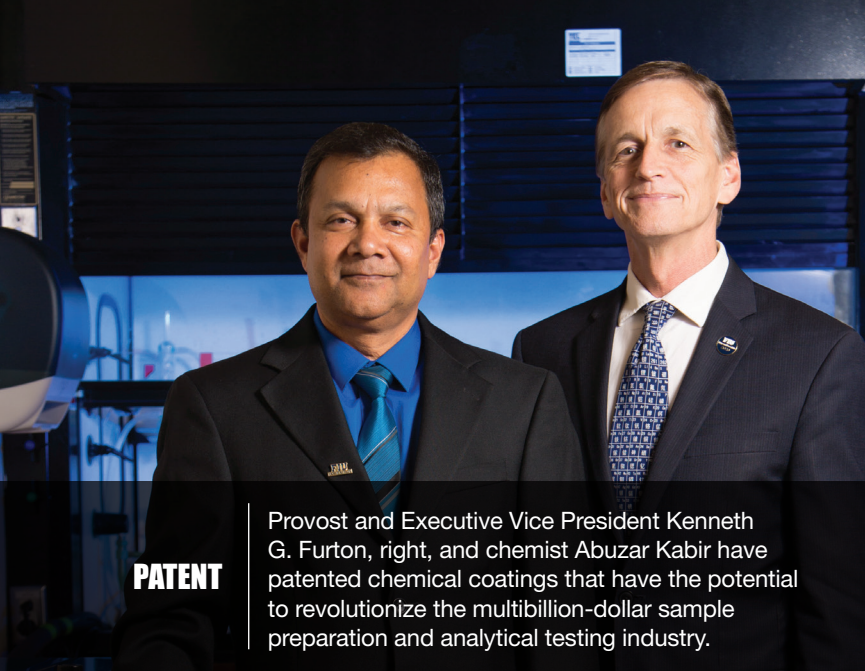
## **FIU is producing patents like never before**

By David Drucker '18

Professor Stavros Georgakopoulos exemplifies FIU's inventing culture. The College of Engineering and Computing faculty member started with a novel idea: integrate the principles of the ancient art of origami into the production of electronics to create the ultimate portable, space-efficient technology. The Air Force saw the invention's potential and granted him \$4.8 million to establish the Transforming Antennas Center. Now, Georgakopoulos' research is pushing wireless communication into the future.

The origami antenna is one example in a stream of recent success stories made possible by the university's prioritization of innovation.

FIU has grown its patent production by 650 percent seemingly overnight. In the years 2014 and 2015, university researchers earned a total of eight patents. In 2016 and 2017, the two-year total catapulted to 60 patents. The university's rapid turnaround began five years ago when an established researcher with a mind for inventing ascended to provost.



## PATENT

Provost and Executive Vice President Kenneth G. Furton, right, and chemist Abuzar Kabir have patented chemical coatings that have the potential to revolutionize the multibillion-dollar sample preparation and analytical testing industry.



## PATENT

A prosthetic hand system that connects directly to the nervous system is a technology patented by biomedical engineering professor Ranu Jung.

Continued

### Trust the process

Provost and Executive Vice President Kenneth G. Furton, who holds 12 patents and has eight pending in the field of chemistry, conducted decades of research in the College of Arts, Sciences & Education before taking his current office in 2014. To earn those patents, he had to first submit documents to the Office of Research and Economic Development (ORED), which supports the university's research community and oversees its endeavors, to verify that his inventions were original.

In his new position, Furton wanted to develop a system in which these documents, known as disclosures, could be approved faster. "Our intellectual property office was very limited. I had inventions that I disclosed that wound up not getting patented, which kind of discouraged me a little bit from putting in further disclosures because it's a lot of effort to do all the paperwork and disclose it for the patent ultimately not to be issued," he said.

So Furton and senior management got to work changing FIU's inventing environment, and they set a stretch goal: 20 patents per year by 2020. To put this into context, in 2014 FIU was only producing one to two patents per year and had 25 patents in its entire history. An additional incentive rolled in when the Florida Board of Governors announced that universities producing 100 patents over a three-year span would meet one of the Preeminent State Research University metrics.

Another influence on the patent surge: Pedro Hernandez, an engineer, patent lawyer

and MBA who arrived at FIU six years ago with numerous years of experience at Motorola and Texas Instruments. He was well-acquainted with the intricacies of the patent process and understood the value of boosting efforts.

Hernandez talks about companies like IBM, that might patent 5,000 innovations in a year but only see a small percentage go anywhere. "They do it," he said, "because they want to have a culture of folks inside that company that are constantly coming up with good ideas."

A similar culture is taking shape at FIU, one rooted in research and bolstered by ORED's support and the university's encouragement of faculty invention.

"The emphasis on patenting has skyrocketed over the last five years," said director of the International Forensic Research Institute DeEtta (Dee) Mills. She had ideas for two patents on the back burner for years. Now they are pending approval and already garnering interest from the U.S. Department of Defense.

### Show me the money

Pursuing a patent can be a daunting task for faculty. One reason: money, or lack thereof. To keep the research that leads to inventions going, researchers must apply for grants from federal agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Energy as well as state, local and private organizations.

ORED subscribes to a database of funders, lists funding opportunities on its website and sends email notifications to

alert faculty to new sources of funding as they become available. Its staff is available to assist faculty in their efforts to identify funders and submit grant applications. ORED reviews a researcher's proposal to ensure it meets stated guidelines, assists in creating a solid budget and submits the document electronically.

"The challenge with patents is that faculty [members] are doing multiple things at once," said ORED Vice President Andres Gil. "Sometimes, the time you dedicate to that takes away from other things you're doing."

Once a grant has been awarded, ORED aids faculty by generating required quarterly and annual reports that include detailed accounting of expenses and, often, proof that safety and other protocols have been followed. Accurate and comprehensive reporting ensures that research compliance and integrity are preserved.

### Recognizing—and protecting—intellectual property

Not all patents are born intentionally. Some faculty may have a potential invention on their hands and not even know it. Their research can contain a novel idea that they were not actively looking to patent.

This happened to Georgakopoulos, inventor of the origami antenna. After giving a talk about his research, he received a lot of interest about a subject he touched on: making wireless power structures foldable. It made him wonder how he could apply the method in other areas.

From a lecture, he thought of an idea—foldable antennas—that would secure millions of dollars for research.

“When you’re researching, sometimes you don’t know what will come about,” Georgakopoulos said. “Giving a talk and seeing what people are interested in can give you more applications.”

Even during such a gray period—between active research and a solid discovery of something new—ORED works to keep researchers from accidentally publishing ideas before they can be protected. The office stays connected with faculty across the university and discusses with them what they are working on. As a safeguard, researchers sometimes send their manuscripts to ORED for review before publication.

And finally, once ORED has approved a researcher’s patent disclosure, the office also assists with patenting the intellectual property. Hernandez hires specialized attorneys to comb over details before an application is submitted to the United States Patent and Trademark Office, an important step that years ago the university did not have in place and one that has contributed greatly to the positive outcome. Today, about nine out of 10 patents FIU submits to the United States Patent and Trademark Office are approved.

### Student and peer collaboration

Another obstacle that ORED helps alleviate for faculty is managing the raw amount of lab and fieldwork that goes into research. The office allocates additional funding toward postdoctoral and graduate students to assist research professors.

These connections are mutually beneficial. While professors gain help, students receive hands-on experience and a chance to convert their work in the classroom into applications that can improve the world.

The mentorship of doctoral student Haixiang Yu by chemistry professor Yi Xiao is a prime example of this reciprocal return. Together they patented a test for cocaine consumption in DUI cases. (Their innovation is faster, cheaper and more accurate than current products on the market.)

These student-professor endeavors end up

generating more than patents. They prepare the next generation for academia.

“When I met [Yu], he wasn’t sure if he wanted to go in this direction, and then I showed him this project and he fell in love,” Xiao said. “He eventually wants to become a professor. I’m so happy he wants to do that and to carry on my legacy.”

Cooperative efforts extend well beyond such student-faculty relationships, however. There is no environment of invention without interdisciplinary research. Inventors use a combination of expertise to turn an idea into a patent, something ORED encourages.

Anuradha Godavarty, a biomedical engineering professor, knows this well. Her patented hand-held scanner, which relies on light instead of radiation to evaluate the progress of wound healing and cancer therapy, is the latest example in a career that takes advantage of interdisciplinary partnerships. Over the years she has worked with computer science and statistics faculty, radiation oncologists, surgeons, dermatologists, psychologists and neuropsychologists.

“You cannot do anything alone,” Godavarty said. “When it comes to research, you have to collaborate.”

### Next stop: commercialization

For a patent to have a wide effect, it has to be commercialized. There are two main avenues to achieving this: licensing the innovation to an existing company, or creating a new startup company to manufacture and market the innovation.

Licensing a patent to a large company or the government is the preferred route among academics as it frees them of business concerns to continue inventing. One of ORED’s priorities is to connect with FIU alumni in select industries who might have a potential interest in such an arrangement or can help connect FIU to others in the industry who may have need for a specific technology.

For example, alumnus-owned company CDR Maguire currently markets and distributes a steel bridge system invented by a faculty member in the College of Engineering and Computing. Fostering such

relationships is key to getting inventions into the marketplace.

“We need to have this community,” Hernandez said. “We can have a good idea, but finding the person who needs that good idea is the hard part.”

The alternative to licensing is creating a startup. It is a potentially more lucrative way to go for both the inventor and the university—the two sharing profits on any invention that is ultimately commercialized—but finding an initial investor for such a company can take a long time. FIU encourages researchers interested in building a company around their inventions to participate in ORED’s StartUP FIU accelerator, which provides expert guidance and advice.

**“You cannot do anything alone. When it comes to research, you have to collaborate.”**

Anuradha Godavarty, a biomedical engineering professor who holds three patents

Sometimes, the most effective way for an inventor to help the university commercialize a patent is to pursue both options. That’s what Georgakopoulos is doing. He has established a small business to get his innovation into the marketplace even while he continues to look for a company interesting in licensing it.

“You definitely have to try different things because you never know which path is going to lead to success,” he said. “So that’s why we’re pursuing different avenues.”

Even as FIU slowly wets its feet in the realm of commercialization, its culture of innovation is churning out more ideas than ever before. Where FIU once aimed for 20 patents a year by 2020, the university saw more than 60 awarded in 2018 and is ranked 26th for patent production by the National Academy of Inventors.

What the future holds is pending. ■





# FIU TENNIS

By David Drucker '18 | Photo by Margarita Rentis '17

## Serving up success international-style

**E**ight young women from eight countries and three continents assemble on the royal-blue hardcourts of Modesto A. Maidique Campus. While only two share a common mother tongue, they all communicate easily over the language of their sport: tennis.

Head coach Katarina Petrovic, herself a transplant from Serbia, tells her team to warm up for practice just as the early-morning sun peeks around the Green Library.

Women's tennis is the most international sport at FIU—and one of its best. Last year, the Panthers won Conference USA for the first time, and this year they brought in a top-10 recruiting team. Now the players smile through the sweat as they jump rope in the 85-degree October heat.

“[Petrovic] has everything under control,” said assistant coach Georgi Rumenov, who is from Spain. “She’s like a mom here for the girls who are living far away from their homes.”

Far away is right: The ladies hail from Venezuela, Paraguay, France, Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Lithuania and Uzbekistan. Each was talented enough to pursue an individual professional tennis career full-time in her own

country immediately after high school. Instead, they chose to join the Panthers.

“I feel I’m a part of this team, and they need me,” said freshman international business major Kamila Umarova from Uzbekistan. “In a tournament, when it’s a tough moment, someone screams, ‘Go Panthers!’ And I’m like, ‘Aah, I will do anything for this university.’”

Aside from the camaraderie and expert coaching, education is a major incentive to play for FIU. Overseas, it is nearly impossible for students to pursue both their study of choice and a career in tennis.

“I got accepted [to study] political science back in France,” said sophomore international business major Sandra Bozinovic, “but if I started to do school there, I would stop playing tennis. That’s why I chose to come here.”

The players face some challenges when they first arrive. Like any freshman, they get lost in the city-like landscape of campus. Not always fluent in English, they sometimes find academic assignments difficult. Luckily for them, FIU has a commitment to preparing competitors to excel both in and out of the classroom. With access to tutoring and study

hall sessions at the Student-Athlete Academic Center, and professors generally willing to go out of their way to answer questions and assist as needed, the team members do exceedingly well: Last season they collectively earned the highest average GPA of the 14 women’s tennis teams in Conference USA.

Petrovic also helps get them acclimated and comfortable. One tradition: a team meal enjoyed once a week at a player’s dorm.

“Sometimes Coach makes something from home,” said senior computer engineering major Maryna Veksler. “She makes the best moussaka and cheese pie.”

Petrovic also has a positive coaching style that brings the team together.

“I think sports is becoming too negative,” Petrovic said. “Coaches in tennis are always telling players, ‘This is the bad thing you do.’ So I make sure I tell them what they’re doing good first, and then something they can do to improve.” ■

Above, from left: Maryna Veksler, Kamila Umarova, Mariia Solnyshkina, Basak Akbas, Maria Turrillo, Sandra Bozinovic, Paulina Bakaite Not pictured: Gabriela Ferreira

# CLASS NOTES

## 1990s



**Juan Fernandez '91** was recently honored by the National Hispanic Media Coalition with an Excellence in Broadcast Journalism Award. Fernandez has worked as an anchor and reporter for CBS2 KCAL in Los Angeles for nearly 23 years. A skilled bilingual journalist, Fernandez began his career at Univision and later Channel 7 in Miami before moving to California.



**Dwayne Bryant '93**, author and TV personality, was recently listed in EBONY Magazine's Power 100 List for 2018, which compiles leaders who have impacted the African-American community. Others on the list include Venus Williams, Drake and Barack and Michelle Obama. Bryant is the president and founder of Inner Vision International, which "empowers urban youth to recognize their value as societal contributors and global citizens."



**Ariana Fajardo Orshan '93** was confirmed as U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, per President Donald J. Trump's nomination. Fajardo will be the first woman to be the top federal prosecutor in Florida.



**Johanna Suarez '94, MS '95** was promoted to vice president of senior living at Miami Jewish Health Systems, an assisted living facility. Suarez has managed independent, assisted and memory care communities in South Florida for over 20 years. She is an advocate for Alzheimer's awareness and a longtime volunteer for the Alzheimer's Association, co-chairing the Broward Walk for the past two years. She currently is a member of the Southeast Florida Chapter Board of Directors. In 2014, she received the Executive Director of the Year Award from the Florida Senior Living Association and currently serves on the FHCA Florida Center for Assisted Living Committee.

## 2000s



**Hugo Seijas '05** launched Doodle Addicts, a startup he co-founded and also codes for. The website serves as a community for artists to share their work and engage in analog drawing and doodling challenges they can share on the site. Some examples include: Drawing an imaginary friend, doodling on coffee cups or designing a wall clock. Currently more than 22,000 artists contribute to the community.

**Ela M. Hernandez '06** was sworn in as president of the Hispanic National Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division during its 43rd Annual Conference in Philadelphia. The association is the largest of Latino legal professionals in the United States. It acts to create opportunities for Hispanic lawyers, helping generations of attorneys to succeed.



**Ron Hertel JD '06** was recently appointed to the Flagler County Education Foundation's board of directors for the 2018-19 term. He is an attorney with Chimento Dwyer Hertel Grant & Kistemaker. The foundation provides grants to educators and supports Flagler County's Flagship Programs by providing supplies and clothing to students and their families in need.



**Maria D. Garcia '05, JD '08** was named president-elect of the Cuban American Bar Association. Her term as president will begin in January 2019. The nonprofit's members include judges, lawyers and law students of various backgrounds all working to serve the Cuban and broader South Florida communities.



**Alexandra Cunningham Cameron MA '09**, a respected New York-based curator, writer and design editor, was appointed Edward and Helen Hintz Secretarial Scholar at Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum. Cunningham will work to develop contemporary design exhibitions and secure pieces for the permanent collection.

## 2010s



**Victoria Collado '12** guest-directed "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" this fall at the Herbert and Nicole Wertheim Performing Arts Center. The play is based on a short story by Gabriel García Márquez and written by Pulitzer Prize winner Nilo Cruz. Collado has worked in theatre both in Miami and New York City. Last year, she was the assistant director of "Latin History for Morons" by John Leguizamo on Broadway.

**Marx P. Calderon '12** was sworn in as treasurer of the Hispanic National Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division during its 43rd Annual Conference held in Philadelphia.



**Gabriel Garay JD '12** was elected president of the Coral Gables Bar Association. The organization's members include judges, lawyers and law students interested in issues affecting the Coral Gables community and broader legal issues impacting South Florida and beyond.



**Jessica Meszaros '14** won first place in four categories at the Florida Associated Press Broadcasters Awards for her work at WGCU-FM, Fort Myers, where she hosts "All Things Considered." Meszaros previously worked for WLRN Radio.

**Dwayne Wong '14** published his latest work, "Faure Must Go," an exploration of the events that took place before the 2017 protests in Togo against its severe 50-year dictatorship. It features an interview with Farida Nabourema, a notable Togolese activist and the co-founder of the opposition movement.



**Daniela Ottati '09, Ph.D. '15** recently celebrated the second anniversary of her business, Ottati Sports Journalism Center. The innovative center offers intensive sports reporting training to Spanish-speaking journalists and other communicators in South Florida.



## Jorge and Darlene Pérez: A Lifetime of Giving

By Charles Crespo MA '13, FIU Foundation

In recognition of their support, Jorge and Darlene Pérez's last name graces a beautiful art museum in downtown Miami. But did you know that their largesse extends, in a big way, to FIU?

Recently, the couple donated \$1 million to FIU's Honors College. The largest gift in the college's history, it created the Jorge and Darlene Pérez Scholars Endowment, which will support scholarships for high-achieving students in the college, particularly those intending to live and work in the South Florida community upon graduation.

The Honors College attracts students who are not only high achievers, but also leaders in their respective high schools. Although they are specializing in specific fields across the university, the college brings them together to work and learn in a unique way. For example, a professor will design a class that sees biology and engineering majors rubbing elbows with sociology and English majors.

These collaborative environments encourage students to learn how to work with those whose perspectives and expertise differ from their own. Through innovative surroundings like this, the college is educating its high-achieving students to be tomorrow's leaders, ready to step out of their comfort zone in ways that the 21st century innovation economy demands.

"Jorge Pérez has been a leader in the business world, in the cultural world, and he

helped remake the Miami skyline," said Juan Carlos Espinosa, dean of the Honors College. "It's only natural that he wanted to create leaders who would transform our city to the best that it can be."

The Pérezes know the value of this kind of leadership. He is a billionaire who amassed his fortune as a real estate developer. An FIU alumna, she heeded the call of nursing and has devoted a career to caring for others and, now, as an adjunct clinical preceptor for the Nurse Practitioner Graduate Program at FIU, to mentoring and teaching those who would follow in her footsteps.

They also understand the merits of bringing together people from all backgrounds and experiences to create something powerful at FIU. In 2006, the couple made a significant donation to the Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing & Health Sciences, an institution founded on meeting the needs of underserved populations. The gift supported the college's general endowment, and named the Jorge M. and Darlene M. Pérez Nursing Laboratory. Boytell-Pérez earned both her undergraduate and MSN degrees there, and she continues to be an active member of the Dean's Leadership Council.

"In addition to providing me with an incredible foundation upon which to build my career, FIU introduced me to lifelong mentors, incredible friends and exceptional students," said Boytell-Pérez. "I remember

my college years as some of the happiest of my life and so I feel compelled to help create and foster a similar learning environment for future students."

This gift continues to offer support for the thousands of FIU nursing alumni providing healthcare for the South Florida community. With this new endowment for the Honors College, the Pérezes will do the same for a diverse group of future professionals who will tackle the problems of tomorrow.

"It gives me a great sense of pride to be able to help support one of South Florida's flagship institutions," said Pérez. "We are honored to be a part of FIU's incredible family and look forward to continuing to work hand-in-hand to identify and empower the next generation of leaders."

With support from donors like the Pérezes and innovative teaching methods from its colleges, FIU will undoubtedly continue to produce future professionals who will change South Florida—maybe even its skyline—in their own unique ways in the years to come.

"Through these donations, we have several examples of the power of philanthropy," said Howard R. Lipman, CEO of the FIU Foundation, Inc. "Gifts like these provide crucial financial support to our students, as they continue to work to transform our community. We thank Jorge and Darlene for their continued support of FIU." ■

## VIP: Very Important Panther

### Michael R. Mendez '03, MBA '10

- Owner, Mendez Fuel
- Member, Dean's Advisory Council, College of Law (2009-present)
- Member, Dean's Advisory Board, College of Arts, Sciences & Education (2016-present)
- Past member, FIU Foundation Board (2007-2016)

**Q: Tell us how you reimagined the gas station concept to build a successful company, which includes four stations and a free-standing convenience store in Miami-Dade County.**

**A:** The traditional model of customers coming in for gas and maybe chips and water was becoming outdated. I knew we had to be different and innovative. I could have added a Cuban bakery, which for our market would have been fairly typical, but I figured ours would be just one of many. Instead, we launched our own line of cold-pressed juices. It was a challenge at first as we fought the perception that gas stations are dirty and not going to have good food. Then we got into acai bowls, smoothies and avocado toast. And we've become an outlet for craft beer. My brother does an incredible job of curating our tap list. [Customers come in to fill growlers, a container used to transport draft beers; no alcohol is served.] Now brands want to work with us to debut their products, and sometimes we even get exclusives because we have such a strong name in the beer community. We're no longer just a gas station but a destination.

**Q: History is not the first major one equates with a successful entrepreneur. And while you do also have an MBA, can you explain how your undergraduate degree has served you?**

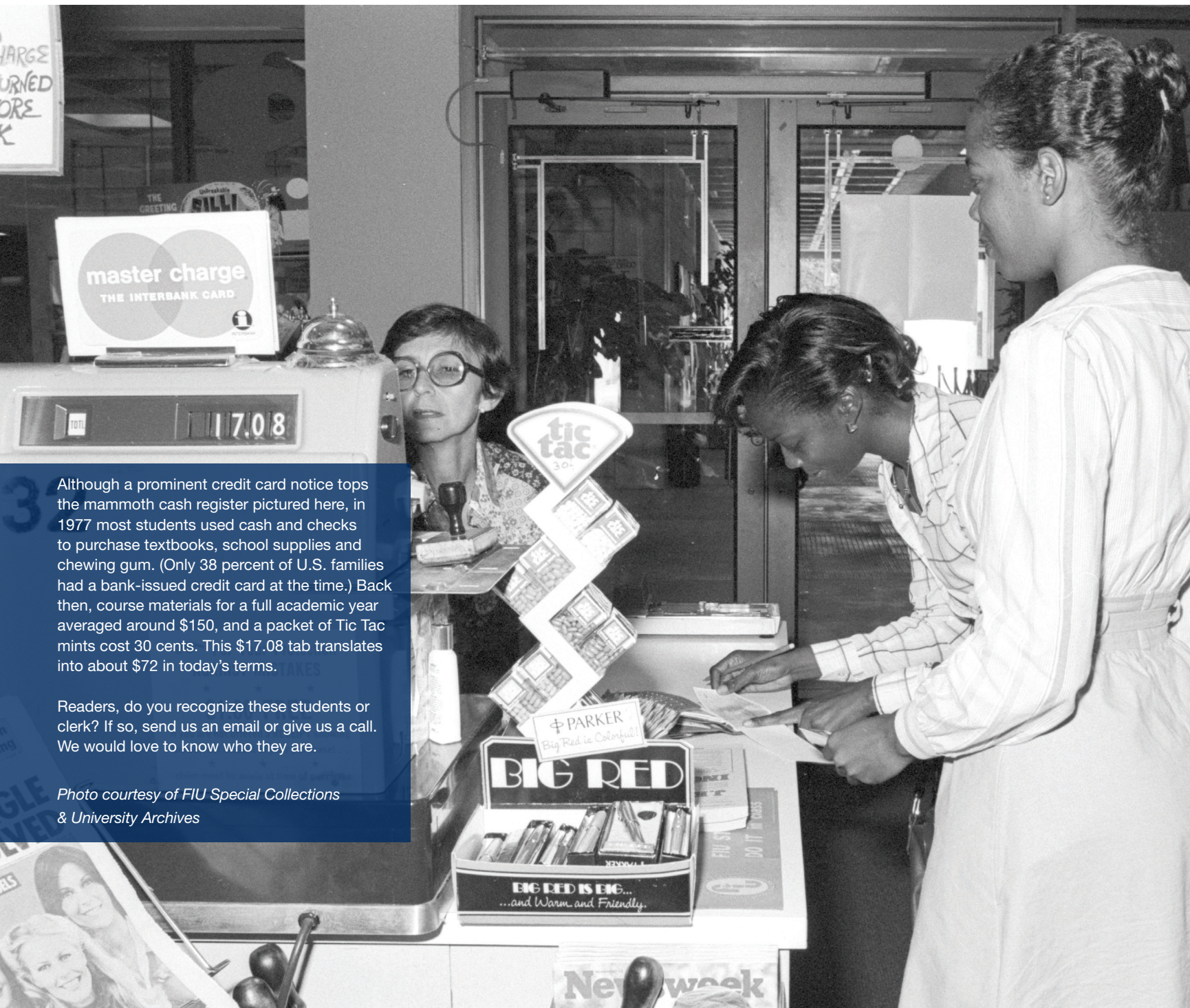
**A:** I got into history because it is a subject that I enjoyed. After earning my diploma, I went into financial services for a long time, which also had nothing to do with my degree. But it taught me how to read effectively, how to meet deadlines and to write. More than anything else, it taught me how to read between the lines and get to the point.

**Q: As an undergraduate, you played pitcher for FIU baseball. How did that impact you?**

**A:** Those were some of the best days of my life. I'm still friends with guys that I played with. That whole experience taught me a lot. We had so many demands on our time—the gym, class, practice, study hall. It really taught us how to manage our time, be responsible for ourselves and for each other. We learned how to be a team, how to work together. And we were good! One year we finished top-10 in the country.

**Q: You serve your alma mater by sitting on boards, and through a foundation (named for your uncle, the late Brothers to the Rescue pilot Carlos Costa) of which you are president you have funded scholarships and an immigration law clinic at FIU. Why stay connected?**

**A:** It's important. FIU is in my backyard and a critical component of this community and its future. A lot of people take for granted the role the university plays and the amazing job that it has done in positioning itself on a national level and even a global level. But when people do pay attention to what's going on at FIU and where it's heading, they get excited. Having a strong FIU can only mean the best for this community. ■



3 Although a prominent credit card notice tops the mammoth cash register pictured here, in 1977 most students used cash and checks to purchase textbooks, school supplies and chewing gum. (Only 38 percent of U.S. families had a bank-issued credit card at the time.) Back then, course materials for a full academic year averaged around \$150, and a packet of Tic Tac mints cost 30 cents. This \$17.08 tab translates into about \$72 in today's terms.

Readers, do you recognize these students or clerk? If so, send us an email or give us a call. We would love to know who they are.

Photo courtesy of FIU Special Collections & University Archives