**CRAMMING IN**

**Student fulfills long held graduation goal**

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Staff Writer

Nicaraguan-born Betty Flores is living the American dream, graduating with more than 3,000 students at the end of this year’s Fall semester.

In 1986, when she was four years old, Flores’ family came to the United States. She said that she would also miss Miami, as well.

Fast forward several years later and Flores is finally earning her college degree.

“T’ve been waiting for this day since the first day of my freshman orientation class,” Flores said. “I passionately yearned for success, and I still do. [Graduating] is a great accomplishment.”

Flores found out about FIU through her Bright Futures scholarship, and chose it because it was close to her home and because she loved the Miami weather.

She also enjoyed the University’s diversity, something she will miss.

“There are people from every part of the globe. It’s great, because every step is a chance to learn about a different language, culture, and different experience.”

Flores said that she would also miss the ability “to learn about anything first hand from experienced personnel.”

In addition to saying goodbye to FIU, Flores may also bid farewell to Miami as well.

“I would love to go to New York for law school,” Flores said.

Flores said she would definitely recommend FIU to prospective students.

Her advice for the incoming class?

“Simply have your head on your shoulders, and never give up. Take it one class at a time, one credit at a time, and never give up. Nothing is impossible if your desire is stronger than the obstacle,” Flores said.

FIU worth attending despite some annoyances

There’s nothing sweeter than walking out of a class for the last time. Nothing. After years of classes, midterm and finals, I can finally say farewell to FIU.

PantherSoft can not be easy. I won’t constantly refresh the page so I can squeeze into a section’s last remaining spot.

My futility and the bursar’s office are two words that every student who has been through the financial aid office and then sent to the registrar, only to have someone there send me back to the bursar, ever again. If I’m done with FIU.

But please don’t take this as just another rant against life at FIU. This school has endured more than enough attacks—usually for good reason—in the four years that I’ve been enrolled. I don’t want to feed into the bloated culture of complaining.

I’m just glad that all of the bureaucratic, illogical, and ridiculous procedures at FIU are no longer my concern. Wait, I guess nitpicking is still going to happen.

Being consumed by negativity is a little too easy at FIU, and it shouldn’t be that way. I could just complain about the football team’s 0-12 performance this season. But I’d rather remember the exhilarating atmosphere of 17,000 screaming lunatics packed into the Football Stadium during the inaugural game in 2002.

There are a lot of things I could cite to criticize FIU, but I have to admit, it wasn’t all that bad. I was given a financial aid package that made college a reality. I met Neil Reisner, Mario Diament and Allan Richards journalism professors who managed to drive me crazy while teaching me how to be a better journalist.

Most of all, FIU gave me a chance to finish what someone else started.

My father was an All-American in Division III soccer, conference player of the year and a Dean’s List honoree in 1984. After my birth that year, it became too difficult for my father to support his family and remain a full-time student. He never graduated. When I receive my degree, it will be his just as much as mine.

My story is not unique at FIU. Thousands of us are first-generation college students here because of scholarships or opportunities that this school created for us. Students complain so much about parking and registration that we never think about what this University has done to better our lives.

As much as I complain about various initiatives and decisions that were made during my time as a student, I’m grateful to have attended FIU. I started as an immature boy depending on his parents. I’ll finish a wiser man who still depends on his parents.

I’ve gone through several curriculum changes, mind-bending cram sessions and brand new sneakers ruined by those ducks outside the Green Library. This school has given me plenty of reasons to be angry, but even more reasons to be thankful. I’m a Graham Center time waster, Marty’s Cube spinner during finals week and of course, a whiner. I am FIU. That’s one thing I can’t complain about.
1) Which is the *best radio station in Miami* 88.1 FM or 95.3 FM?

A) 88.1; it comes in crystal clear in Homestead and Kendall

B) 95.3; within 15 miles of UP it rocks my radio

C) The New Times choice for best radio station in Miami, 95.3

D) The New Times choice for best radio station in Miami, 88.1

E) All of the above; both signals play the same great music.

Answer: E
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Distinguished community members to receive awards during graduation ceremonies

Five distinguished members of the community will receive awards for their contributions during the graduation ceremonies Dec. 18 and 19.

Cristina Saralegui, journalist, producer, and community activist, will receive an honorary degree in public service. Saralegui came to Miami from Cuba in 1960 at the age of 16 and after graduating from the University of Miami, worked for renowned magazines like Vanity Fair and Cosmopolitan in Spanish, she was editor in chief for 10 years. In 1989 she became executive producer and host of the talk show “The Cristina Show,” a leading U.S.-Spanish program seen throughout Latin America and Europe.

She is also the founder of “Arriva la Vida,” a charity organization for HIV/AIDS awareness. Saralegui will be honored Dec. 18, at 10 a.m.

Larry M. Schomkan, director of the Kampong National Tropical Botanical Garden, and Nicholas G. Bustle, Sun Trust Bank City president for Miami-Dade county, will both receive an Outstanding Alumni FIU Medalion for their contributions to the University. Schomkan will be honored Dec. 18, at 3 p.m., and Bustle will be honored Dec. 19, at 3 p.m.

Petet Martinez, vice president of IBM Global Business Services and senior location executive for IBM South Florida, and Alvaro G. de Molina, chief financial officer for Bank of America, will receive the Cal Koons Community Service Medalion for their positive impact on their profession, the community, and the University. Martinez will be honored Dec. 19, at 10 a.m., and De Molina will be honored Dec. 19, at 7:30 p.m.

—Compiled by Maria Cheles based on a press release by Media Relations.
Josh Padrick came to FIU in 2002 wanting to major in physical therapy and play some football. After almost five years, he is now graduating with a degree in sports management and his name splashed all over the school’s passing records.

Padrick, who redshirted his freshman year, has started every game at quarterback for the football team since the 2003 season. He holds nearly every single-season and career passing record at FIU — including yards, touchdowns, completions and attempts.

For his career, the Merritt Island, Fla., native completed 820-of-1479 passes for 9,237 yards, 42 touchdowns and 50 interceptions.

With Padrick graduating, not only will the Golden Panthers be looking to replace a head coach, but a starting quarterback as well.

Q: How would you describe your overall experience at FIU?
I’ve been here for four-and-a-half, five years, played football and got a great education. I’d say it’s been pretty good.

Q: What do you plan on doing after graduation?
I’m going to be taking it slow; just keeping in shape and working out and hopefully continue with football.

Q: If a career in professional football doesn’t pan out, what do you see yourself doing?
If that doesn’t work out, I’ll probably go into coaching high school somewhere or teaching.

Q: Because you want to go into coaching, have you thought of coming back to FIU as a graduate assistant?
I don’t know if I would be able to with the coaching changes and all.

Q: On a scale of one to 10 — with one being not good and 10 being excellent — how do you feel you’ve lived up to your personal expectations throughout college?
I’d say an eight. I tried to do everything the best I can, but sometimes you realize you maybe could have done things differently. Overall, though, I have absolutely no regrets.

This special issue of The Beacon was produced by C. Joel Marino (Editor in Chief), Christopher Necuze (Production Manager) and Chris Cutro (Photo Editor). The Beacon would like to congratulate the class of 2006.