

## iREAL Vision Document: Commissioner Jerry Cohen

**Question#5: What alternative scenarios of institutional change should we consider, and what are the pros and cons as well as the costs of the initiatives proposed? e.g. Smaller and more focused could improve our national rankings but reduce our local impact. Being a leader in sustainability; Improving athletics.**

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Strategic growth is critical to the long term success of FIU. But this growth must include institutional changes that allow us to do more with less state funding on a per-student basis. Growth must ensure that FIU continues to attain and improve performance metrics to maximize funding from the state and continue to provide an outstanding student experience. To achieve this balance, FIU must boldly expand on its successes blending high tech with high touch. Therefore, FIU must find mechanisms to greatly expand its use of hybrid course models that allow for greater student enrollment, more meaningful interactions with faculty (even though total contact time is less), and enhanced student achievement. Such a model will allow more students to be enrolled per faculty, commute to FIU less often (reducing carbon footprint), yet maintain the on-campus interactions that are critical to a students' growth and facilitate their strong life-long commitment to FIU. It also will allow FIU to use existing space more efficiently - a critical need with PECO projects not on the horizon - and enhance 6-year graduation rates.

Investment must be made in areas where FIU can truly be excellent, especially in programs that are unique in the country or the world. This would attract quality faculty and students which will enhance opportunities to garner research grants and philanthropic gifts. FIU cannot be all things to all people or risk sacrificing quality. In addition to enhancing the online experience for students, we must not forget the value of campus life and the energy and vibrancy is critical for students and alumni. A way to enhance campus life would be through athletics and cultural offerings. Athletics is a point of pride for many institutions - for its students, community and alumni. Continuing to build a quality athletics program will generate excitement and pride in the institution. In the arts, FIU can leverage Miami's growing cultural scene and align itself with the community through private/public partnerships. It also allows the University to engage the community and bring back alumni to campus. In addition, exposing students to the arts will create more well-rounded and dynamic individuals.

The following is a summary of the discussion that centered around three primary focus areas: A) improving graduation rates, B) branding FIU as a quality institution and C) growing strategically, and proposed changes that would enhance each area.

## **FOCUS AREAS:**

### **A. Improving graduation rates**

FIU's six year graduation rate has recently increased to just above 50%. Since most majority minority universities have graduation rates in the 30 and 40% ranges we are doing comparably well but we should aspire to reach the 60s and 70% range. To the extent that the student body is non-traditional (working, first generation, minority/majority, commuting), we need to focus on services to support them. We need to be more competitive in attracting students that are qualified for merit based scholarships or awards. Increasing the quality of our student body will naturally increase the graduation rate and enhance the work already being done to strengthen this area. Since most of our FTICs come from MDCPS, expanding dual enrollment will reduce the number of credits our students need to complete their degrees and will improve graduation rates. Other strategies include more scholarship money, more affordable housing close to campus and added opportunities for on campus student employment.

### **B. Branding FIU as quality institution**

FIU is well branded as a community partner/builder and solutions center but does not have the external reputation of being a quality institution with top researchers, students and programs. The 2013 fall incoming freshman class had an average GPA of 3.8, SAT score of 1700 and ACT score of 26 - FIU has become one of the more difficult schools to get into in the state of Florida - but that has not been well publicized. It is still widely thought of as a safety school. The incoming freshman acceptance rate is just below 50% and only a third that are accepted, actually enroll. This area must be addressed if we want to recruit better students, faculty and community partners. We are a culture that likes to win - we must be branded as a winning institution to compete for media attention, philanthropic gifts and quality students, faculty and staff.

### **C. Growing Strategically**

Grow with caution was the message from the group. Recognizing the need to provide quality, affordable education, as well as the need to generate revenue, the group recommends growing in strategic areas. For example, this is the time to define what FIU will be known for - what areas of excellence do we possess and how do we enhance those programs to attract even more quality? In addition, Miami is a growing city - we have the opportunity to leverage its need for a competent and dynamic workforce to our advantage. Ideally our areas of excellence for strategic growth will also be able to leverage our unique location (geography and demography).

## Proposed Changes (focus areas affected):

### **1. Effective University-wide Marketing & Public Relations (A, B, C)**

#### PRIORITY #1

- Revamp External Relations & Marketing into non-cost centers of the University to provide access to all units.
- Develop public relations/marketing/communications strategy on how to raise the awareness of quality. FIU must decide what it is and wants to be - can't be all things to all people.
- Leverage alumni to be ambassadors for FIU.
- Get our faculty and student research into trade magazines as a way to get peer recognition and enhance rankings.
- Establish annual communications strategy for when stories are fed into the media - goal is to have big stories rolled out throughout the year to keep FIU in the media.

#### PRIORITY #2

- Create an ad campaign to draw out successful alumni.
- Publicize important philanthropic gifts or partnerships.
- Publicize the quality recruitment - tell stories about the first class faculty, researchers and students.
- Have publications that target the audience we want to attract - not just students and faculty.
- Get on tv/radio as experts and publicize that to the broader community prior to and after the spot.

#### PRIORITY #3

- Create partnerships with corporations and other community stakeholders to use our faculty as expert speakers or panelists - encourage them to hold those events at FIU's MMC to expose more people to FIU's vibrancy.
- Interview companies that hire FIU alumni and tell the story of why an FIU alumnus is a great hire.

### **2. Enhance Quality Through Growth (A, B, C)**

- Offer more hybrid & flipped classes.
  - Train incoming faculty to teach hybrid & flipped classes before teaching their first class.
  - Require existing faculty to transition conventional courses to new model and facilitate that with training and mentorship.
  - Substantial improvements to IT to optimize faculty and student experiences.
- Athletics is a point of pride for the institution and the community - we should continue to make investments to improve athletic programs.
  - Concentrate on recruiting locally as it will drive the local community to attend contests.
  - Maximize exposure as a mid-major athletic school and focus on winning conference titles

- Concentrate on improving facilities to increase donor base, enhance fan base and improve student attendance (i.e. add kitchen facilities, in-game experience for students and fans).
- Widening the circle events where donors, prospects, volunteers host intimate gatherings to get to know our star faculty.
- Identify the metrics needed to climb up rankings and to build up the quality of student and faculty scholarship and seek to satisfy those, then build media plan around the rising quality.
- Recruit community leaders/stakeholders to the FIU MMC campus- once people get here and experience the energy, beauty and size of the campus, they would be more apt to keep coming back, but the goal is to get them here in the first place and give them a great experience.
- Strengthen only the satellites that are keys to our brand of excellence - MMC is where the majority of the action is - as long as that is the case, most of our faculty, students and staff will want to be there.

### 3. Cultural Center for Miami "FIU Artist Studio" (B, C)

- FIU as a gateway to cultural offerings in Miami - continue to invest in the arts and expose students to the arts.
- Improve communications about theatre, museum, and music events on campus both internally and externally.
- University-wide approach to Coconut Grove Playhouse (press announcement, communication, marketing, funding, etc.) & incorporate an 'Actor's Studio' of the South - **FIU Artist Studio** (Invite Andy Garcia, Gloria Estefan, Rene Fleming, Teresita Fernandez, Zaha Hadid, Frank Gerry) for 4-6 'talks' a year spanning artistic mediums offered at FIU, including film actors, presented at Arsht Studio Theatre or Coconut Grove Playhouse.
- Partner with Telemundo or Local Fox affiliate (i.e. Louis Aguirre, Lisa Petrillo) and create Arts @ FIU (similar to medical minute of the week)
- Partner with theatre at Arsht Center, Coconut Grove Playhouse, etc. to get our students performing out in the community to showcase their talent while helping theatres put in quality shows on instead of being dark.
- Produce one show a year at Arsht Studio Theatre, with faculty showcase as well. Possible branding called - "FIU Artist Studio @ The Arsht."
- Create greater tie with the Wolfsonian to leverage that brand and link it to FIU.

### 4. Targeted Recruitment (A, B)

#### PRIORITY #1

- Work with high school guidance counselors - both public and private - to recruit students in their junior and senior years
  - Target admissions office - Assign ten (10) recruiters/advisors geographic areas with goal to bring in twenty (20) AP, Gifted, & Honors students (preparatory program)
  - Host four (4) Recruitment Days at FIU - 20 high schools at each for regular student population

- Work with Alberto Carvalho's and Pablo Ortiz's offices to incorporate FIU as part of the statewide university tours that the public schools coordinate every year
- Enhance and promote parents & grandparents orientation program to engage them in the FIU experience throughout the year.

#### PRIORITY #2

- Fliers to employees with kids in their junior and senior year of high school expressing the quality of the FIU degree.
- Deans or Administrators should reach out personally to competitive students – either call them, or take top 10-20 students entering their programs to breakfast, etc

### 5. **Reorganize Student Services (A, B)**

#### Advising

- Increase advising opportunities - identify students with potential to excel but may need additional help and don't ask for it. We have to train our professors to be able to identify these characteristics, seek out the student and get them appropriate advising.
- Ensure that all advisors are up to date on curriculum requirements for on-time graduation and to minimize students receiving competing information.
- Continue to invest in culture and athletics to promote a vibrant campus life and instill pride in students and alumni. Student-athletes also have a higher rate of graduation than the general student body as well.

#### Career Services

- Encouraging students to use career services to be trained before each interview – it is vital that companies have access to the best students at the onset to establish our credibility and commitment.
- Tell our story to companies - companies today are seeking to recruit a workforce that mirrors our student demographic - we should be attracting more internship Reach out to top firms in every field in which we excel to give our graduates access to these blue chip companies.
- Establish mentorship programs with community leaders/stakeholders
- Conduct exit poll on why students leave (either transfer or just drop out) – to ferret out any issues we are not addressing.