

1 PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE
2 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

3
4 Tuesday, April 12th, 2022

5 8:00 p.m. - 8:53 p.m.

6 Graham Center Ballrooms

7 Florida International University

8 11200 S.W. 8th Street,

9 Miami, Florida, 33199

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11 FIU STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION LISTENING SESSION

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19 PRESENT:

20
21 ROGER TOVAR, Chair

22
23 R. WILLIAM FUNK, Esq.

24
25 SOFIA TRELLES, PhD, Ombudsperson

1 MR. TOVAR: Good afternoon. My name is
2 Roger Tovar and I'm the vice chair of the FIU
3 Board of Trustees. In addition it is my
4 pleasure to serve as chair of the Presidential
5 Search Committee. I would like to extend a
6 warm welcome to the Presidential Search
7 Committee members and the FIU community who are
8 joining us for the listening sessions and thank
9 them for participating in this important step.
10 The FIU Board of Trustees met on April 5th to
11 announce the Presidential Search Committee
12 members. The Presidential Search Committee
13 also held its first meeting on April 5th. To
14 keep all of you and members of the FIU
15 community informed, I am pleased to announce
16 that we have launched the presidential search
17 website which will provide information on our
18 search process, meetings, and candidates. This
19 website will be updated routinely. We invite
20 you to visit the website. R. William Funk and
21 Associates based in Dallas, Texas has been
22 selected to assist with the search for FIU's
23 sixth president. The firm has conducted more
24 than 430 searches for colleges and university
25 presidents and chancellors. Mr. Funk is

1 joining us today as we welcome members of the
2 university community and the general public who
3 are joining us via the webcast as we engage in
4 listening sessions. I now invite Mr. Funk to
5 begin the listening session. Mr. Funk?

6 MR. FUNK: Thank you, Roger. And
7 greetings to those of you who squeezed into the
8 auditorium tonight. We're delighted that
9 you've taken the time to come and talk to us
10 about the presidential search. And I wanted to
11 kind of go off script for a second. Since we
12 only have five of you here and the folks that
13 are online can do the same as they -- comments,
14 but tell us who you are and where you're from
15 originally, and why did you come to FIU?

16 MS. NYLANDER: Hello. Nice to meet some
17 of you, I haven't met you before, but pleasure
18 to be here. I'm Elizabeth Nylander. I'm the
19 Chief of Staff for SGA. I'm originally from
20 all over the country. I'm a military brat, so
21 I don't identify with one place really. But I
22 came to FIU, my family is originally from Miami
23 and my parents -- my grandparents lived near
24 here, and I came particularly for the
25 communication school, even though I did end up

1 transferring out -- just centralized location
2 with family and for the academics.

3 MR. FUNK: And what year are you in?

4 MS. NYLANDER: I'm senior, I'm graduating
5 in like three weeks.

6 MR. TOVAR: Congratulations.

7 MR. FUNK: And do you have plans after
8 that?

9 MS. NYLANDER: Yes, I do. I am going to
10 be moving up to the D.C. area. I'm going to
11 graduate school for forensic and legal
12 psychology at -- university.

13 MR. FUNK: Wonderful. Congratulations
14 with all that.

15 MS. NYLANDER: Thank you.

16 MR. FUNK: Thank you. Yes, sir.

17 MR. SUTTON: Hi there. My name is
18 Alexander Sutton (phonetic). I'm a sophomore,
19 and I am studying political science. I decided
20 to come to FIU because I've been on this campus
21 even when I was a kid, both of my parents have
22 worked here for a long time, and so I knew this
23 campus really well and I felt at home. And,
24 you know, I applied to other schools as well,
25 but I kind of always knew that I was going to

1 come to FIU, especially because FIU has had one
2 of the best -- United Nations programs in the
3 country for a really long time. The people
4 here who know me are probably tired of hearing
5 me talk about -- at this point because I talk
6 about it all the time, but I knew a lot of the
7 people at FIU's UN team when I was in high
8 school, and I just thought that if I went to a
9 different school I would be missing out, so I
10 decided to come here instead, and I'm not the
11 head delegate of the model UN team and I'm
12 having a great time, so that's really what
13 brought me here. And I love FIU with all my
14 heart.

15 MR. FUNK: Were you from the Miami area?

16 MR. SUTTON: Born and raised in Miami,
17 yes, sir.

18 MR. FUNK: Okay, great. Thank you very
19 much.

20 MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

21 MR. LUGO: Good afternoon, everyone. My
22 name is Cristhofer Lugo and I'm the coming SGA
23 President. I'm a senior majoring computer
24 science, originally from the Dominican
25 Republic, but I grew up from Turks and Cacaos.

1 The reason I came to FIU was just for an
2 education. Back home it's not -- sensibility
3 to an education is not that good. So coming to
4 FIU was definitely a stepping stone from where
5 I came from. I loved the diversity, the
6 culture. They took me with open hands coming
7 from such a small island. And I just love this
8 university so much.

9 MR. FUNK: You're a senior? When do you
10 graduate, in May?

11 MR. LUGO: I graduate in the fall
12 semester, and I'm back to doing my masters
13 immediately right after.

14 MR. FUNK: Here?

15 MR. LUGO: Yes.

16 MR. FUNK: Okay. Thank you very much.

17 MR. LUGO: Of course. Thank you.

18 MR. FUNK: Yes, sir.

19 MR. RUBIDO: Thank you. My name is
20 Alexander Rubido, and I currently serve as the
21 student government president for the university
22 and a member of the FIU board. I am a
23 graduating senior graduating this May, and I
24 intend to go to law school.

25 MR. FUNK: Do you know where?

1 MR. RUBIDO: Hopefully FIU. Number one
2 bar passage rate in the State of Florida.

3 MR. FUNK: There you go. And where are
4 you from originally?

5 MR. RUBIDO: Born and raised in Miami,
6 Florida.

7 MR. FUNK: Okay, fantastic. We have a lot
8 of -- timers.

9 MR. LEVINE: My name is Brian Levine. I
10 am a graduate student. I came to FIU first to
11 study hospitality, and I got my masters in that
12 I just completed, and I decided to do another
13 masters in human resource management which I
14 just started. I'm the student government
15 association governor of the Biscayne Bay
16 campus. That sounds a little weird. I still
17 haven't gotten used to the name. But I am not
18 originally from Miami or Florida. I grew up on
19 Long Island, New York and I lived for a number
20 of years in Albany, New York, New York's
21 capitol, before deciding to kind of make a
22 career change and come down here. And I was
23 visiting Florida, visiting in Miami and was
24 interested in like tourism at that point, and I
25 looked up and I saw that they had a program at

1 FIU and I went all and I kind of -- for a quick
2 tour which there wasn't -- I wasn't actually
3 able to get ahold of anyone at admissions at
4 that time, but I met with one of the advisers
5 who kind of explained the program, and so I had
6 a good understanding, and then I applied within
7 a few weeks afterwards. And so I've been in
8 Miami for about four years.

9 MR. FUNK: A little different winter than
10 in Albany, New York.

11 MR. LEVINE: Yes. I've never been cold
12 here, so.

13 MR. FUNK: There you go. Well, thank you
14 all for that. It's good to get to know you.
15 Now a couple in the back, guys -- let me pick
16 up now where Roger threw it to me. The board
17 has been emphatic about wanting to make sure
18 that we had a very transparent process and that
19 we would get the input from all of the major
20 constituents. We spent the day today really in
21 some four, or five, six different sessions with
22 various constituent groups. We've learned a
23 lot, and we've been looking forward to this
24 student session because we know that you will
25 give us even more insight in terms of what

1 you'd like to see in the next president. There
2 were three questions that you've already seen
3 and we're going to flash it on the screen
4 above. And it essentially is, these are the
5 three questions that kind of get to the essence
6 of the information we need to go out and be a
7 better steward to the university. And the
8 first question is essentially, you know, what
9 do you see as the major challenges and
10 opportunities this next president may inherit
11 both immediately and then maybe down the road a
12 bit? And secondly, if those are the challenges
13 and opportunities, what kind of person do you
14 think would be best prepared to address the
15 challenges and exploit the opportunities, what
16 kind of personality, leadership style,
17 worldview, what adjectives would you use to
18 describe the ideal next president? And I have
19 a story to tell you about that. And then,
20 thirdly, your search firm's responsibility is
21 really to reach out to people who will not
22 respond to the ads that are being run and who
23 will not respond to a letter that the search
24 committee might send. These are people who are
25 very happy where they are, very successful

1 where they are, and they're not looking. So to
2 present an opportunity to them, we have to talk
3 to them, nurture, cajole them as to why they
4 should become a candidate here. So we try to
5 point out to them all the positives about FIU.
6 You know, what are those compelling reasons we
7 can give to these candidates who are not really
8 looking for another opportunity? One thought
9 that always comes to mind for me when we're
10 meeting with the student constituents and SGA
11 reps is that we did a search at Vanderbilt
12 University for a new president a number of
13 years back and I'll never forget, one of the --
14 I think it was the president of SGA there said,
15 well, Mr. Funk, we're on a two hand shake
16 program here at Vanderbilt, and I knew I was
17 being set up for some kind of story or
18 whatever, and -- I said, what do you mean, two
19 hand shake program? And he said, well, when
20 you're a freshman and you come to orientation,
21 you stand in line and you shake hands with the
22 president, and then four years later when you
23 graduate, you walk across the stage and you
24 shake hands with him again, but we never see
25 him in between those two handshakes. So I've

1 always thought about that. I mean, I -- and as
2 a result I think presidents should be very
3 visible. You know, you should know who your
4 president is. He should stop you occasionally
5 on campus and ask you how it's going. He
6 should remember some of your names, especially
7 those of you who are in SGA. But what -- how
8 would you respond to that question about what
9 kind of president you'd like to see in the
10 position, even though a couple of you are going
11 to be gone and you won't get to see the benefit
12 of our good work? But any of these questions
13 that you'd like to respond to, or the
14 adjectives about what kind of person you'd like
15 to see in the role? I think they're going to
16 make it.

17 MS. TRELLES: Yes, I'm totally going to
18 make you walk all the way to the back to answer
19 these questions. I also wanted to mention that
20 we do have a couple of you all participating
21 online, so if you would like to ask any
22 questions or you have any comments regarding
23 these three questions, or any of the topics
24 that Bill just mentioned, please feel free to
25 use the platform to let us know. We want to

1 make sure that every student has an opportunity
2 to voice their comments and to have their voice
3 heard, so please, we encourage you to use the
4 platform that we have available to us so that
5 we can learn a little bit more about you and
6 what you're looking for in the next president
7 of FIU. Thank you.

8 MR. FUNK: What Sofia is not telling you
9 is that if you tune into the 11:00 o'clock news
10 tonight, you'll see yourself giving these
11 comments. No, I'm kidding. I'm kidding. Yes,
12 sir.

13 MR. SUTTON: You had me nervous there for
14 a second -- what I was going to say. One thing
15 that I would like to see the next university
16 president which a lot of my friends at FIU have
17 agreed with me, some of them haven't, but it's
18 personally I think something that would be
19 beneficial to the university is a president
20 that is favorable to expanding and supporting
21 the Greek life community on campus. And of
22 course I'm biased, I'm involved in Greek life
23 as brother of Theta Chi Fraternity, but I
24 genuinely think that having a strong Greek life
25 community at FIU, even stronger than it

1 currently is, would be a benefit to our
2 university because of the fact that I think if
3 there are a large number of high school seniors
4 who are considering, they're either going to be
5 applying, and they are considering
6 opportunities, like academic opportunities,
7 they're probably going to take into account the
8 amount of like recreational opportunities
9 they're going to have as well. And I know that
10 universities that we compete with, like Florida
11 State, like UF, have very strong and
12 established Greek life communities there, and
13 friends of mine who go to those universities
14 have told me that was a factor when they
15 decided to go, and they're also pursuing very
16 intense academic careers there, but they have a
17 good time getting involved in a fraternity or
18 sorority. I think FIU's Greek life community
19 has definitely been moving as of recently, but
20 some of my friends have told me that they wish
21 -- administration, and I know it's always hard
22 because there's at every university always a
23 constant push and pull between Greek life and
24 the administration. And sometimes members of
25 Greek life don't always behave and they get

1 punished as they should be. But I think
2 ultimately I've seen -- there's been a lot of
3 good that FIU Greek life has done, and I think
4 if the next president were in support of
5 fostering the Greek life community even more
6 and potentially bringing back some of the Greek
7 life housing because I know there's an empty
8 house right now that I'm not sure might be
9 getting filled if that fraternity comes back,
10 but perhaps even expanding so there's other
11 chapters of Greek life, fraternities and
12 sororities that are able to live on campus as
13 well. This is something that I think would be
14 of benefit to the university because it would
15 attract more students to come. It might also
16 bring more money to the university I think.
17 Ultimately I just think it would also help
18 those students who had to get most involved on
19 campus because a lot of my friends who aren't
20 involved in Greek life are still very involved
21 on campus, but almost everybody I know who is
22 involved in my chapter and other fraternities
23 or sororities always area involved in at least
24 one, usually two or three extracurricular
25 activities and make a big impact on campus. So

1 I genuinely think that it would be very
2 beneficial if our next university president
3 were favorable to the Greek life community and
4 wanted to help those chapters who conduct
5 themselves appropriately and help FIU shine.
6 So that's one of the qualities I think the next
7 university president should have.

8 MR. TOVAR: And thank you. I don't know
9 the history behind it, but it's good to point
10 out, and it's something for me, not only in
11 this committee, but as a board member to
12 understand a little better. So couldn't have
13 been said better, you presented your point very
14 well. I will look into that and it will be a
15 pointed discussion, so thank you very much.

16 MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

17 MR. TOVAR: And, Cristhofer, I would also
18 say, if that is the point of you of a lot of
19 your constituency and to understand, that's
20 something -- and Alex, I don't know if you are
21 going can add anything to that, but maybe with
22 the report that you do in the board meetings,
23 if truly there is this desire to expand that, I
24 would encourage you all to bring it up and --
25 because that's your opportunity to be heard and

1 say, listen, we have a lot of people that want
2 this, and so I think he just said it, there's a
3 lot of push and pull ebbs and flows in these
4 things. Couldn't understand it, so thank you.
5 Good point.

6 MR. LUGO: Thank you. And that's
7 something that -- you know, we will look into.
8 But something I want to shift into is I want
9 this new president to understand our middle
10 name, international, that this is an
11 international school. As an international
12 student, being able to provide those
13 opportunities, whether it's career, academic --
14 being able to understand the culture of each
15 and every one of I think it's 135 countries
16 that we have present, about 3,000 students from
17 international. Being able to understand the
18 struggles that international students have to
19 go through on a daily basis. We pay almost
20 triple when it comes to tuition. And whenever
21 you see the challenges we do whenever it's time
22 to go into the workforce, the amount of time
23 and pressure we have to put in to get an
24 on-campus job, the time and pressure we have to
25 put in into our education because many of us

1 are first generation student, many of us are
2 pushing ourselves to make our family proud.
3 And sometimes many international students
4 cannot have their family present in their
5 graduation simply because of different
6 scenarios. So a president that is able to put
7 that foot forward and to building a better
8 atmosphere for our -- international student --
9 the experience I had has been pretty smooth,
10 not the smoothest that it could be, but I met
11 many that have to -- if it wasn't because of
12 the people they knew, they wouldn't be in the
13 place they are now. So if it was for somebody
14 who didn't know absolutely anything and just
15 come in, they would find it really challenging,
16 really hard to get through it, to get through
17 these four years, and being able to say, okay,
18 this university gave me all of the tools, all
19 the necessary equipment that I need to either
20 take by home or apply here. So that's
21 something that I would tell the new president.

22 Our major challenges. We are about to
23 celebrate our 50 years, so that means every
24 decision this new president makes will affect
25 the next 50 years to come. Everything that he

1 does will set the foundation, will lay the
2 groundwork for the next 50 years to come. This
3 institution is pretty new compared to many, and
4 being able to adapt to change, this is
5 opportunity now as we evolve into a tech era,
6 being able to adapt to the change, rather than
7 being stuck in the past, is something else that
8 I will put forward to the --

9 MR. FUNK: Great. Thank you so much.

10 MR. LEVINE: Okay. So I'll offer --
11 background that I was -- before FIU -- two
12 different times when I entered and reentered
13 higher education at three different
14 institutions and seen a few different
15 presidents in those, including as a student as
16 alumni. My first was in the City of Albany
17 which was the state university of New York at
18 Albany. I also spent time in Northeastern
19 University in Boston. So two things I want to
20 bring up. One, I would like to see a president
21 that has experience at a university that has
22 more than one campus. I'm right now based at
23 the Biscayne Bay campus with my position where
24 I took most of my classes for -- hospitality.
25 I'm also now taking classes in a new program at

1 FIU at I-75. When you're on the smaller
2 campus, you often will not see the same things
3 and the same activity you do when you're on the
4 main campus. You kind of feel like the
5 forgotten stepchild. Not for lack of trying to
6 do that, but, you know, BBC which is our
7 Biscayne Bay campus which is a beautiful campus
8 is a much smaller campus, and there has been
9 some struggles for enrollment. I do think we
10 need somebody that could build some focus to
11 it, and also to spend time there. It's very
12 rare that the president comes to the campus, so
13 much so that it's a big deal when the president
14 comes to that campus. I want it to be
15 something more regular. I've seen pictures of
16 previous presidents of presidents here that
17 might interact right in the Graham Center, but
18 I would rarely ever see that and really never
19 saw that in the four years I've been at the
20 Biscayne Bay campus. There were a couple of
21 town halls, the last of which in-person town
22 hall at BBC was in February of 2020. COVID
23 obviously complicated things. I don't think no
24 one was expecting that. I was actually hoping
25 that we would have like an in-person town hall

1 this semester, but as we know, it's been a
2 little more tumultuous than we expected, but I
3 think it's so important to have those, things
4 like town halls, but also have, you know, more
5 regular informal contact. So I really would
6 appreciate somebody that has experience at a
7 school that's got more than one campus. And
8 specifically I would love to see somebody that
9 has experience in one of those schools that has
10 more than one campus, and experience working on
11 if there's a dominant campus, a non-dominant
12 campus. So while they probably still would be
13 based here, having that understanding of a
14 different campus and a feel I think would bring
15 a great perspective because I believe that a
16 broader university that has multiple campuses,
17 you need to be able to give attention to each
18 of those campus and grow. I'm not saying it
19 would be all the time, but I think it's
20 important.

21 The other thing I wanted to bring up was
22 so several of the presidents that I've observed
23 when I was in Albany, there was a couple of
24 contrasts. One president who -- got booed at
25 graduation because they were disconnected from

1 the campus. It was a big activity that they
2 call fountain day which was like where they
3 turn on the fountains, and as you said, it gets
4 cold, so we don't have as many sunny days as we
5 do here, and so that was like the equivalent of
6 the biggest school spirit event, and my senior
7 the president missed it to go somewhere else in
8 the country to fundraise. Not downplaying the
9 importance of fundraising, but if the president
10 here misses a homecoming game, or like a team
11 event, or -- you know, it really rubs people
12 the wrong way. Later on there was a president
13 that came in by the name Kermit Hall
14 (phonetic). He was only there for about a year
15 and a half because he passed away. He was out
16 traveling, I remember seeing the news that
17 talked about, and I thought they were just kind
18 of doing a listing of accomplishments, but he
19 had unfortunately had I think either a heart
20 attack or something while vacationing. But I
21 remember when he came, he had done some things
22 to correct some things. In the previous time
23 they were doing construction, so they moved the
24 university's administration to the edge, the
25 far edge of the campus. There was a main

1 campus and a smaller campus. The far edge so
2 no student would ever really interact with most
3 administrators or the president, which I felt
4 was a mistake. It would be like, you know,
5 taking it basically off campus. When Kermit
6 Hall came in, he immediately saw the need that
7 there needs to be -- he needed to be in the
8 center, so he moved his office essentially back
9 onto the main campus, set up an office in the
10 library in a very central location because he
11 realized that in -- for practical, but also --
12 reasons, it's important for the president of
13 the university to spend time on the actual
14 campus. I also remember that he had given a
15 business card to people, students, alumni,
16 which I was impressed that it contained the
17 cell number. I don't know if others have done
18 that -- I can't speak to that, but I just
19 thought that was very impressively open. He
20 also chose to teach a class, and I'm not saying
21 that the president needs to teach a class, but
22 part of the reason he chose to was he wanted to
23 be more connected to students. And I'm not
24 saying that's the only way, but I think it's
25 very important for a president to really have

1 some direct contact with students. Teaching
2 can be one thing, but that's not only -- I
3 understand the job, the time -- the president,
4 especially at a complex university here, makes
5 that very difficult, but I think it's nice when
6 they want to maybe occasionally teach and have
7 that more direct experience. So those are my
8 thoughts from seeing some different presidents.
9 The ones where they've had a chance to really
10 truly be present and interact with students and
11 be there for those key events is very
12 important. I do -- that again, having someone
13 with experience with multiple campuses, it can
14 really embrace all of the campuses that make
15 FIU not one campus, but one large multifaceted
16 institution.

17 MR. TOVAR: Thank you.

18 MR. FUNK: Great, thank you. By the way,
19 I think Kermit drowned when he was on vacation.

20 Another just quick side, we recruited
21 Neeli Bendapudi to the University of Louisville
22 and she on the first -- when she was
23 inaugurated gave the student body her cell
24 phone number, and everybody thought at first it
25 was some kind of gimmick, but she literally,

1 she would say, here's my cell phone number,
2 here's my personal phone number, don't call me
3 frivolously, but if you have a real problem and
4 you're not getting any satisfaction working
5 through the step, you call me. And wildly
6 popular. She was just named the president of
7 Penn State a couple of months ago, so kind of
8 an interesting -- I didn't know Kermit did that
9 at --

10 MR. LEVINE: The interesting -- the
11 provost was at Albany my first year, and I
12 think either the end of the first or the second
13 year left to become to the president of -- I
14 still think it's a weird name, the University
15 of South Florida which is in Tampa, Judy
16 Genshaft, I know she was there for -- I haven't
17 seen her in 20 years, I think she's no longer
18 there, I saw she was there for a while, so
19 interesting.

20 MR. FUNK: Yeah, she had a long run. She
21 had very successful. We just wanted to see how
22 long you can stand there and -- make you smile.
23 Sorry.

24 MS. NYLANDER: So I kind of want to echo
25 the sentiments a little bit of what Brian was

1 saying beforehand about the connection to a
2 student body, of course that's why we're here.
3 I think it's incredibly important for the
4 president to have a connection at least to the
5 student government association, to have that
6 connection to some part of the student body so
7 that student's voices are genuinely heard and
8 they're not really just fading off into the
9 dust. Not to say that that does happen now.
10 Our administration is fantastic and I love
11 working for them, but I think to carry that
12 throughout is incredibly important. As well as
13 just getting able to show face, as Brian was
14 saying, at the events on campus, off campus,
15 what have you. I know President Jessell, our
16 interim President Jessell just went to the
17 Pride Parade in Miami Beach, off campus event.
18 FIU had a float, but it wasn't an FIU and he
19 went to support and I think that's incredible.
20 So just being able to show face and name the
21 connection with students. And like you were
22 saying, Mr. Funk, just to be able to say, how
23 are you enjoying your time at FIU, and spark up
24 an easy conversation with students, something
25 that students aren't afraid to have, and

1 they're not afraid to approach our next
2 president. So I think that's incredibly
3 important.

4 But to put a little shameless plug in
5 here, I guess for a smaller group of students
6 at FIU, I guess recognizing the veteran and
7 military community more. I'm personally, like
8 I said, a military child, and our veteran's
9 office is amazing. I personally just would
10 like to see a little bit more recognition for
11 the military holidays. There have been some
12 that I think have kind of been missed, and
13 that's okay, it happens, but again, you still
14 have that community of students, so I think
15 it's really important just to be able to
16 recognize them and their service. We do have
17 an office here. And as well as police
18 officers, first responders, fire personnel,
19 just be able to recognize everybody whose
20 service should be recognized. Again, a little
21 bit of a smaller community, but I think still
22 really important. And then just to be able to
23 support the students wholly on a full level.
24 We're saying, again, saying like, if you need
25 anything, if there's something that you're

1 going through that you're not getting answers
2 to, please feel free to reach out to me, please
3 feel free to reach out to my team. I'm not
4 saying that necessarily it entails sharing a
5 phone number, I think that can be incredibly
6 personal, and that's a personal choice to
7 share, but just being able to support the
8 students on any level that they could possibly
9 need is important. Thank you.

10 MR. FUNK: Wonderful. Thank you.

11 MR. TOVAR: Can I -- was somebody else
12 going to go? Go ahead.

13 MR. FUNK: We've got one -- Alex and -- in
14 the room.

15 MR. TOVAR: Anything you'd like to say?
16 Okay. Good to have you. You know, it's kind
17 of interesting, as I sit here and I listen, you
18 know, one of the things some of them brought up
19 was Greek life that was important. I think
20 Cristhofer, you mentioned the international
21 students and the struggles and so forth, and on
22 the -- the experience, Brian, on the -- dual
23 campuses, and I would take that further. I
24 would tell you that not only do we have the
25 dual campuses, but we have FIU in Broward, and

1 we have the research center in the Keys, and we
2 just were at what used to be called Tory Pines
3 now it's called the Center for Translational
4 Sciences, and there's many, many other centers.
5 We have three museums. I think it's important
6 for you all as the student body, I know we
7 talked about the president being disconnected
8 at one of the places you were at in Albany, the
9 need to interact, and then the need for the
10 president to connect to the student body. One
11 of the things -- one of the first things that
12 Bill and myself discussed was I mentioned to
13 him and I was kind of giving him -- if it was
14 just my selection, my wish list of all the
15 things that I would see in a president, and
16 outside of all the other things that I think
17 are normal is that ability to walk through
18 campus and interact with students, interact
19 with the faculty and staff, interact with the
20 folks that work so hard to cut the grass, or
21 clean the floors, or just the matter of saying
22 hello because that tone is set there and it
23 flows to the rest of us. But I would also
24 encourage you all, Alex, you're outgoing,
25 Cristhofer, you're coming in as the president

1 of student body, and I think I talked to you
2 about this a few weeks ago, is to create a wish
3 list as to things that you all think are
4 important, all of the other students as to the
5 feedback that you all get, and then prioritize
6 those lists. And I -- down with our current
7 president, our current provost, with our future
8 president as to how do we address these things
9 because I think that would be very -- and you
10 mentioned that Dr. Jessell was at the gay pride
11 event, and I think if any of these people
12 knowing where their heart is or they hear, hey,
13 it's important for you to be here, or for you
14 to be -- they're going to do the best that they
15 can. Sometimes it's just a matter of them
16 hearing and understanding that these things are
17 important. Because it's interesting, not that
18 Dr. Jessell needed to hear this from me, but
19 one of the stories I mentioned to him is that
20 -- actually, Alex, it was one of your
21 predecessors that mentioned to me the
22 engineering building over on Flagler, and that
23 the condition of some of the areas weren't
24 good, that the bathrooms weren't good, that the
25 lighting wasn't good, and actually, it was Alex

1 also. And so I went over and visited with her
2 and I think there was some other folks with us,
3 and then I brought it up, and then my biggest
4 concern was that nobody from the administration
5 had been over there in years. And so I don't
6 think it's because of a lack of desire, I think
7 it's that we all get caught up in all the
8 things that are pressing us down, and we forget
9 that we need to go out there and do that
10 interaction or visit the different satellites,
11 and places, and things that we have. So I
12 would encourage you all as student body, I
13 would encourage you, Cristhofer, as to coming,
14 you have the opportunity, and Alex will tell
15 you this, at every board meeting to issue a
16 report. And I would encourage you not to do it
17 where you're surprising anyone, so I would let
18 whoever know, hey, I'm going to be bringing
19 this up so that they're ready, but for you to
20 mention what is important to your group, what
21 is not happening, that we want more Greek life.
22 Now, there very likely could be a reason not to
23 do it, I don't know, but you're right because
24 the house has been sitting over there empty,
25 and so what are we going to do with it, or do

1 we want to encourage more Greek life. So
2 frankly, these have been the best comments
3 today. So I enjoy the feedback. I will take a
4 lot of this back to some of the folks that I
5 interact with and look into it, but I would
6 encourage you all to continue creating where
7 you think the administration can do better, the
8 board can do better, prioritizing it, and I
9 think it would go a long way to improve the
10 experience. Because at the end of the day, you
11 know, we listen to the faculty, we listen to
12 the staff, we listen to all of these people,
13 and they're all very, very important, but the
14 most important is you all, the consumers, the
15 students. So I would again reiterate voice
16 these concerns, and I think they would be
17 addressed. But they're good and valid points.
18 And I'll also tell you, speaking about the
19 North Miami Beach campus, I agree with what
20 you're saying, and that to me has been an issue
21 that -- it's a programming issue, that they
22 will schedule certain classes over there,
23 certain classes over here, and why not if --
24 why not focus on a couple of majors and that
25 they're located there, and now all of a sudden

1 on the housing side, there will be people lined
2 up to live in those dorms over there because --
3 I would love to live in a place that I'm
4 looking at the bay, but it's all about
5 scheduling those classes, having people willing
6 to be in one location or the other. So again,
7 a very valid point. I think that is something
8 that is being discussed as to how do we figure
9 out better, how that scheduling should be over
10 there, but, again, I keep bringing it up, so.

11 Any questions we got online, Sofia?

12 MR. FUNK: And Alex is still at the mic.

13 MS. TRELLES: You know, I'm actually going
14 to ask Alex to give us our next comment. We do
15 not have any comments or questions right now
16 online.

17 MR. RUBIDO: All right. Thank you very
18 much. I want to start off by saying that as
19 president I've had the privileged to have
20 served under two presidents of the institution
21 which gives me a perspective as to what I would
22 want to see in the next university president.
23 I've had some time to think about this, this
24 question. I think that what you saw today is
25 very evident of the university student

1 community, of any community, and that's that
2 every person has their own unique issue that
3 they feel needs to be addressed, and that's the
4 challenge with governments, on a student level,
5 on a university level, on the state, local,
6 national level, everyone has their own unique
7 issue. So I think that the most important
8 quality that a university president can have is
9 receptiveness, accessibility and receptiveness
10 because they go hand in hand. There's no use
11 in being receptive if you're not accessible,
12 and I think that's something that Dr. Jessell
13 has done incredibly well, he's made himself
14 very accessible to the student government and
15 the students. He walks around, he talks to our
16 students, he talks to our faculty, he talks to
17 our staff. And I think that it's critical for
18 at least our community that the president be
19 visible and be open to comments. Half the time
20 they don't require anything other than someone
21 to listen to. Most grievances can be solved
22 just by listening to someone, and it's a trait
23 that not everyone has, and I think it's one of
24 the most important ones that as a university
25 community we can look for in our president.

1 And then I would say that question one, I
2 think, can be phrased differently. I don't
3 think FIU has challenges. I think everything
4 that we face is a new opportunity here, and
5 that's the way that our university looks at it.
6 We don't see things as challenges which have
7 success and failure. Everything is an
8 opportunity for growth, an opportunity for
9 change, and I think that's a very important
10 mindset that we as a university community
11 carry, and that our president should carry. We
12 look at things as ways to improve, and that's
13 everything. We look at ourselves, we look at
14 policy, we look at academics, and it's always,
15 how do we improve this experience, how do we
16 improve the outcomes, and that's how FIU has
17 done so well, as a university community we look
18 at challenges as opportunities. So I would say
19 that that's an important mindset for our
20 university president to have. And that will
21 conclude my remarks.

22 MR. TOVAR: Well, Alex, that's incredible
23 because you sound like a seasoned outgoing
24 president, understanding that everybody brings
25 to you what they think is important, but this

1 is what I was mentioning to you, Cristhofer,
2 that everybody will bring to you what they
3 think is important, and I think Alex has some
4 very good advice which is to be able to, number
5 one, listen because that resolves half of it,
6 and then being able to balance or to explain,
7 yes, this needs to be brought to the forefront,
8 this maybe I could talk to and explain why this
9 maybe isn't reasonable -- so that's great
10 words. And I think that's great words going
11 out and coming in. And so -- and it goes for
12 the president, it goes for all of our jobs as
13 to what we do, is to have that desire to listen
14 -- communication skills, to be able to talk and
15 discuss and see what we're going to do to move
16 forward. Great stuff. Thank you. But again,
17 these are very similar priorities just
18 formatted or discussed in a different way than
19 every other group, you know. What's
20 interesting is as we've spoken to every group,
21 you probably sit down and go over all these
22 comments and there's probably four or five
23 points, being able to assimilate in South
24 Florida, provide good leadership, an
25 understanding of the community, so we

1 appreciate the comments. Yes?

2 MR. SUTTON: I know we're trying to wrap
3 up, so I'll make this quick, but another idea
4 came to me regarding the challenges that I
5 think the next president might inherit or I
6 guess as Alex said, an opportunity to make FIU
7 even better. I think that one of the things
8 FIU is missing or at least this time -- as I
9 think it should is that sense that we're all a
10 panther nation united together, not only our
11 students, but our faculty, our alumni, our
12 staff. We need more panther pride, I think.
13 And the easiest place to see that I think is
14 with FIU athletics where there isn't as much
15 turn out as I think anybody would like to see.
16 There isn't --

17 MR. TOVAR: What, I'm sorry?

18 MR. SUTTON: Athletics. Going to like
19 football games and other things. But I think
20 it's -- more than that, I think it's just a
21 general sense of school spirit and good pride
22 that I -- you'll have to take my word for it,
23 if it doesn't show, but I'm extremely proud to
24 be a panther, and I think everybody else at SGA
25 is as well. But a lot of my friends who are

1 less involved just go about their business as a
2 student, but identify more as just a college
3 student and not an FIU student, and I -- I want
4 the next president to be able to not only have
5 that sense of interaction with the student
6 body, but to -- become a bit of an icon because
7 we have certain icons at FIU like Rory Panther
8 and various other things that represent our
9 university, but if the face of our next
10 president, whoever he or she may be, themself
11 become something where people associate them
12 with our university and they're someone who is
13 liked, loved, and respected, and admired, that
14 I think would be just one set of many that
15 would need to be taken to further increase the
16 amount of panther pride and panther nationalism
17 is what I like to say that people will feel
18 towards this university. And so whoever that
19 person may be who ends up becoming our next
20 president, I think they just need to have a
21 certain level of charisma that would allow them
22 to really represent and embody what it is to be
23 the leader of the panther nation that we have
24 here at FIU.

25 MR. TOVAR: And listen, I agree on the

1 role of the president doing that, but I'll also
2 tell you as words of encouragement, if you
3 would have gone to one of the basketball games,
4 and you very likely did this year, I think as
5 to where we're at at the basketball games to
6 where we were two, three, four years ago with
7 our coach, Jeremy Ballard, it's amazing the
8 excitement, the type of product that they're
9 putting on the court. I was taking my wife to
10 the games and she frankly was not a sports fan
11 and she was enjoying it, and loved calling to
12 those kids. As far as athletics, as you all
13 are well aware, in December we brought in a new
14 athletic director, Scott Carr, we brought in a
15 new football coach. And if you had the
16 opportunity to go to the scrimmage this
17 Saturday, it's -- the whole thing felt
18 completely different. You know, we had
19 probably more people at that scrimmage than we
20 probably had a lot of the actual football games
21 last year. As far as panther nation, I spend
22 time with Scott Carr over at -- facility three
23 weeks ago, and I think you're going to see --
24 you're already seeing changes over there as to
25 the way the facilities look. We're -- we're

1 pushing hard to make some investments as far as
2 lighting. And then as far as panther-ising the
3 hallways and creating that spirit, and that
4 feel, and that, you know, things are different
5 and then it's all about being an FIU panther.
6 So great points. I would encourage you all to
7 get your friends and families to come to the
8 games, to get involved to be part of the
9 activities, because really it is a lot of fun.
10 Now, I'm also pushing Scott to make sure that
11 the activities, you know, how do we make them
12 more friendly for the fans and before the game,
13 after the game, during the game, and look at
14 the details, and I think you're going to see
15 changes on that also. So we're all aligned.
16 And, you know, one of the things that we
17 discussed is to make sure that we bring in a
18 president that understands we're a division 1
19 school and has a passion for sports, that wants
20 -- and one of the things we talk about on the
21 board, if you have an opportunity to listen, is
22 that whatever we do, we should be relevant in
23 it. I'm not saying that we have to win every
24 game, although I would like to, but at a
25 minimum we should be relevant. And so as long

1 as I'm involved in this, I will push for that,
2 and there's a lot of other people pushing for
3 the same, but I don't want to speak for anyone
4 else. So thank you.

5 MR. FUNK: Anything else? We have one
6 person who hasn't -- are you sure you don't
7 want to make a few comments? And tell us who
8 you are, where you're from originally, and why
9 did you choose to come here?

10 MR. MESIDOR: Yes. My name is Wrendly
11 Mesidor. I'm Haitian, like from Haiti. So one
12 of the things -- about like safety on campus
13 because there was that one time last year and a
14 lot of student -- the student gets concerned
15 about it, like a football player get to the
16 campus and then something that -- and a lot of
17 the student are concerned about like they were
18 concerned about the situation. Like I want a
19 president who actually don't just sweep
20 anything under the rug, but actually take
21 initiative, like take action, like make sure
22 our campus is safe for the student. Even me,
23 myself as a student, I want to be able to be on
24 campus, be safe. I actually spend more time on
25 campus than actually I spend at my house. I

1 don't want to be on campus and then I expect
2 something is going to happen, like something is
3 not going to be safe. I should be able to come
4 to campus and then feel like I'm at home, like
5 go safety, and that should be for all the other
6 student body, like they -- especially we have a
7 big population of females. They should not be
8 able to walk around campus and feeling unsafe.
9 So we want a president which they're going to
10 be strong in leadership and make sure we have a
11 safe campus.

12 MR. TOVAR: And I appreciate that comment,
13 but just for clarity sake, and I know in Haiti
14 and a lot of countries we call soccer football.

15 MR. MESIDOR: Yes, soccer, but football --

16 MR. TOVAR: No, I get it, but just for
17 clarity's sake because I don't want to
18 associate our football team with -- it was a --
19 the team -- our football stadium, the semi or
20 the professional soccer team uses it, and the
21 incident that took place, and I agree with you.
22 I think none of us want to receive a call that
23 any incident has happened. And so safety is
24 very important. I believe our police
25 department, we have 69 police officers; is that

1 correct? What's the size of our police force?

2 SPEAKER: Yes, we're budgeted for 74 but
3 we have currently have -- I have to check, but
4 we're about 68 right now.

5 MR. TOVAR: So point well taken. And,
6 again, the next president will be very focused
7 on making sure that every person that is on
8 this campus is safe. Thank you. Thank you.
9 So I think -- are we close to being done?

10 MS. TRELLES: We are coming to the end of
11 our time together.

12 MR. TOVAR: I got --

13 MS. TRELLES: I just wanted to say that we
14 do not have any comments or questions from our
15 online platform. So if anybody has anymore
16 comments or questions for us, this is the time.

17 MR. TOVAR: And I appreciate the work --
18 your team, Sofia, and Ana, and, you know, the
19 work because this -- this takes a lot to put
20 this together, so I appreciate it. We are
21 going to reconvene tomorrow with more listening
22 sessions and -- actually, tomorrow a university
23 wide listening session will take place at 10:00
24 a.m. to get input from our students, faculty,
25 staff regarding the qualities and

1 qualifications we want to see in our next
2 president. If you'd like to join that meeting,
3 everybody is welcome. And again, I would
4 encourage you all, there's a list of the 15
5 members of the search committee and reach out
6 to any one of those individuals with any
7 suggestions, concerns. It's good for multiple
8 people to hear not only the input of the deans,
9 or the faculty, the staff, but you all, the
10 students, because you all are the ones that are
11 living and breathing this, you all are the ones
12 that are here for hopefully what is a life
13 changing experience, and experience that
14 propels you all into your careers. I'm sure
15 you're going to get accepted into the law
16 school, so look forward to seeing you as an
17 attorney. And whatever you all's chosen fields
18 are, I'm sure you're going to do very well.
19 Because what motivates me most out of anything
20 I do all year is attending some of the
21 commencement exercises. It's amazing to see
22 you all as students walking across that stage
23 with that sense of accomplishment, achievement,
24 and those huge smiles. So go out there and
25 accomplish great things. Thank you very much.

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Thank you.

MR. FUNK: Thank you very much.

(Whereupon, the proceedings
concluded at 8:53 p.m.).

- - -

CERTIFICATE

1
2
3 THE STATE OF FLORIDA)
4 COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE)
5

6 I, Daisy L. Amador, a Court Reporter, do
7 hereby certify that I was authorized to and did
8 report the proceedings, had and taken at the Graham
9 Center Ballrooms, Florida International University,
10 11200 S.W. 8th Street, Miami, Florida, 33199, on
11 April 12th, 2022, for the Presidential Search
12 Committee; that the foregoing pages, numbered 1 to
13 45, inclusive, constitute a true and complete record
14 of my notes.
15

16 I further certify that I am not an
17 attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
18 related to any of the parties, nor financially
19 interested in the action.

20 Dated this 20th day of April, 2022.

21
22 

23 _____
24 Daisy L. Amador
25 Notary Public for the State of Florida
Commission No.: HH175493
Expires: 10/17/2025

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