PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Tuesday, April 12th, 2022
8:00 p.m. - 8:53 p.m.
Graham Center Ballrooms
Florida International University
11200 S.W. 8th Street,
Miami, Florida, 33199

FIU STUDENT GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION LISTENING SESSION

PRESENT:

ROGER TOVAR, Chair

R. WILLIAM FUNK, Esq.

SOFIA TRELLES, PhD, Ombudsperson
MR. TOVAR: Good afternoon. My name is Roger Tovar and I'm the vice chair of the FIU Board of Trustees. In addition it is my pleasure to serve as chair of the Presidential Search Committee. I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Presidential Search Committee members and the FIU community who are joining us for the listening sessions and thank them for participating in this important step. The FIU Board of Trustees met on April 5th to announce the Presidential Search Committee members. The Presidential Search Committee also held its first meeting on April 5th. To keep all of you and members of the FIU community informed, I am pleased to announce that we have launched the presidential search website which will provide information on our search process, meetings, and candidates. This website will be updated routinely. We invite you to visit the website. R. William Funk and Associates based in Dallas, Texas has been selected to assist with the search for FIU's sixth president. The firm has conducted more than 430 searches for colleges and university presidents and chancellors. Mr. Funk is
joining us today as we welcome members of the university community and the general public who are joining us via the webcast as we engage in listening sessions. I now invite Mr. Funk to begin the listening session. Mr. Funk?

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

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

    MR. FUNK: And what year are you in?
    MS. NYLANDER: I'm senior, I'm graduating
in like three weeks.
    MR. TOVAR: Congratulations.
    MR. FUNK: And do you have plans after
that?
    MS. NYLANDER: Yes, I do. I am going to
be moving up to the D.C. area. I'm going to
graduate school for forensic and legal
psychology at -- university.
    MR. FUNK: Wonderful. Congratulations
with all that.
    MS. NYLANDER: Thank you.
    MR. FUNK: Thank you. Yes, sir.
    MR. SUTTON: Hi there. My name is
Alexander Sutton (phonetic). I'm a sophomore,
and I am studying political science. I decided
to come to FIU because I've been on this campus
even when I was a kid, both of my parents have
worked here for a long time, and so I knew this
campus really well and I felt at home. And,
you know, I applied to other schools as well,
but I kind of always knew that I was going to
come to FIU, especially because FIU has had one
of the best -- United Nations programs in the
country for a really long time. The people
here who know me are probably tired of hearing
me talk about -- at this point because I talk
about it all the time, but I knew a lot of the
people at FIU's UN team when I was in high
school, and I just thought that if I went to a
different school I would be missing out, so I
decided to come here instead, and I'm not the
head delegate of the model UN team and I'm
having a great time, so that's really what
brought me here. And I love FIU with all my
heart.

MR. FUNK: Were you from the Miami area?

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

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

MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

MR. LUGO: Good afternoon, everyone. My
name is Cristhofer Lugo and I'm the coming SGA
President. I'm a senior majoring computer
science, originally from the Dominican
Republic, but I grew up from Turks and Cacaos.
The reason I came to FIU was just for an education. Back home it's not -- sensibility to an education is not that good. So coming to FIU was definitely a stepping stone from where I came from. I loved the diversity, the culture. They took me with open hands coming from such a small island. And I just love this university so much.

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

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

MR. FUNK: Here?

MR. LUGO: Yes.

MR. FUNK: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. LUGO: Of course. Thank you.

MR. FUNK: Yes, sir.

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

MR. FUNK: Do you know where?
MR. RUBIDO: Hopefully FIU. Number one bar passage rate in the State of Florida.

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

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

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

MR. LEVINE: My name is Brian Levine. I am a graduate student. I came to FIU first to study hospitality, and I got my masters in that I just completed, and I decided to do another masters in human resource management which I just started. I'm the student government association governor of the Biscayne Bay campus. That sounds a little weird. I still haven't gotten used to the name. But I am not originally from Miami or Florida. I grew up on Long Island, New York and I lived for a number of years in Albany, New York, New York's capitol, before deciding to kind of make a career change and come down here. And I was visiting Florida, visiting in Miami and was interested in like tourism at that point, and I looked up and I saw that they had a program at
FIU and I went all and I kind of -- for a quick tour which there wasn't -- I wasn't actually able to get ahold of anyone at admissions at that time, but I met with one of the advisers who kind of explained the program, and so I had a good understanding, and then I applied within a few weeks afterwards. And so I've been in Miami for about four years.

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

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

MR. FUNK: There you go. Well, thank you all for that. It's good to get to know you. Now a couple in the back, guys -- let me pick up now where Roger threw it to me. The board has been emphatic about wanting to make sure that we had a very transparent process and that we would get the input from all of the major constituents. We spent the day today really in some four, or five, six different sessions with various constituent groups. We've learned a lot, and we've been looking forward to this student session because we know that you will give us even more insight in terms of what
you'd like to see in the next president. There were three questions that you've already seen and we're going to flash it on the screen above. And it essentially is, these are the three questions that kind of get to the essence of the information we need to go out and be a better steward to the university. And the first question is essentially, you know, what do you see as the major challenges and opportunities this next president may inherit both immediately and then maybe down the road a bit? And secondly, if those are the challenges and opportunities, what kind of person do you think would be best prepared to address the challenges and exploit the opportunities, what kind of personality, leadership style, worldview, what adjectives would you use to describe the ideal next president? And I have a story to tell you about that. And then, thirdly, your search firm's responsibility is really to reach out to people who will not respond to the ads that are being run and who will not respond to a letter that the search committee might send. These are people who are very happy where they are, very successful
where they are, and they're not looking. So to
present an opportunity to them, we have to talk
to them, nurture, cajole them as to why they
should become a candidate here. So we try to
point out to them all the positives about FIU.
You know, what are those compelling reasons we
can give to these candidates who are not really
looking for another opportunity? One thought
that always comes to mind for me when we're
meeting with the student constituents and SGA
reps is that we did a search at Vanderbilt
University for a new president a number of
years back and I'll never forget, one of the --
I think it was the president of SGA there said,
well, Mr. Funk, we're on a two hand shake
program here at Vanderbilt, and I knew I was
being set up for some kind of story or
whatever, and -- I said, what do you mean, two
hand shake program? And he said, well, when
you're a freshman and you come to orientation,
you stand in line and you shake hands with the
president, and then four years later when you
graduate, you walk across the stage and you
shake hands with him again, but we never see
him in between those two handshakes. So I've
always thought about that. I mean, I -- and as a result I think presidents should be very visible. You know, you should know who your president is. He should stop you occasionally on campus and ask you how it's going. He should remember some of your names, especially those of you who are in SGA. But what -- how would you respond to that question about what kind of president you'd like to see in the position, even though a couple of you are going to be gone and you won't get to see the benefit of our good work? But any of these questions that you'd like to respond to, or the adjectives about what kind of person you'd like to see in the role? I think they're going to make it.

MS. TRELLES: Yes, I'm totally going to make you walk all the way to the back to answer these questions. I also wanted to mention that we do have a couple of you all participating online, so if you would like to ask any questions or you have any comments regarding these three questions, or any of the topics that Bill just mentioned, please feel free to use the platform to let us know. We want to
make sure that every student has an opportunity
to voice their comments and to have their voice
heard, so please, we encourage you to use the
platform that we have available to us so that
we can learn a little bit more about you and
what you're looking for in the next president
of FIU. Thank you.

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

MR. SUTTON: You had me nervous there for
a second -- what I was going to say. One thing
that I would like to see the next university
president which a lot of my friends at FIU have
agreed with me, some of them haven't, but it's
personally I think something that would be
beneficial to the university is a president
that is favorable to expanding and supporting
the Greek life community on campus. And of
course I'm biased, I'm involved in Greek life
as brother of Theta Chi Fraternity, but I
genuinely think that having a strong Greek life
community at FIU, even stronger than it
currently is, would be a benefit to our university because of the fact that I think if there are a large number of high school seniors who are considering, they're either going to be applying, and they are considering opportunities, like academic opportunities, they're probably going to take into account the amount of like recreational opportunities they're going to have as well. And I know that universities that we compete with, like Florida State, like UF, have very strong and established Greek life communities there, and friends of mine who go to those universities have told me that was a factor when they decided to go, and they're also pursuing very intense academic careers there, but they have a good time getting involved in a fraternity or sorority. I think FIU's Greek life community has definitely been moving as of recently, but some of my friends have told me that they wish -- administration, and I know it's always hard because there's at every university always a constant push and pull between Greek life and the administration. And sometimes members of Greek life don't always behave and they get
punished as they should be. But I think ultimately I've seen -- there's been a lot of good that FIU Greek life has done, and I think if the next president were in support of fostering the Greek life community even more and potentially bringing back some of the Greek life housing because I know there's an empty house right now that I'm not sure might be getting filled if that fraternity comes back, but perhaps even expanding so there's other chapters of Greek life, fraternities and sororities that are able to live on campus as well. This is something that I think would be of benefit to the university because it would attract more students to come. It might also bring more money to the university I think. Ultimately I just think it would also help those students who had to get most involved on campus because a lot of my friends who aren't involved in Greek life are still very involved on campus, but almost everybody I know who is involved in my chapter and other fraternities or sororities always area involved in at least one, usually two or three extracurricular activities and make a big impact on campus. So
I genuinely think that it would be very beneficial if our next university president were favorable to the Greek life community and wanted to help those chapters who conduct themselves appropriately and help FIU shine. So that's one of the qualities I think the next university president should have.

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

MR. SUTTON: Thank you.

MR. TOVAR: And, Cristhofer, I would also say, if that is the point of you of a lot of your constituency and to understand, that's something -- and Alex, I don't know if you are going can add anything to that, but maybe with the report that you do in the board meetings, if truly there is this desire to expand that, I would encourage you all to bring it up and -- because that's your opportunity to be heard and
say, listen, we have a lot of people that want this, and so I think he just said it, there's a lot of push and pull ebbs and flows in these things. Couldn't understand it, so thank you.

Good point.

MR. LUGO: Thank you. And that's something that -- you know, we will look into. But something I want to shift into is I want this new president to understand our middle name, international, that this is an international school. As an international student, being able to provide those opportunities, whether it's career, academic -- being able to understand the culture of each and every one of I think it's 135 countries that we have present, about 3,000 students from international. Being able to understand the struggles that international students have to go through on a daily basis. We pay almost triple when it comes to tuition. And whenever you see the challenges we do whenever it's time to go into the workforce, the amount of time and pressure we have to put in to get an on-campus job, the time and pressure we have to put in into our education because many of us
are first generation student, many of us are
pushing ourselves to make our family proud.
And sometimes many international students
cannot have their family present in their
graduation simply because of different
scenarios. So a president that is able to put
that foot forward and to building a better
atmosphere for our -- international student --
the experience I had has been pretty smooth,
not the smoothest that it could be, but I met
many that have to -- if it wasn't because of
the people they knew, they wouldn't be in the
place they are now. So if it was for somebody
who didn't know absolutely anything and just
come in, they would find it really challenging,
really hard to get through it, to get through
these four years, and being able to say, okay,
this university gave me all of the tools, all
the necessary equipment that I need to either
take by home or apply here. So that's
something that I would tell the new president.

Our major challenges. We are about to
celebrate our 50 years, so that means every
decision this new president makes will affect
the next 50 years to come. Everything that he
does will set the foundation, will lay the
groundwork for the next 50 years to come. This
institution is pretty new compared to many, and
being able to adapt to change, this is
opportunity now as we evolve into a tech era,
being able to adapt to the change, rather than
being stuck in the past, is something else that
I will put forward to the --

MR. FUNK: Great. Thank you so much.

MR. LEVINE: Okay. So I'll offer --
background that I was -- before FIU -- two
different times when I entered and reentered
higher education at three different
institutions and seen a few different
presidents in those, including as a student as
alumni. My first was in the City of Albany
which was the state university of New York at
Albany. I also spent time in Northeastern
University in Boston. So two things I want to
bring up. One, I would like to see a president
that has experience at a university that has
more than one campus. I'm right now based at
the Biscayne Bay campus with my position where
I took most of my classes for -- hospitality.
I'm also now taking classes in a new program at
FIU at I-75. When you're on the smaller campus, you often will not see the same things and the same activity you do when you're on the main campus. You kind of feel like the forgotten stepchild. Not for lack of trying to do that, but, you know, BBC which is our Biscayne Bay campus which is a beautiful campus is a much smaller campus, and there has been some struggles for enrollment. I do think we need somebody that could build some focus to it, and also to spend time there. It's very rare that the president comes to the campus, so much so that it's a big deal when the president comes to that campus. I want it to be something more regular. I've seen pictures of previous presidents of presidents here that might interact right in the Graham Center, but I would rarely ever see that and really never saw that in the four years I've been at the Biscayne Bay campus. There were a couple of town halls, the last of which in-person town hall at BBC was in February of 2020. COVID obviously complicated things. I don't think no one was expecting that. I was actually hoping that we would have like an in-person town hall
this semester, but as we know, it's been a little more tumultuous than we expected, but I think it's so important to have those, things like town halls, but also have, you know, more regular informal contact. So I really would appreciate somebody that has experience at a school that's got more than one campus. And specifically I would love to see somebody that has experience in one of those schools that has more than one campus, and experience working on if there's a dominant campus, a non-dominant campus. So while they probably still would be based here, having that understanding of a different campus and a feel I think would bring a great perspective because I believe that a broader university that has multiple campuses, you need to be able to give attention to each of those campus and grow. I'm not saying it would be all the time, but I think it's important.

The other thing I wanted to bring up was so several of the presidents that I've observed when I was in Albany, there was a couple of contrasts. One president who -- got booed at graduation because they were disconnected from
the campus. It was a big activity that they
call fountain day which was like where they
turn on the fountains, and as you said, it gets
cold, so we don't have as many sunny days as we
do here, and so that was like the equivalent of
the biggest school spirit event, and my senior
the president missed it to go somewhere else in
the country to fundraise. Not downplaying the
importance of fundraising, but if the president
here misses a homecoming game, or like a team
event, or -- you know, it really rubs people
the wrong way. Later on there was a president
that came in by the name Kermit Hall
(phonetic). He was only there for about a year
and a half because he passed away. He was out
traveling, I remember seeing the news that
talked about, and I thought they were just kind
of doing a listing of accomplishments, but he
had unfortunately had I think either a heart
attack or something while vacationing. But I
remember when he came, he had done some things
to correct some things. In the previous time
they were doing construction, so they moved the
university's administration to the edge, the
far edge of the campus. There was a main
campus and a smaller campus. The far edge so
no student would ever really interact with most
administrators or the president, which I felt
was a mistake. It would be like, you know,
taking it basically off campus. When Kermit
Hall came in, he immediately saw the need that
there needs to be -- he needed to be in the
center, so he moved his office essentially back
onto the main campus, set up an office in the
library in a very central location because he
realized that in -- for practical, but also --
reasons, it's important for the president of
the university to spend time on the actual
campus. I also remember that he had given a
business card to people, students, alumni,
which I was impressed that it contained the
cell number. I don't know if others have done
that -- I can't speak to that, but I just
thought that was very impressively open. He
also chose to teach a class, and I'm not saying
that the president needs to teach a class, but
part of the reason he chose to was he wanted to
be more connected to students. And I'm not
saying that's the only way, but I think it's
very important for a president to really have
some direct contact with students. Teaching can be one thing, but that's not only -- I understand the job, the time -- the president, especially at a complex university here, makes that very difficult, but I think it's nice when they want to maybe occasionally teach and have that more direct experience. So those are my thoughts from seeing some different presidents. The ones where they've had a chance to really truly be present and interact with students and be there for those key events is very important. I do -- that again, having someone with experience with multiple campuses, it can really embrace all of the campuses that make FIU not one campus, but one large multifaceted institution.

MR. TOVAR: Thank you.

MR. FUNK: Great, thank you. By the way, I think Kermit drowned when he was on vacation. Another just quick side, we recruited Neeli Bendapudi to the University of Louisville and she on the first -- when she was inaugurated gave the student body her cell phone number, and everybody thought at first it was some kind of gimmick, but she literally,
she would say, here's my cell phone number, here's my personal phone number, don't call me frivolously, but if you have a real problem and you're not getting any satisfaction working through the step, you call me. And wildly popular. She was just named the president of Penn State a couple of months ago, so kind of an interesting -- I didn't know Kermit did that at --

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

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

MS. NYLANDER: So I kind of want to echo the sentiments a little bit of what Brian was
saying beforehand about the connection to a
student body, of course that's why we're here.
I think it's incredibly important for the
president to have a connection at least to the
student government association, to have that
connection to some part of the student body so
that student's voices are genuinely heard and
they're not really just fading off into the
dust. Not to say that that does happen now.
Our administration is fantastic and I love
working for them, but I think to carry that
throughout is incredibly important. As well as
just getting able to show face, as Brian was
saying, at the events on campus, off campus,
what have you. I know President Jessell, our
interim President Jessell just went to the
Pride Parade in Miami Beach, off campus event.
FIU had a float, but it wasn't an FIU and he
went to support and I think that's incredible.
So just being able to show face and name the
connection with students. And like you were
saying, Mr. Funk, just to be able to say, how
are you enjoying your time at FIU, and spark up
an easy conversation with students, something
that students aren't afraid to have, and
they're not afraid to approach our next 

president. So I think that's incredibly 

important.

But to put a little shameless plug in 

here, I guess for a smaller group of students 

at FIU, I guess recognizing the veteran and 

military community more. I'm personally, like 

I said, a military child, and our veteran's 

office is amazing. I personally just would 

like to see a little bit more recognition for 

the military holidays. There have been some 

that I think have kind of been missed, and 

that's okay, it happens, but again, you still 

have that community of students, so I think 

it's really important just to be able to 

recognize them and their service. We do have 

an office here. And as well as police 

officers, first responders, fire personnel, 

just be able to recognize everybody whose 

service should be recognized. Again, a little 

bit of a smaller community, but I think still 

really important. And then just to be able to 

support the students wholly on a full level. 

We're saying, again, saying like, if you need 

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

MR. FUNK: Wonderful. Thank you.

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

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

MR. TOVAR: Anything you'd like to say? Okay. Good to have you. You know, it's kind of interesting, as I sit here and I listen, you know, one of the things some of them brought up was Greek life that was important. I think Cristhofer, you mentioned the international students and the struggles and so forth, and on the -- the experience, Brian, on the -- dual campuses, and I would take that further. I would tell you that not only do we have the dual campuses, but we have FIU in Broward, and
we have the research center in the Keys, and we
just were at what used to be called Tory Pines
now it's called the Center for Translational
Sciences, and there's many, many other centers.
We have three museums. I think it's important
for you all as the student body, I know we
talked about the president being disconnected
at one of the places you were at in Albany, the
need to interact, and then the need for the
president to connect to the student body. One
of the things -- one of the first things that
Bill and myself discussed was I mentioned to
him and I was kind of giving him -- if it was
just my selection, my wish list of all the
things that I would see in a president, and
outside of all the other things that I think
are normal is that ability to walk through
campus and interact with students, interact
with the faculty and staff, interact with the
folks that work so hard to cut the grass, or
clean the floors, or just the matter of saying
hello because that tone is set there and it
flows to the rest of us. But I would also
courage you all, Alex, you're outgoing,
Cristhofer, you're coming in as the president
of student body, and I think I talked to you
about this a few weeks ago, is to create a wish
list as to things that you all think are
important, all of the other students as to the
feedback that you all get, and then prioritize
those lists. And I -- down with our current
president, our current provost, with our future
president as to how do we address these things
because I think that would be very -- and you
mentioned that Dr. Jessell was at the gay pride
event, and I think if any of these people
knowing where their heart is or they hear, hey,
it's important for you to be here, or for you
to be -- they're going to do the best that they
can. Sometimes it's just a matter of them
hearing and understanding that these things are
important. Because it's interesting, not that
Dr. Jessell needed to hear this from me, but
one of the stories I mentioned to him is that
-- actually, Alex, it was one of your
predecessors that mentioned to me the
engineering building over on Flagler, and that
the condition of some of the areas weren't
good, that the bathrooms weren't good, that the
lighting wasn't good, and actually, it was Alex
also. And so I went over and visited with her and I think there was some other folks with us, and then I brought it up, and then my biggest concern was that nobody from the administration had been over there in years. And so I don't think it's because of a lack of desire, I think it's that we all get caught up in all the things that are pressing us down, and we forget that we need to go out there and do that interaction or visit the different satellites, and places, and things that we have. So I would encourage you all as student body, I would encourage you, Cristhofer, as to coming, you have the opportunity, and Alex will tell you this, at every board meeting to issue a report. And I would encourage you not to do it where you're surprising anyone, so I would let whoever know, hey, I'm going to be bringing this up so that they're ready, but for you to mention what is important to your group, what is not happening, that we want more Greek life. Now, there very likely could be a reason not to do it, I don't know, but you're right because the house has been sitting over there empty, and so what are we going to do with it, or do
we want to encourage more Greek life. So frankly, these have been the best comments today. So I enjoy the feedback. I will take a lot of this back to some of the folks that I interact with and look into it, but I would encourage you all to continue creating where you think the administration can do better, the board can do better, prioritizing it, and I think it would go a long way to improve the experience. Because at the end of the day, you know, we listen to the faculty, we listen to the staff, we listen to all of these people, and they're all very, very important, but the most important is you all, the consumers, the students. So I would again reiterate voice these concerns, and I think they would be addressed. But they're good and valid points. And I'll also tell you, speaking about the North Miami Beach campus, I agree with what you're saying, and that to me has been an issue that -- it's a programming issue, that they will schedule certain classes over there, certain classes over here, and why not if -- why not focus on a couple of majors and that they're located there, and now all of a sudden
on the housing side, there will be people lined up to live in those dorms over there because -- I would love to live in a place that I'm looking at the bay, but it's all about scheduling those classes, having people willing to be in one location or the other. So again, a very valid point. I think that is something that is being discussed as to how do we figure out better, how that scheduling should be over there, but, again, I keep bringing it up, so.

Any questions we got online, Sofia?

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

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

MR. RUBIDO: All right. Thank you very much. I want to start off by saying that as president I've had the privileged to have served under two presidents of the institution which gives me a perspective as to what I would want to see in the next university president. I've had some time to think about this, this question. I think that what you saw today is very evident of the university student
community, of any community, and that's that every person has their own unique issue that they feel needs to be addressed, and that's the challenge with governments, on a student level, on a university level, on the state, local, national level, everyone has their own unique issue. So I think that the most important quality that a university president can have is receptiveness, accessibility and receptiveness because they go hand in hand. There's no use in being receptive if you're not accessible, and I think that's something that Dr. Jessell has done incredibly well, he's made himself very accessible to the student government and the students. He walks around, he talks to our students, he talks to our faculty, he talks to our staff. And I think that it's critical for at least our community that the president be visible and be open to comments. Half the time they don't require anything other than someone to listen to. Most grievances can be solved just by listening to someone, and it's a trait that not everyone has, and I think it's one of the most important ones that as a university community we can look for in our president.
And then I would say that question one, I think, can be phrased differently. I don't think FIU has challenges. I think everything that we face is a new opportunity here, and that's the way that our university looks at it. We don't see things as challenges which have success and failure. Everything is an opportunity for growth, an opportunity for change, and I think that's a very important mindset that we as a university community carry, and that our president should carry. We look at things as ways to improve, and that's everything. We look at ourselves, we look at policy, we look at academics, and it's always, how do we improve this experience, how do we improve the outcomes, and that's how FIU has done so well, as a university community we look at challenges as opportunities. So I would say that that's an important mindset for our university president to have. And that will conclude my remarks.

MR. TOVAR: Well, Alex, that's incredible because you sound like a seasoned outgoing president, understanding that everybody brings to you what they think is important, but this
is what I was mentioning to you, Cristhofer, that everybody will bring to you what they think is important, and I think Alex has some very good advice which is to be able to, number one, listen because that resolves half of it, and then being able to balance or to explain, yes, this needs to be brought to the forefront, this maybe I could talk to and explain why this maybe isn't reasonable -- so that's great words. And I think that's great words going out and coming in. And so -- and it goes for the president, it goes for all of our jobs as to what we do, is to have that desire to listen -- communication skills, to be able to talk and discuss and see what we're going to do to move forward. Great stuff. Thank you. But again, these are very similar priorities just formatted or discussed in a different way than every other group, you know. What's interesting is as we've spoken to every group, you probably sit down and go over all these comments and there's probably four or five points, being able to assimilate in South Florida, provide good leadership, an understanding of the community, so we
appreciate the comments. Yes?

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

MR. TOVAR: What, I'm sorry?

MR. SUTTON: Athletics. Going to like football games and other things. But I think it's -- more than that, I think it's just a general sense of school spirit and good pride that I -- you'll have to take my word for it, if it doesn't show, but I'm extremely proud to be a panther, and I think everybody else at SGA is as well. But a lot of my friends who are
less involved just go about their business as a student, but identify more as just a college student and not an FIU student, and I -- I want the next president to be able to not only have that sense of interaction with the student body, but to -- become a bit of an icon because we have certain icons at FIU like Rory Panther and various other things that represent our university, but if the face of our next president, whoever he or she may be, themself become something where people associate them with our university and they're someone who is liked, loved, and respected, and admired, that I think would be just one set of many that would need to be taken to further increase the amount of panther pride and panther nationalism is what I like to say that people will feel towards this university. And so whoever that person may be who ends up becoming our next president, I think they just need to have a certain level of charisma that would allow them to really represent and embody what it is to be the leader of the panther nation that we have here at FIU.

MR. TOVAR: And listen, I agree on the
role of the president doing that, but I'll also
tell you as words of encouragement, if you
would have gone to one of the basketball games,
and you very likely did this year, I think as
to where we're at at the basketball games to
where we were two, three, four years ago with
our coach, Jeremy Ballard, it's amazing the
excitement, the type of product that they're
putting on the court. I was taking my wife to
the games and she frankly was not a sports fan
and she was enjoying it, and loved calling to
those kids. As far as athletics, as you all
are well aware, in December we brought in a new
athletic director, Scott Carr, we brought in a
new football coach. And if you had the
opportunity to go to the scrimmage this
Saturday, it's -- the whole thing felt
completely different. You know, we had
probably more people at that scrimmage than we
probably had a lot of the actual football games
last year. As far as panther nation, I spend
time with Scott Carr over at -- facility three
weeks ago, and I think you're going to see --
you're already seeing changes over there as to
the way the facilities look. We're -- we're
pushing hard to make some investments as far as lighting. And then as far as panther-is-ing the hallways and creating that spirit, and that feel, and that, you know, things are different and then it's all about being an FIU panther. So great points. I would encourage you all to get your friends and families to come to the games, to get involved to be part of the activities, because really it is a lot of fun. Now, I'm also pushing Scott to make sure that the activities, you know, how do we make them more friendly for the fans and before the game, after the game, during the game, and look at the details, and I think you're going to see changes on that also. So we're all aligned. And, you know, one of the things that we discussed is to make sure that we bring in a president that understands we're a division 1 school and has a passion for sports, that wants -- and one of the things we talk about on the board, if you have an opportunity to listen, is that whatever we do, we should be relevant in it. I'm not saying that we have to win every game, although I would like to, but at a minimum we should be relevant. And so as long
as I'm involved in this, I will push for that, and there's a lot of other people pushing for the same, but I don't want to speak for anyone else. So thank you.

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

MR. MESIDOR: Yes. My name is Wrendly Mesidor. I'm Haitian, like from Haiti. So one of the things -- about like safety on campus because there was that one time last year and a lot of student -- the student gets concerned about it, like a football player get to the campus and then something that -- and a lot of the student are concerned about like they were concerned about the situation. Like I want a president who actually don't just sweep anything under the rug, but actually take initiative, like take action, like make sure our campus is safe for the student. Even me, myself as a student, I want to be able to be on campus, be safe. I actually spend more time on campus than actually I spend at my house. I
don't want to be on campus and then I expect something is going to happen, like something is not going to be safe. I should be able to come to campus and then feel like I'm at home, like go safety, and that should be for all the other student body, like they -- especially we have a big population of females. They should not be able to walk around campus and feeling unsafe. So we want a president which they're going to be strong in leadership and make sure we have a safe campus.

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

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

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

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

    MR. TOVAR: So point well taken. And, again, the next president will be very focused on making sure that every person that is on this campus is safe. Thank you. Thank you.

So I think -- are we close to being done?

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

    MR. TOVAR: I got --

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

    MR. TOVAR: And I appreciate the work -- your team, Sofia, and Ana, and, you know, the work because this -- this takes a lot to put this together, so I appreciate it. We are going to reconvene tomorrow with more listening sessions and -- actually, tomorrow a university wide listening session will take place at 10:00 a.m. to get input from our students, faculty, staff regarding the qualities and
qualifications we want to see in our next president. If you'd like to join that meeting, everybody is welcome. And again, I would encourage you all, there's a list of the 15 members of the search committee and reach out to any one of those individuals with any suggestions, concerns. It's good for multiple people to hear not only the input of the deans, or the faculty, the staff, but you all, the students, because you all are the ones that are living and breathing this, you all are the ones that are here for hopefully what is a life changing experience, and experience that propels you all into your careers. I'm sure you're going to get accepted into the law school, so look forward to seeing you as an attorney. And whatever you alls chosen fields are, I'm sure you're going to do very well. Because what motivates me most out of anything I do all year is attending some of the commencement exercises. It's amazing to see you all as students walking across that stage with that sense of accomplishment, achievement, and those huge smiles. So go out there and accomplish great things. Thank you very much.
Thank you.

MR. FUNK: Thank you very much.

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

THE STATE OF FLORIDA    )
COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE    )

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

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

Dated this 20th day of April, 2022.

____________________________
Daisy L. Amador
Notary Public for the State of Florida
Commission No.: HH175493
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