

1 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
2 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMMUNITY SESSIONS:
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11 COMMUNITY SESSION
12 Wednesday, October 12, 2022
13 Graham Center Ballrooms
14 2:32 p.m. - 3:31 p.m.
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22 Stenographically Reported By:
23 Gina Rodriguez, RPR, CRR
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1 DR. TRESSELL: Good afternoon, everyone.
2 My name is Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my
3 pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the members
4 of our FIU community who are joining us today
5 for the opportunity to meet and hear from the
6 presidential candidate finalist, Dr. Kenneth A.
7 Jessell. R. William Funk & Associates have been
8 selected to assist the university in its search
9 for FIU's sixth president.

10 The firm has conducted more than 430
11 searches for colleges and university presidents
12 and chancellors. Mr. Funk and his team are
13 joining us today through Zoom and have the
14 ability to answer any of your question in
15 regarding to the search process.

16 All of yesterday's and today's sessions
17 have been available to our community to attend
18 in person through Zoom and through WebCast. Our
19 session today will be approximately an hour
20 long. And after the candidate's presentation,
21 we will open it for a Q & A session.

22 Dr. Kenneth is interim president of Florida
23 International University, a position he has held
24 since his appointment on January 21st of 2022.
25 As interim president, Dr. Jessell serves as the

1 chief executive officer for the university and
2 is responsible for academic and educational
3 programs. Research enterprises and economic
4 development, advancement and fundraising,
5 community engagement, intercollegiate athletics,
6 diversity and equity and inclusion initiatives,
7 human resources and facilities management.
8 Prior to his appointment as interim president,
9 Dr. Jessell served as the senior vice president
10 for finance and administration as well as the
11 chief financial officer at FIU from 2009 until
12 2022. In his position, he was responsible for
13 the management and administrations of
14 financials, facility and business service
15 operations at the university.

16 Dr. Jessell is also a professor of finance
17 in the college of business administration here
18 at FIU. It is my pleasure to introduce you to
19 Dr. Jessell.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 DR. JESSELL: Thank you, Sofia, for your
22 kind introduction, and thank you for being here
23 in person as well as virtually. It is so much
24 of an honor for me to be here with you today to
25 talk about my candidacy for the sixth president

1 of FIU.

2 As most of you know, I was not intending to
3 be a candidate for the permanent position of
4 president; however, sometimes our plans change
5 and something that was never dreamed of presents
6 itself as a dream come true. And over the past
7 nine months as interim president, I have learned
8 to love FIU more than I could have ever
9 imagined, and I have found both the
10 opportunities and the challenges of the position
11 to be more rewarding than any of my other
12 positions over a 39-year career.

13 I have been rewarded professionally more
14 than I thought possible. And while I have been
15 at FIU for 13 years, for some of you this may be
16 the first time that we have interacted in person
17 or virtually, so let me tell you a few things
18 about Ken Jessell. I was born and reared in
19 Fort Lauderdale, Florida. And except for the
20 time that I spent at Florida State University as
21 an undergraduate student earning a bachelor of
22 science degree in political science and a
23 graduate student earning an MBA in finance and a
24 Ph.D. in finance, I have lived in South Florida.
25 For many years, almost all of those years it was

1 in Broward County. And since 2009, I have been
2 a proud resident of Miami-Dade County.

3 I am a product of Broward County's K-12
4 public schools, and I am a proud graduate of
5 Fort Lauderdale High School, the flying elves.
6 I'm a first-generation student, and I have a
7 wonderful support structure with my family. I
8 have my wife, Lori, and in December we will be
9 married for 46 years. I have a son, John; a
10 daughter, Amanda; a son-in-law, Jeffrey; and an
11 amazing 18-month-old grandson, James. There is
12 nothing better than being a grandparent. And my
13 mom is still here. She will be 93 in about
14 three weeks.

15 So even though I haven't been a global
16 traveler, as you can tell, I've really never
17 spent much time out of the State of Florida or
18 outside of South Florida, I have had a very
19 exciting and enriched career for 26 years at FAU
20 and now 13 years here at FIU. So, 39 years in
21 higher education and 39 years doing the things
22 that matter most, the things that are most
23 important to me. Being in a university
24 environment where we do great things in
25 advancing knowledge and training and preparing

1 our students for the opportunities they will be
2 facing in the years ahead.

3 I would now like to spend a little time
4 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on
5 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its
6 sixth president. The first is student success.
7 And this is an amazing part of the job and one
8 of the most rewarding parts of the job. As a
9 national urban public research university, FIU
10 will continue to invest in our students and
11 their academic and career successes. Our FIU
12 faculty must be not only excellent scholars, but
13 also proficient in evidence-based teaching
14 practices. We embrace our faculty who bring
15 path-breaking research into the classroom as
16 part of evidence-based and inclusive teaching.
17 Our culture of teaching excellence facilitates
18 learning so our students are critical thinkers
19 who can take what they have learned in the
20 classroom or in the lab and apply their
21 knowledge to solving problems.

22 We must continue to innovate our curriculum
23 so it is aligned with career needs and to adopt
24 different designs and methods for learning that
25 are more meaningful for today's 21st century

1 learners, including experiential learning,
2 competency-based learning and
3 micro-credentialing. Our system of shared
4 governance and collegial discussions and
5 cooperation are more important now than ever
6 before in keeping our curriculum relevant.

7 FIU continues to be a leader in innovation.
8 Our global learning for global citizenship, QEP
9 that we adopted in 2010 is successful because we
10 know the value proposition of our students
11 understanding both culture and cultures within a
12 global framework. In our 2021 QEP, critical
13 skills for the 21st century, focuses on student
14 attainment of skills related to artificial
15 intelligence data and emotional intelligence
16 through micro-credentialing courses. However,
17 we are already seeing the expansion of A.I. and
18 E.I. throughout our curriculum. I cannot think
19 of a single program that does not have
20 significant A.I. and E.I. applications and
21 wording opportunities and these skills translate
22 into jobs, jobs that are so important for our
23 knowledge-based economy of today.

24 And we will continue at FIU to be
25 accountable to our stakeholders and measure our

1 progress and performance in educating our
2 students, including retention and graduation
3 rates, employment and strategic degrees, as well
4 as other key metrics related to research and
5 access.

6 FIU's keen focus on performance has been
7 the primary reason we have excelled in both
8 state and national rankings as well as why we
9 have received significant incremental state
10 performance funding and philanthropic funding,
11 such as the \$40 million MacKenzie Scott gift
12 that we received last year.

13 And I am committed to our goal, our
14 university goal of achieving Top 50 university
15 in U.S. News & World Report rankings in just
16 three years. We are in the fastest rising
17 university in U.S. News public rankings in the
18 last ten years. We are up 62 spots and are now
19 ranked Number 72 of all public universities in
20 the country. And I know it gets harder and
21 harder to increase in the rankings as we rise in
22 the rankings, but I know that we can get there
23 with the right focus and the right investments.

24 Indeed, we have already achieved many
25 Top 50 rankings in the past few years, including

1 those focusing on economic mobility, return on
2 investment, innovation, and research expenditure
3 growth. FIU will remain committed to
4 maintaining our focus on access by providing
5 educational opportunities to our Pell-eligible
6 students. Our students with the greatest
7 financial need, almost 50 percent of our
8 students and ensuring that they graduate as
9 quickly as our non-Pell students.

10 We all know an FIU education is not
11 restricted to students with high financial
12 resources and our Number 4 ranking in social
13 mobility by U.S. News and Number 32 ranking in
14 Washington Monthly reflect our commitment to
15 improving the lives of our students, their
16 families and our community. We are committed to
17 improving these impressive rankings even further
18 in the years ahead.

19 Second, I would like to talk about research
20 excellence. FIU is an R1 public research
21 university and is in the Top 3 percent in
22 research production of all universities and
23 colleges in the country. And I remain committed
24 to the research enterprise of our university and
25 the planned investment of resources to expand

1 research opportunities. Research is critical to
2 expanding knowledge, developing innovative
3 solutions to problems and gaining a better
4 understanding of the complex world we live in.
5 Our research expenditures have surpassed
6 \$245 million, and we are in the Top 10 of
7 research expenditure growth of R1 public
8 universities over the past ten years, and we are
9 poised to hit the \$400 million mark by 2025.
10 And we already exceed the research expenditures
11 required for preeminent research university
12 designation by the Florida Board of Governors.

13 Quality research requires investments, and
14 I believe the greatest opportunities for
15 expanded external research funding at FIU are in
16 the areas where we have already achieved a
17 competitive advantage through established
18 infrastructure and nationally and
19 internationally recognized and acclaimed
20 academic and research programs such as those in
21 environment and health.

22 This is especially true when we focus on
23 interdisciplinary research that involves most,
24 if not all, academic programs at FIU. For
25 example, environmental resilience covers

1 everything from sea level rise, ecosystems,
2 saltwater intrusion and water quality, extreme
3 weather events and building mitigation to name
4 just a few.

5 Environmental research will include the
6 sciences, architectural design, business,
7 education, sociology, health, forensic science,
8 engineering, construction, global affairs,
9 technology and computer science, law and health,
10 as well as main other disciplines, and I believe
11 that this focus on interdisciplinary research
12 will enable us to maximize the opportunities for
13 grant awards and research that will solve global
14 problems.

15 We know, too, that industry partnerships
16 are critical to both basic and applied research.
17 We will need industry at the table to solve the
18 challenging problems we, as a community, nation,
19 and world are facing.

20 The third is sustainable resources. FIU
21 must have sustainable and sufficient human,
22 physical and financial resources to fulfill our
23 mission of outstanding teaching, research
24 excellence and community engagement. The
25 recruitment and retention of our best faculty

1 and staff are my highest priorities. I
2 understand the difficulties of current market
3 conditions, both economically and human
4 capital-wise. It is hard to find a talent that
5 we need, and we are losing great talent day in
6 and day out.

7 Our team proposed and the FIU Board of
8 Trustees approved last month a \$60.7 million
9 legislative budget request for Top 50
10 operational support and this request was also
11 submitted to the Florida Board of Governors.
12 Included in this request is almost \$26 million
13 to retain our outstanding faculty and staff who
14 have demonstrated sustained exceptional
15 performance and commitment of quality teaching,
16 student success and research.

17 Also included is \$15 million in scholarship
18 support in students, 5 million for hiring
19 additional faculty in areas of strategic
20 importance and in areas where we know we need to
21 decrease the student-to-faculty ratios. And
22 there's \$12.5 million for investments in
23 technology to improve operational efficiencies
24 and cover recurring costs. I will advocate to
25 the Board of Governors and legislative

1 leadership for these additional funds to support
2 FIU, and I have already done so.

3 Additionally, I will advocate for
4 additional funding to achieve a level of funding
5 for FIU that is fair and equitable compared to
6 the funding received by our sister institutions
7 in Florida. And you have my commitment that I
8 will stay focused on FIU's strategic priorities
9 and not take on new initiatives that are not
10 strategic and that oftentimes dilute the scarce
11 resources we already have. I will be asking the
12 question, "What is the ROI on this project?"
13 every time. This question, by the way, is in my
14 DNA. I will also work tirelessly on expanding
15 our sources of revenues, particularly
16 philanthropy, net auxiliary revenues and
17 external grant funding and find ways to provide
18 high-quality administrative support services and
19 achieve cost savings through shared services,
20 including human resources, information
21 technology, business and financial services and
22 research administration.

23 Additionally, I have already asked the FIU
24 foundation to prioritize student scholarship
25 funding in their annual development goals and to

1 focus on gifts that meet strategic priorities of
2 FIU and advance our mission as part of their
3 annual plan.

4 Fourth is university affinity and
5 engagement. Declining college enrollments
6 nationwide have required increased efforts on
7 retaining and graduating every student we admit.
8 We understand better than ever before that we
9 must do a better job of ensuring that our
10 students are successful in college and that the
11 cost of losing a student is significantly more
12 than the cost of recruiting one.

13 Every student we bring in, we want to
14 graduate. Students who are engaged with their
15 university through student clubs and
16 organizations, Model UN, Student Ambassadors,
17 Greek Life, Athletics, Marching Band, Panther
18 Camp, and the dozens of other student groups we
19 have at FIU typically achieve greater gains in
20 learning, are more staffed with their college
21 experiences, experience stronger mental health
22 and well-being, feel more prepared for life
23 after college and are more likely to promote
24 their institution and to give back financially
25 to their alma mater at higher rates once they

1 graduate. And this engagement translates to
2 higher retention and higher graduation rates for
3 our students, which improve our metrics and our
4 rankings.

5 You may have observed firsthand this
6 affinity over homecoming week, particularly on
7 Saturday where it was standing room only on our
8 housing promenades and plazas. It was shoulder
9 to shoulder, and the excitement was everywhere,
10 and these benefits are multiplied when we create
11 and engage faculty and staff along with our
12 students where mentoring, collegial discussions
13 and encouragement take place and where ideas for
14 research and innovation emerge throughout our
15 great halls, in our offices, in our Wolfe and
16 Graham Centers, in our food courts, on our
17 plazas and lawns and on Biscayne Bay.

18 This affinity also translates to stronger
19 alumni engagement. The experiences of our
20 students while they are here will define how
21 active and supportive our alumni are after they
22 graduate. Alumni give back in many ways. They
23 provide mentoring and internship opportunities
24 for our current students and help improve job
25 placement rates once our students graduate and

1 they help with admissions by serving as
2 ambassadors and telling FIU's promising story of
3 hope and achievement. It is a source of immense
4 pride for Panthers who hire other Panthers.
5 They know the quality of the education our
6 students receive, they know the value
7 proposition of an FIU degree, and I know you do
8 as well.

9 Engaged alumni also support FIU
10 financially. Our alums are among the top donors
11 to FIU, and we have almost 300,000 alumni and
12 most of them are in South Florida, right in our
13 own backyard. Imagine the impact of their
14 advocacy on FIU, how their advocacy can promote
15 our outstanding teaching and our outstanding
16 research and our outstanding community support.

17 And, finally, we need to stay engaged with
18 our community. Our community and FIU are better
19 off when our students, faculty and staff
20 collaborate with our larger community. We can
21 enrich the lives of our residents through health
22 and civic partnerships, service and research,
23 and we know the community will reciprocate by
24 supporting FIU.

25 Indeed, many of the largest gifts to FIU

1 are from members of our community who were not
2 FIU alumni, benefactors who believe in FIU and
3 its mission and believe in our students. Let's
4 face it. We are a Panther family and a family
5 community, and we work better together.

6 We will have a greater affinity for FIU as
7 an engaged community of students, faculty and
8 staff, just like our alma mater says: "Every
9 scholar side by side."

10 So where does this take us? We can be
11 proud, extremely proud of what FIU has
12 accomplished over the past 50 years, starting on
13 an abandoned airfield, opening to the largest
14 enrollment of any educational institution at
15 that time, 5,667 upper division and master
16 students. And now, today, we are educating over
17 56,000 students, achieving \$246 million in
18 research expenditures, being the number one
19 producer of degrees to Hispanics, being a Top 10
20 producer of baccalaureate degrees to
21 African-Americans and achieving national
22 rankings typically reserved for much older
23 universities.

24 FIU has always had lofty goals and high
25 expectations and these have always been

1 exceeded, and we will continue with this
2 tradition during our next 50 years. Our
3 successes speak for themselves, and they are
4 speaking in a loud voice. And yet the best is
5 yet to come. We will continue to focus on
6 student success and research excellence. We
7 will continue to produce great leaders,
8 teachers, researchers, scientists, healthcare
9 providers, lawyers, innovators, and
10 entrepreneurs, and I believe together as a
11 Panther family, we have the opportunity to be
12 the world leader in solving the biggest problems
13 facing society today: The health of its people
14 and the environment we live in.

15 Thank you, again, for being here. Thank
16 you for allowing me the opportunity to be with
17 you and to present my priorities.

18 And now I think, Sofia, we go into the
19 Q & A session. Thank you.

20 (APPLAUSE)

21 DR. TRESSELL: So thank you all for joining
22 us in person through our WebCast, as well as
23 through Zoom. I am happy to announce that we
24 have had over a thousand members of our FIU
25 community join us over all of our sessions,

1 today as well as yesterday. And we are really
2 excited to have this Q & A session so that you
3 can ask your questions of our finalist. I would
4 also like to share that we do have our search
5 firm available with us today through Zoom in
6 case anyone has questions regarding our search
7 process specifically. Mr. Bill Funk will be
8 able to answer those questions directly.

9 Please feel free to approach the microphone
10 if you have any questions. We have also
11 collected some questions as we prepared for
12 today's session, and I will be reading those.
13 And anybody who is joining us through Zoom, you
14 can ask questions through that platform, and I
15 will be reading them here.

16 SPEAKER: Hi, Dr. Jessell. My name is
17 Dylan. I am the president of ROSC on campus,
18 and I'm also --

19 DR. JESSELL: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear
20 you.

21 SPEAKER: I'm the president of ROSC which
22 is the Registered Student Organizations, and I'm
23 also a senator for CASE.

24 So I am not sure if you know, but we've
25 been working on a time capsule that we would

1 like to bury at the end of the year. So my
2 question is: If you had the opportunity to put
3 something in it to mark FIU history, what do you
4 think you would do?

5 DR. JESSELL: Boy, that's a -- that is a
6 tough question because there are, like, a
7 thousand things that I would put in there, but
8 if I had to select only one, I would take the
9 recent one-pager, front and back, that talks
10 about FIU's successes.

11 I addressed several, but not all in my
12 conversation today, and I think having that in
13 the time capsule so people could see what we
14 achieved in our first 50 years and that really
15 represents a culmination of 50 years of effort.
16 That didn't happen overnight, 50 years of
17 effort. And then when we get to 100 hundred,
18 when I and a few others here will be opening it
19 and comparing it to the standards and
20 accomplishments of the current day, I think that
21 would be amazing.

22 So, if that -- if I could only select one
23 thing, that would be it.

24 SPEAKER: Awesome. Thank you so much.

25 DR. JESSELL: And if you need something to

1 put in, I can get you that.

2 SPEAKER: This question is for our FIU
3 Presidential Search Committee who recently
4 approved a range of compensation for FIU's next
5 president. The last university president had an
6 approximate base salary of \$502,000. How are we
7 to justify the proposal of a base salary
8 increase range between 600- to 700,000 for FIU's
9 next president when many full-time employees are
10 still making less than \$60,000 and have not had
11 an increase of over \$10,000 in many years. And
12 unlike leadership, most likely will not be
13 getting additional compensation in the form of a
14 potential bonus or other benefits?

15 DR. TRESSELL: We do have a member of the
16 committee here with us, Trustee Tovar.

17 TRUSTEE TOVAR: Listen, I think that's a --
18 it's an interesting question, but it's two
19 different things. When we set out to look at
20 the compensation for Dr. Jessell, what we wanted
21 to do is take into consideration what is fair
22 and what is just. We looked at many
23 universities throughout the country, and we
24 looked at the state system. And really if you
25 look at that range that we're in, it's not one

1 of the top paid university presidents. I
2 believe it's Number 5. And so you look at the
3 complexity of the job. You say there's 57-,
4 58,000 students, and I say it's like running a
5 mini city because not only do you have the
6 students, you have the faculty, staff, you have
7 the multiple campuses, you've constantly got
8 ongoing projects going on.

9 So, we want to be fair, we want to
10 compensate Dr. Jessell for what the type of job
11 that it is. And, frankly, if it was in private
12 industry, I would tell you he'd probably be
13 getting paid ten times more. Now, when you look
14 at the faculty and staff compensation, we're
15 cognizant of that, too. And, so, unfortunately,
16 we're in a system where I wish I could wave a
17 magic wand and say, "There's more funds." We do
18 have a budget, and we constantly sit here and
19 try to figure out how we divide the pie. We're
20 constantly asking in different places the
21 legislature as far as fundraising and everything
22 else and then we talk about the lack of
23 increase, but I think there's a little bit of
24 loss there because there has been increases as
25 we've had carry forward funds. We've used a lot

1 of those carry forward funds to either give
2 people raises where we're trying to retain and
3 we're trying to, again, compensate people
4 fairly. There's been other instances where
5 we've taken these carry forward funds and said,
6 "We can't make a commitment long-term," but then
7 we do bonus structures to make sure that people
8 do have as fair a wage as we could make it.

9 So, again, it's a balancing act, and I
10 think regardless of whether we paid Dr. Jessell
11 a little bit less, it wouldn't be like we could
12 resolve the entire issue or even a good portion
13 of it. So, it's not -- it's not one or the
14 other, it's we're addressing the compensation
15 issue for the president coming in. And, again,
16 I think it's fair and it's just, but it's a
17 compensation that also takes into consideration,
18 as I said previously, that part of the job of
19 the president is a willingness and a desire to
20 serve.

21 So, did I answer the question, Sofia?

22 DR. TRESSELL: You did.

23 TRUSTEE TOVAR: Okay. Thank you very much,
24 thank you.

25 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you so much for

1 providing a little bit of insight as to that
2 process.

3 (APPLAUSE)

4 DR. JESSELL: Would you like me to --

5 DR. TRESSELL: Yes, please.

6 DR. JESSELL: Because there are really two
7 parts of the question. I could not answer the
8 first, but let me talk about the second part of
9 that is, you know, what we're trying to do.

10 As I mentioned, the retention of our
11 outstanding faculty and staff is a very, very
12 top priority, not only for me but for the
13 administration and the Board of Trustees. In
14 addition to the \$60 million advocacy, which
15 included 20-something million dollars for salary
16 components for our faculty and staff, we are
17 also going to be advocating the legislature to
18 be included in the salary increases that were
19 awarded to all state employees this past year.
20 Many of you may know that all state employees
21 received a 5.28 percent salary increase, but all
22 university employees were excluded from that,
23 that award. And we were all, you know, saddened
24 when we read the allocation document to find
25 that university employees were not included.

1 So, that's going to be another one of our
2 advocacy positions.

3 Secondly, we're looking at opportunities to
4 restructure a little bit and redistribute some
5 of those savings we have in restructuring back
6 to our employees. Our thinking is we may have
7 one or two less employees, but we can get
8 greater productivity if we are fairly
9 compensating those other employees. So, they're
10 willing to work a little bit more in return for
11 a just level of compensation. And we've done,
12 you know, several of those already. We did some
13 even before the budget construction this year,
14 and that's why we were able to get by with the
15 balance budget doing only 1.5 percent reduction
16 as compared to 2.5 percent, you know, percent
17 reduction. So, that makes it a lot better for
18 us as an institution.

19 But we do get it. We are working very,
20 very hard. We were able to do a little bit for
21 the faculty, you know, this year, in terms of a
22 recurring adjustment, not nearly sufficient, not
23 what anybody wanted for our lowest paid
24 employees. We did a \$3,000 bonus. That
25 translates to about a 10 percent salary

1 adjustment for the one year. And we have to
2 find ways of making sure that amount, you know,
3 continues on a recurring basis. So, we do
4 recognize the issues, we are committed to
5 retaining our faculty and staff by rewarding our
6 faculty and staff.

7 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you.

8 We do have a question from a member of our
9 audience.

10 SPEAKER: Yes, hi, good afternoon. Trustee
11 Tovar, I wish I would have known I had to dress
12 up today, I would have presented myself a little
13 bit better, but I know that we are in good hands
14 with you at the helm of this Presidential Search
15 Committee. I know you're Cuban born and raised
16 in Puerto Rico. My wife happens to be
17 Cuban-Puerto Rican, so I understand that we are
18 in good hands, boy. Let me tell you. A.J.
19 Meyer, Class of '09 and '11, two-time offender
20 of FIU as well as former student body president
21 and had the opportunity to be on the Board of
22 Trustees when we selected our fifth president
23 and now have the honor of being a friend to
24 hopefully our future sixth president. So I come
25 as a member of the FIU community that bleeds

1 blue and gold as a former student body president
2 in full support for your not only nomination but
3 selection as our sixth president of Florida
4 International University.

5 My question really resides around your
6 creativity. When I was involved in the Board of
7 Governors and you were at Florida Atlantic
8 University, you brought forth some of the most
9 creative P3 opportunities that the state had
10 ever seen in a state university system at the
11 time. And as we talk about revenue generation
12 and other challenges that we have and
13 understanding the limitations with respect to
14 the Board of Governor's rules and regulations,
15 are there initiatives that you're exploring to
16 bring back that creativity and that creative
17 side of yourself to really explore unique areas
18 to not just grow the university, but to create
19 additional revenue for the university? Thank
20 you.

21 DR. JESSELL: Absolutely. We have to look
22 at, you know, the private sector. We have to
23 look at industry and having public private
24 partnerships really can make a big difference in
25 achieving some of our goals. We did do the

1 public-private partnership housing at BBC, we
2 did the Royal Caribbean performance production
3 and rehearsal facility at BBC. We entered into
4 an arrangement with a private developer in a P3
5 project for I-75. I know we have a lot more
6 work to do there, and that is something that is
7 on our radar screen. And we are going to be
8 looking at even additional opportunities. You
9 know we have the hotel conference center and
10 alumni center. Sadly, because of Covid and some
11 of the market conditions of today with higher
12 materials and labor costs as well as higher
13 financing rates, it's been a little bit of a
14 challenge to get that project moving, but we are
15 still optimistic that that will happen and then
16 that will give us the opportunity to do even
17 more activities that will contribute to what is
18 very important to me, the fourth thing that I
19 described, and that is engagement with the
20 university, the affinity with the university.
21 We can do a lot more with conferences right here
22 on campus. We can support families as they're
23 coming for commencements and graduation
24 ceremonies and convocation ceremonies, athletic
25 events and the like. We are looking at that.

1 We might have another one in terms of the
2 aquatic center. We just got in the last two
3 weeks the consultant's report because we think
4 that might be an opportunity to do something
5 grand, not only for FIU but for the community by
6 having a world-class aquatic center right here
7 on campus, an aquatic center that will serve not
8 only our competitive athletes in the swimming
9 program but our students at FIU as well as
10 members of the community, and that could help
11 them develop an affinity toward FIU. I know
12 that your two children are already proud
13 Panthers, and it's because you're bringing them
14 to football games and many other events, and
15 that's how that cycle goes. And those types of
16 opportunities we absolutely need to continue
17 looking at.

18 Many of the things that we did, you know,
19 after we did them, the regulations changed, made
20 it a little bit harder even for the ones that we
21 did, which I thought were very, very sound
22 projects, it took a little bit of time to get it
23 through the Board of Governors, but at the end
24 of the day we did. I think we just have to have
25 a quality program, one that makes sense

1 financially and programmatically and one that
2 will really help elevate the university.

3 SPEAKER: Dr. Jessell, first of all, thank
4 you for all that you have done and continue to
5 do and will do for our FIU. My question is in
6 relation to the FIU foundation. As you are
7 aware, FIU supports the foundation each year
8 with certain operating expenses. This support
9 is key to the success of the foundation in its
10 ability to help move FIU forward with
11 scholarships, professorships, research and
12 capital projects. How will you, as president,
13 continue to support FIU's foundation efforts and
14 help cover certain operating expenses to ensure
15 continued success?

16 DR. JESSELL: Our foundation has been
17 amazing for the university. In fact, it was
18 even here before the university was here. They
19 did a lot of the initial fundraising. It is
20 definitely a value provision, but I think every
21 activity, every program, every business that we
22 have at the university has to be evaluated on a
23 regular basis, so this is how I approach even
24 the foundation. So, yes, we do provide funding
25 for foundation and development activities. And

1 the reality is we would need to be providing
2 that level of -- of that funding even if we
3 didn't have a foundation. We don't want to
4 ignore, which I talked about earlier, the major
5 impact that our alumni have. So, even without a
6 foundation, we would have to spend money just to
7 cultivate those relationships with alumni.

8 The important thing is that as we look at
9 the investments, that we also look at what is
10 the value proposition, what is coming back in,
11 in a positive net present value; and what would
12 be appropriate for the investments that we are
13 making? There are many, many good benchmarks
14 out there. So if we spend a dollar, can we
15 bring in on a net present value basis two
16 dollars or three dollars or four dollars or five
17 dollars? What is the best practice? What do we
18 see out there in terms of comparable foundations
19 with comparable types of institutions and what
20 they're bringing in? So, I am very committed to
21 working with the foundation to make sure that we
22 have the right value proposition in place.

23 I do want us to be more focused, I think
24 that it will help us in raising more dollars as
25 well as reduce our operating expenses. As I've

1 said in the presentation, I've already
2 challenged the foundation in terms of
3 scholarship funding. Scholarship is cash
4 funding that our students need, and the more
5 students we can graduate, the more they can be
6 giving back to the university. They recognize
7 the value proposition, and I know they are
8 committed to FIU and they want to continue with
9 that tradition.

10 And, secondly, I want to be laser-focused
11 on the things that we're going after. And even
12 with -- even within the university, I mean, time
13 and time again, and these are the questions that
14 our Board of Trustees is at, yeah, it's nice to
15 bring in, you know, 5 million, but you're also
16 going to have \$5 million in expenditures. So,
17 it really at a net basis doesn't help us move up
18 the bar, if it's not strategic. If it is
19 strategic, it makes a lot of sense. If this is
20 something that we really want to do, it is
21 really strategic for the university, we
22 absolutely should be doing it. But if it really
23 doesn't help us in the rankings, if it really
24 isn't strategic, why take the time and effort to
25 spend \$5 million when you're getting \$5 million

1 back? Because that is taking away to the things
2 that are very, very important.

3 I will say that our foundation volunteers
4 are second to none. I am honored and privileged
5 to work with them. I am honored and privileged
6 to work with some of the best alumni people that
7 we have as part of that process, and I will
8 continue to work very, very closely with the
9 alumni and development teams at the university.

10 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you for sharing that.
11 We have a question from -- we have a question
12 from a member of our audience.

13 SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. President. My
14 name is Alex Rubido. I'm a former student body
15 president, and I had the honor of serving while
16 you took office last year.

17 My question is related directly towards
18 student affinity. You talk about how important
19 student affinity is. We're a young university,
20 just turned 50, we're celebrating and student
21 affinity runs the institution. It gets students
22 involved, it continues their engagement after
23 they graduate, encourages future donation.

24 Can you talk a little bit about your
25 specific plans on increasing student affinity

1 and Panther pride at FIU?

2 DR. JESSELL: Yeah. So, number one, I want
3 to meet with so many of our student groups and
4 have conversations with them. I want to get
5 them excited. Many of you know, I was a member
6 of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, the FIJIs. I'm a
7 strong supporter of the Greek system. This past
8 Friday night I was the key speaker at the
9 FIJI -- it's called pig dinner because they
10 roast a pig and it goes back to 1882 University
11 of California at Berkeley. And I did that with
12 a keen focus on affinity and responsibility.
13 I -- they'll be coming back in a year and a
14 half, and I wanted to get the alumni excited
15 about supporting the fraternity as it comes
16 back. And I consider all of the Greek brothers
17 and sisters as my personal brothers and sisters.

18 So, during the events over the weekend, I
19 think I went to almost every fraternity,
20 sorority that had a tent over there in the
21 promenade. And I will do that with the band, I
22 will do that with our pride group, I will do
23 that with all of our college groups, just to
24 show that I value what they're doing and
25 recognize how important they are to the success

1 of our institution and the success of their
2 fellow students. As I mentioned, students that
3 are engaged do better in college. They have a
4 better learning experience, they retain better,
5 they graduate better, they give back more, and
6 that helps us improve the cycle going forward.

7 So, I think that's probably the most
8 important thing that I can do is meet with the
9 groups and tell them how much I love them and
10 how important they are to the university. And
11 whenever we can, we will advocate for them and
12 help fund them, et cetera.

13 SPEAKER: Thank you, and, once again,
14 congratulations on your nomination.

15 DR. JESSELL: Thank you.

16 DR. TRESSELL: The floor is yours.

17 SPEAKER: Thank you. Good afternoon, sir,
18 my name is Myrna Sonora. I have been a member
19 of the president's advisory council since 2015.
20 I'm very happy to be here and to have this
21 opportunity. I also am the regional vice
22 president for an organization called "Prospera,"
23 an economic development agency that helps
24 minority businesses start, sustain and grow. We
25 are also partners with programs like the SBDC at

1 FIU and the startup FIU program. Just to name
2 two of many, we also work with the procurement
3 folks. But, with regards to the SBDC at FIU in
4 particular, we were successful in our bid for
5 the SBA Navigator grant that was, I hope you
6 understand, in our sector, incredibly important
7 because only two grants were received in the
8 southeast, both of them in Florida, one at your
9 university. So, kudos to the Navigator folks
10 that are doing that work.

11 And I think to your point with regards to
12 bringing the community into the campus and to
13 make them more a part of what's happening, I'm
14 interested in getting a sense for your support
15 for entrepreneurship initiatives like the ones
16 that you have had so far that have been so
17 successful.

18 DR. JESSELL: Absolutely. And when I
19 talked about engaging with the community, I
20 really -- I really meant it. We are going to be
21 a better institution by having that community
22 involvement. I want to have every student have
23 the opportunity for an internship every semester
24 or every year, so it's not weighted at the very,
25 very back end, because I think that enriches

1 their academic experience and also asks the
2 types of questions and do the type of work that
3 will get ready for those types of careers and
4 jobs.

5 We do have excellent programs already in
6 place. You mentioned the startup, you mentioned
7 SBDC. So many of our businesses in
8 South Florida are really the small businesses
9 and these are many of the types of businesses
10 that our students will be going into and
11 creating on their own. So without that
12 partnership, we will not be as successful in the
13 community, so we definitely want to do a lot
14 more there.

15 SPEAKER: And to support that point, just
16 as a final observation, 70 percent of small
17 business -- of business licenses issued in
18 Miami-Dade County are the business that have
19 four or less employees. So, it is a critical --
20 it's mode of the economy, but it's a critical
21 mode of the families, so I'm delighted to see
22 that you want to continue to support those
23 initiatives.

24 And one final shout out to the folks in
25 your external affairs team, they are practicing

1 what you preach. We will be hosting our staff
2 retreat here on campus on Friday and all 40
3 employees from all over the United States will
4 be here, so thank you for hosting us and thank
5 you, guys, for finding the space.

6 So, congratulations, we'll be watching you.
7 I am going to hold you to your word.

8 DR. JESSELL: You can hold me to my word.

9 SPEAKER: Thank you.

10 DR. TRESSELL: We have another question
11 from a member of the live audience.

12 SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Krista Schmidt.
13 I am currently a law student here at FIU Law.
14 So I just wanted to hear a little bit about how
15 you're going to support the law school, the med
16 school and the graduate programs.

17 DR. JESSELL: So, the med school and the
18 law school and the graduate programs, you know,
19 are very, very important for any university, but
20 particularly for FIU. First, it shows how
21 persistent we are to have both a medical school
22 and a law school at a university that's only 50
23 years old is truly amazing.

24 Secondly, you heard in my discussion, my
25 perception -- and my commitment to the health

1 initiatives. This is an area where we can
2 really excel as an institution in terms of
3 research and collaborative research. It is a
4 medical school, but it's also all of our health
5 components, right? Also, public health,
6 nursing, the sciences, it all -- it all blends
7 together, and that makes us a stronger
8 institution that will help us in terms of
9 additional dollars coming into the university.

10 So, our med school, as young as it is, is
11 already doing great things. Our law school,
12 we're very, very supportive of the law school,
13 and the law school has earned that support. As
14 young as it is, look at what we're able to
15 accomplish. We have had consistently the
16 highest bar passage rate of any of the
17 universities in the State of Florida, and we
18 have universities in Florida with law schools
19 that are well over a hundred years old and we
20 beat them time and time again. So, that level
21 of support is very, very important.

22 All of our graduate programs, we're not
23 going to get the right diversity, we're not
24 going to get the right talent that we need in
25 the professoriat at our institutions without

1 having strong researchers in place that can step
2 up to the plate and move on. We also can't have
3 the great levels of scientific achievements that
4 we can achieve as a nation without having
5 trained scientists, trained researchers and
6 trained innovators, not just in the lab, but
7 even in terms of the research that they're doing
8 in their offices. I mean, just think about
9 option pricing and derivatives, that didn't
10 happen automatically, and those things were
11 really were just coming out when I was in school
12 and now that's almost a dinosaur in terms of the
13 financial markets. And, so, those things really
14 contribute to the value of society.

15 SPEAKER: Thank you for your support.

16 DR. TRESSELL: We do have time for just a
17 couple of more questions before, unfortunately,
18 we do have to finish our last session.

19 Please, the floor is yours.

20 SPEAKER: Hi, how are you. My name is
21 Zachary Stangl and a proud brother of Phi Delta
22 Theta and also a member of Student Government.
23 The question was asked on how you would grow
24 institutional affinity. However, as a Greek
25 myself, I've seen firsthand the effect that

1 Greek life has on institutional affinity. But
2 with a population of Greeks more or less a
3 thousand students, you know, in a university
4 with well over 55,000, how would you grow the
5 Greek community here at FIU, understanding that
6 you have -- that you have -- we have your full
7 support?

8 DR. JESSELL: Yes, so, it's not a large
9 number and sadly it is a smaller number than
10 when I started FIU in 2009; is that correct?

11 SPEAKER: (Nodding head.)

12 DR. JESSELL: Which tells me that we have
13 not been very Greek friendly, and I am committed
14 to being very Greek friendly. My first week, I
15 was already meeting with our Greek advisor
16 leadership team to talk about things that we can
17 do differently. Now, it also comes with
18 responsibility, and we know that the problems of
19 Greeks are not unique to Greeks, but it turns
20 out when there's a problem in any of our Greek
21 chapters, that's what comes up in the headlines.
22 It's a Greek chapter.

23 And, so, as I said on Friday night, I
24 really hammered that aspect of responsibility,
25 so that's first and foremost. But it's not just

1 to avoid a problem, it is to encourage the level
2 of Greek growth and development that we want and
3 need. We need the graduates and the current
4 chapter members to really set the tone, and we
5 set the tone on what's really important, that we
6 are equal on day one of membership, not the
7 archaic pledge periods. That's when we're going
8 to start to see even greater affinity and
9 desirability of the Greek system.

10 Secondly, I want to make sure we have the
11 right infrastructure in place. I believe the
12 team that we have in our Greek leadership group
13 are about the -- they are -- honestly, they are
14 the best that I have ever worked with. I'm
15 hopeful that you agree with that, based upon
16 your work with them.

17 Thirdly, about two months ago, I actually
18 participated in, as a panelist, a Greek forum
19 where we had a lot of Greek members coming in to
20 talk about the opportunities and the challenges.
21 I think that as administrators the more we
22 listen, the more we're going to be able to
23 resolve the complexities of Greek life and
24 expand and grow the Greek life that we want.

25 And then, finally, making sure that we have

1 the right infrastructure in place. When we did
2 the road realignment, Tamiami Hall and that
3 promenade, in my mind, that was like a Greek
4 village. I wanted to have a place where Greeks
5 could congregate, not have them at, like, four
6 different points of the globe, if you will,
7 right? I wanted them to be in an area where
8 they could show collaboratively their enthusiasm
9 and excitement and also help in the recruiting
10 of additional Greek members. So, I think we're
11 starting to do that. I am happy to meet with
12 all of the Greek organizations. I have talked
13 to your brothers and many others, and it really
14 has paid off.

15 I was not only impressed with the number of
16 Greeks that we had on our first game and in our
17 second game, in the tailgating area, but more
18 importantly how they came into the stadium. So,
19 I want to make sure that we're doing the right
20 types of events and we have the right programs
21 that they'll not only attend but stay the entire
22 event.

23 So, you know, I'm with you a hundred
24 percent. As I have told many of you over the
25 years when I meet with you, my closest friends

1 today are my Greek fraternity brothers. The
2 best man at my wedding is a Greek brother. The
3 godfather of my son is a Greek brother, and I
4 can go on and on. There was only one that I was
5 disappointed in one time, that was for my
6 daughter's wedding. I had 14 wives, so the
7 wives of the brothers are as important, but only
8 13 brothers. And he didn't come because he
9 said, "Why did you schedule your daughter's
10 wedding on the FSU-Clemson game?"

11 And I said, "Well, actually, you should be
12 talking to the coach" because a wedding, if
13 you've ever done a wedding, you know you don't
14 just do that in one year, you know it's about
15 two years out. But at least his wife cared.
16 And I have vacationed as a group. I've got a
17 chat here. We're doing a big vacation in March,
18 and I'm still going on. I made that commitment,
19 so I will not be here for two weeks in March to
20 do the river cruise with my fraternity brothers.

21 So count me in to do anything that I can.
22 And if you have ideas, if you say, "Ken, come in
23 and talk to our fraternity, come in and talk to
24 our sorority, come in to a recruiting group," I
25 will be there.

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(APPLAUSE)

DR. TRESSELL: Thank you for your support for the FIU community, and I would like to thank all of you for attending, whether that was in person, through WebCast or through Zoom. Additionally, I would like to thank all of those members of the FIU community that helped make sure that these events today and yesterday were able to be executed in such a manner that is respectful of our process.

Thank you so very much. And if you are interested in either reading the transcripts or watching the videos from any of our six sessions, they will be available on the presidential search website. Thank you, all.

(Community Session concluded at 3:31 p.m.)

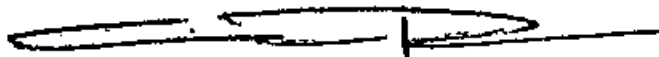
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE

I, GINA RODRIGUEZ, Registered Professional Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

Dated this 14th day of October, 2022.



GINA RODRIGUEZ, RPR, CRR

&	26 5:19 12:12	62 8:18	achieving 8:14
& 2:7,21 8:15	2:32 1:14	7	17:17,21 27:25
18:19 19:2	3	70 37:16	act 23:9
0	3 9:21	700,000 21:8	active 15:21
09 26:19	3,000 25:24	72 8:19	activities 28:17
1	300,000 16:11	75 28:5	30:25
1.5 25:15	3188 46:19	9	activity 30:21
10 10:6 17:19	32 9:13	93 5:13	addition 24:14
25:25	39 4:12 5:20,21	a	additional 12:19
10,000 21:11	3:31 1:14 45:16	a.i. 7:17,20	13:1,4 21:13
100 20:17	4	a.j. 26:18	27:19 28:8 39:9
11 26:19	4 9:12	abandoned 17:13	43:10
12 1:12 5:3	40 8:11 38:2	ability 2:14 30:10	additionally 13:3
12.5 12:22	400 10:9	able 19:8 25:14	13:23 45:6
13 4:15 5:20 44:8	430 2:10	25:20 39:14	addressed 20:11
14 44:6	46 5:9	42:22 45:9	addressing 23:14
14th 46:16	5	absolutely 27:21	adjustment 25:22
15 12:17	5 12:18 22:2	29:16 32:22	26:1
18 5:11	32:15,16,25,25	36:18	administration
1882 34:10	5,667 17:15	academic 3:2	3:10,17 13:22
2	5.28 24:21	6:11 10:20,24	24:13
2.5 25:16	50 8:14,25 9:7	37:1	administrations
20 24:15	12:9 17:12 18:2	access 8:5 9:4	3:13
2009 3:11 5:1	20:14,15,16	acclaimed 10:19	administrative
41:10	33:20 38:22	accomplish 39:15	13:18
2010 7:9	502,000 21:6	accomplished	administrators
2015 35:19	55,000 41:4	17:12	42:21
2021 7:12	56,000 17:17	accomplishments	admissions 16:1
2022 1:12 2:24	57 22:3	20:20	admit 14:7
3:12 46:16	58,000 22:4	accountable 7:25	adopt 6:23
2025 10:9	6	achieve 13:4,19	adopted 7:9
21st 2:24 6:25	60 24:14	14:19 40:4	advance 14:2
7:13	60,000 21:10	achieved 8:24	advancement 3:4
245 10:6	60.7 12:8	10:16 20:14	advancing 5:25
246 17:17	600 21:8	achievement 16:3	advantage 10:17
		achievements	advisor 41:15
		40:3	advisory 35:19

advocacy 16:14 16:14 24:14 25:2 advocate 12:24 13:3 35:11 advocating 24:17 affairs 11:8 37:25 affinity 14:4 15:6 15:18 17:6 28:20 29:11 33:18,19 33:21,25 34:12 40:24 41:1 42:8 african 17:21 afternoon 2:1 26:10 35:17 agency 35:23 ago 42:17 agree 42:15 ahead 6:2 9:18 airfield 17:13 alex 33:14 aligned 6:23 allocation 24:24 allowing 18:16 alma 14:25 17:8 alumni 15:19,21 15:22 16:9,11 17:2 28:10 31:5,7 33:6,9 34:14 alums 16:10 amanda 5:10 amazing 5:11 6:7 20:21 30:17 38:23 ambassadors 14:16 16:2 americans 17:21 amount 26:2	announce 18:23 annual 13:25 14:3 answer 2:14 19:8 23:21 24:7 anybody 19:13 25:23 applause 3:20 18:20 24:3 45:1 applications 7:20 applied 11:16 apply 6:20 appointment 2:24 3:8 approach 19:9 30:23 appropriate 31:12 approved 12:8 21:4 approximate 21:6 approximately 2:19 aquatic 29:2,6,7 archaic 42:7 architectural 11:6 area 39:1 43:7,17 areas 10:16 12:19 12:20 27:17 arrangement 28:4 artificial 7:14 asked 13:23 40:23 asking 13:11 22:20	asks 37:1 aspect 41:24 assist 2:8 associates 2:7 athletes 29:8 athletic 28:24 athletics 3:5 14:17 atlantic 27:7 attainment 7:14 attend 2:17 43:21 attending 45:4 audience 26:9 33:12 38:11 authorized 46:11 automatically 40:10 auxilliary 13:16 available 2:17 19:5 45:14 avoid 42:1 award 24:23 awarded 24:19 awards 11:13 aware 30:7 awesome 20:24	balance 25:15 balancing 23:9 ballrooms 1:13 band 14:17 34:21 bar 32:18 39:16 base 21:6,7 based 6:13,16 7:2 7:23 42:15 basic 11:16 basis 26:3 30:23 31:15 32:17 bay 15:17 bbc 28:1,3 beat 39:20 believe 10:14 11:10 17:2,3 18:10 22:2 42:11 benchmarks 31:13 benefactors 17:2 benefits 15:10 21:14 berkeley 34:11 best 11:25 18:4 31:17 33:6 42:14 44:2 better 5:12 10:3 14:8,9 16:18 17:5 25:17 26:13 35:3 35:4,4,5 36:21 bid 36:4 big 27:24 44:17 biggest 18:12 bill 19:7 biscayne 15:17 bit 22:23 23:11 24:1 25:4,10,20 26:13 28:13
		b	
		baccalaureate 17:20 bachelor 4:21 back 14:24 15:22 20:9 25:5 27:16 31:10 32:6 33:1 34:10,13,16 35:5 36:25 backyard 16:13	

<p>29:20,22 33:24 38:14 bleeds 26:25 blends 39:6 blue 27:1 board 10:12 12:7 12:11,25 24:13 26:21 27:6,14 29:23 32:14 body 26:20 27:1 33:14 bonus 21:14 23:7 25:24 born 4:18 26:15 boy 20:5 26:18 breaking 6:15 bring 6:14 14:13 27:16 31:15 32:15 bringing 29:13 31:20 36:12 brother 40:21 44:2,3 brothers 34:16 34:17 43:13 44:1 44:7,8,20 brought 27:8 broward 5:1,3 budget 12:9 22:18 25:13,15 building 11:3 bury 20:1 business 3:14,17 11:6 13:21 30:21 37:17,17,18 businesses 35:24 37:7,8,9</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">c</p> <p>california 34:11 called 34:9 35:22 camp 14:18 campus 19:17 28:22 29:7 36:12 38:2 campuses 22:7 candidacy 3:25 candidate 1:2 2:6 4:3 candidate's 2:20 capital 12:4 30:12 capsule 19:25 20:13 cared 44:15 career 4:12 5:19 6:11,23 careers 37:3 caribbean 28:2 carry 22:25 23:1 23:5 case 19:6,23 cash 32:3 celebrating 33:20 center 1:13 28:9 28:10 29:2,6,7 centers 15:16 century 6:25 7:13 ceremonies 28:24 28:24 certain 30:8,14 certificate 46:2 certified 46:10 certify 46:11 cetera 35:12</p>	<p>challenge 28:14 challenged 32:2 challenges 4:10 27:12 42:20 challenging 11:18 chancellors 2:12 change 4:4 changed 29:19 chapter 41:22 42:4 chapters 41:21 chat 44:17 chief 3:1,11 children 29:12 citizenship 7:8 city 22:5 civic 16:22 class 26:19 29:6 classroom 6:15 6:20 clemson 44:10 closely 33:8 closest 43:25 clubs 14:15 coach 44:12 cognizant 22:15 collaborate 16:20 collaborative 39:3 collaboratively 43:8 collected 19:11 college 3:17 14:5 14:10,20,23 34:23 35:3 colleges 2:11 9:23</p>	<p>collegial 7:4 15:12 come 4:6 18:5 26:24 44:8,22,23 44:24 comes 34:15 41:17,21 coming 23:15 28:23 31:10 34:13 39:9 40:11 42:19 commencements 28:23 commitment 9:14 12:15 13:7 23:6 38:25 44:18 committed 8:13 9:3,16,23 26:4 31:20 32:8 41:13 committee 21:3 21:16 26:15 community 1:2 1:11 2:4,17 3:5 9:16 11:18,24 16:16,18,18,20 16:23 17:1,5,7 18:25 26:25 29:5 29:10 36:12,19 36:21 37:13 41:5 45:3,7,16 comparable 31:18,19 compared 13:5 25:16 comparing 20:19 compensate 22:10 23:3</p>
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<p>compensating 25:9 compensation 21:4,13,20 22:14 23:14,17 25:11 competency 7:2 competitive 10:17 29:8 complete 46:14 complex 10:4 complexities 42:23 complexity 22:3 components 24:16 39:5 computer 11:9 concluded 45:16 conditions 12:3 28:11 conducted 2:10 conference 28:9 conferences 28:21 congratulations 35:14 38:6 congregate 43:5 consider 34:16 consideration 21:21 23:17 consistently 39:15 constantly 22:7 22:18,20 construction 11:8 25:13 consultant's 29:3 continue 6:10,22 7:24 18:1,5,7</p>	<p>29:16 30:4,13 32:8 33:8 37:22 continued 30:15 continues 7:7 26:3 33:22 contribute 28:17 40:14 conversation 20:12 conversations 34:4 convocation 28:24 cooperation 7:5 correct 41:10 cost 13:19 14:11 14:12 costs 12:24 28:12 council 35:19 count 44:21 country 8:20 9:23 21:23 county 5:1,2 37:18 46:6 county's 5:3 couple 40:17 courses 7:16 courts 15:16 cover 12:24 30:14 covers 10:25 covid 28:10 create 15:10 27:18 creating 37:11 creative 27:9,16 creativity 27:6,16 credentialing 7:3 7:16</p>	<p>critical 6:18 7:12 10:1 11:16 37:19 37:20 crr 1:22 46:19 cruise 44:20 cuban 26:15,17 culmination 20:15 cultivate 31:7 culture 6:17 7:11 cultures 7:11 current 12:2 15:24 20:20 42:3 currently 38:13 curriculum 6:22 7:6,18 cycle 29:15 35:6</p> <p style="text-align: center;">d</p> <p>dade 5:2 37:18 46:6 data 7:15 dated 46:16 daughter 5:10 daughter's 44:6,9 day 12:5,6 20:20 29:24 42:6 46:16 december 5:8 declining 14:5 decrease 12:21 define 15:20 definitely 30:20 37:13 degree 4:22 16:7 degrees 8:3 17:19 17:20 delighted 37:21</p>	<p>delta 34:6 40:21 demonstrated 12:14 derivatives 40:9 described 28:19 design 11:6 designation 10:12 designs 6:24 desirability 42:9 desire 23:19 develop 29:11 developer 28:4 developing 10:2 development 3:4 13:25 30:25 33:9 35:23 42:2 difference 27:24 different 6:24 21:19 22:20 43:6 differently 41:17 difficulties 12:2 dilute 13:10 dinner 34:9 dinosaur 40:12 directly 19:8 33:17 disappointed 44:5 disciplines 11:10 discussing 6:4 discussion 38:24 discussions 7:4 15:12 diversity 3:6 39:23 divide 22:19</p>
---	---	---	---

<p>division 17:15 dna 13:14 document 24:24 doing 5:21 25:15 32:22 34:24 36:10 39:11 40:7 43:19 44:17 dollar 31:14 dollars 24:15 31:16,16,16,17 31:24 39:9 donation 33:23 donors 16:10 dozens 14:18 dr 2:1,2,6,22,25 3:9,16,19,21 18:21 19:16,19 20:5,25 21:15,20 22:10 23:10,22 23:25 24:4,5,6 26:7 27:21 30:3 30:16 33:10 34:2 35:15,16 36:18 38:8,10,17 40:16 41:8,12 45:2 dream 4:6 dreamed 4:5 dress 26:11 dylan 19:17</p>	<p>economically 12:3 economy 7:23 37:20 ecosystems 11:1 educating 8:1 17:16 education 5:21 9:10 11:7 16:5 educational 3:2 9:5 17:14 effect 40:25 efficiencies 12:23 effort 20:15,17 32:24 efforts 14:6 30:13 either 23:1 45:12 elevate 30:2 eligible 9:5 elves 5:5 embrace 6:14 emerge 15:14 emotional 7:15 employees 21:9 24:19,20,22,25 25:6,7,9,24 37:19 38:3 employment 8:3 enable 11:12 encourage 42:1 encouragement 15:13 encourages 33:23 engage 15:11 engaged 14:14 16:9,17 17:7 35:3 engagement 3:5 11:24 14:5 15:1</p>	<p>15:19 28:19 33:22 engaging 36:19 engineering 11:8 enrich 16:21 enriched 5:19 enriches 36:25 enrollment 17:14 enrollments 14:5 ensure 30:14 ensuring 9:8 14:9 entered 28:3 enterprise 9:24 enterprises 3:3 enthusiasm 43:8 entire 23:12 43:21 entrepreneurs 18:10 entrepreneurship 36:15 environment 5:24 10:21 18:14 environmental 10:25 11:5 equal 42:6 equitable 13:5 equity 3:6 especially 10:22 established 10:17 et 35:12 evaluated 30:22 event 43:22 events 11:3 28:25 29:14 34:18 43:20 45:8 evidence 6:13,16</p>	<p>example 10:25 exceed 10:10 exceeded 18:1 excel 39:2 excelled 8:7 excellence 6:17 9:20 11:24 18:6 excellent 6:12 37:5 exceptional 12:14 excited 19:2 34:5 34:14 excitement 15:9 43:9 exciting 5:19 excluded 24:22 executed 45:9 executive 3:1 expand 9:25 42:24 expanded 10:15 expanding 10:2 13:14 expansion 7:17 expectations 17:25 expenditure 9:2 10:7 expenditures 10:5,10 17:18 32:16 expenses 30:8,14 31:25 experience 14:21 35:4 37:1 experiences 14:21 15:19</p>
<p>e</p>			
<p>e.i. 7:18,20 earlier 31:4 earned 39:13 earning 4:21,23 economic 3:3 9:1 35:23</p>			

experiential 7:1 explore 27:17 exploring 27:15 extend 2:3 external 10:15 13:17 37:25 extreme 11:2 extremely 17:11	fiji 34:9 fijis 34:6 final 37:16,24 finalist 2:6 19:3 finally 16:17 42:25 finance 3:10,16 4:23,24 financial 3:11 9:7 9:11 11:22 13:21 40:13 financially 14:24 16:10 30:1 financials 3:14 financing 28:13 find 12:4 13:17 24:24 26:2 finding 38:5 finish 40:18 firm 2:10 19:5 first 4:16 5:6 6:6 20:14 24:8 30:3 38:20 41:14,25 43:16 firsthand 15:5 40:25 fiu 2:4 3:11,18 4:1,8,15 5:20 6:5 6:9,11 7:7,24 9:3 9:10,20 10:15,24 11:20 12:7 13:2,5 13:23 14:2,19 16:7,9,11,14,18 16:24,25 17:2,2,6 17:11,24 18:24 20:3 21:2 26:20 26:25 29:5,9,11 30:5,6,7,10 32:8	34:1 36:1,1,3 38:13,20 41:5,10 45:3,7 fiu's 2:9 8:6 13:8 16:2 20:10 21:4,8 30:13 five 31:16 floor 35:16 40:19 florida 1:1 2:22 4:19,20,24 5:17 5:18 10:12 12:11 13:7 16:12 27:3,7 36:8 37:8 39:17 39:18 46:5 flying 5:5 focus 8:6,23 9:4 10:22 11:11 14:1 18:5 34:12 focused 13:8 31:23 32:10 focuses 7:13 focusing 6:4 9:1 folks 36:3,9 37:24 food 15:16 football 29:14 foregoing 46:12 foremost 41:25 forensic 11:7 form 21:13 former 26:20 27:1 33:14 fort 4:19 5:5 forth 27:8 forum 42:18 forward 22:25 23:1,5 30:10 35:6 found 4:9	foundation 13:24 30:6,7,9,13,16,24 30:25 31:3,6,21 32:2 33:3 foundations 31:18 four 31:16 37:19 43:5 fourth 14:4 28:18 framework 7:12 frankly 22:11 fraternity 34:6 34:15,19 44:1,20 44:23 free 19:9 friday 34:8 38:2 41:23 friend 26:23 friendly 41:13,14 friends 43:25 front 20:9 fsu 44:10 fulfill 11:22 full 21:9 27:2 41:6 fund 35:12 funding 8:10,10 10:15 13:4,4,6,17 13:25 30:24 31:2 32:3,4 fundraising 3:4 22:21 30:19 funds 13:1 22:17 22:25 23:1,5 funk 2:7,12 19:7 further 9:17 future 26:24 33:23
f			
face 17:4 facilitates 6:17 facilities 3:7 facility 3:14 28:3 facing 6:2 11:19 18:13 fact 30:17 faculty 6:12,14 11:25 12:13,19 12:21 15:11 16:19 17:7 22:6 22:14 24:11,16 25:21 26:5,6 fair 13:5 21:21 22:9 23:8,16 fairly 23:4 25:8 families 9:16 28:22 37:21 family 5:7 17:4,4 18:11 far 22:21 36:16 fastest 8:16 fau 5:19 feel 14:22 19:9 fellow 35:2 fifth 26:22 figure 22:19			

<p>g</p> <p>gaining 10:3</p> <p>gains 14:19</p> <p>game 43:16,17 44:10</p> <p>games 29:14</p> <p>gamma 34:6</p> <p>generation 5:6 27:11</p> <p>getting 21:13 22:13 32:25 36:14</p> <p>gift 8:11</p> <p>gifts 14:1 16:25</p> <p>gina 1:22 46:9,19</p> <p>give 14:24 15:22 23:1 28:16 35:5</p> <p>given 6:5</p> <p>giving 32:6</p> <p>global 5:15 7:8,8 7:12 11:8,13</p> <p>globe 43:6</p> <p>go 18:18 44:4</p> <p>goal 8:13,14</p> <p>goals 13:25 17:24 27:25</p> <p>godfather 44:3</p> <p>goes 29:15 34:10</p> <p>going 22:8 24:17 25:1 28:7 32:11 32:16 35:6 36:20 37:10 38:7,15 39:23,24 42:7,22 44:18</p> <p>gold 27:1</p> <p>good 2:1 23:12 26:10,13,18 31:13 35:17</p>	<p>governance 7:4</p> <p>government 40:22</p> <p>governor's 27:14</p> <p>governors 10:12 12:11,25 27:7 29:23</p> <p>graduate 4:23 5:4 9:8 14:14 15:1,22 15:25 32:5 33:23 35:5 38:16,18 39:22</p> <p>graduates 42:3</p> <p>graduating 14:7</p> <p>graduation 8:2 15:2 28:23</p> <p>graham 1:13 15:16</p> <p>grand 29:5</p> <p>grandparent 5:12</p> <p>grandson 5:11</p> <p>grant 11:13 13:17 36:5</p> <p>grants 36:7</p> <p>great 5:24 12:5 15:15 18:7 39:11 40:3</p> <p>greater 14:19 17:6 25:8 42:8</p> <p>greatest 9:6 10:14</p> <p>greek 14:17 34:7 34:16 40:24 41:1 41:5,13,14,15,20 41:22 42:2,9,12 42:18,19,23,24 43:3,10,12 44:1,2</p>	<p>44:3</p> <p>greeks 41:2,19,19 43:4,16</p> <p>group 34:22 42:12 44:16,24</p> <p>groups 14:18 34:3,23 35:9</p> <p>grow 27:18 35:24 40:23 41:4 42:24</p> <p>growth 9:3 10:7 42:2</p> <p>guys 38:5</p> <p>h</p> <p>half 34:14</p> <p>hall 43:2</p> <p>halls 15:15</p> <p>hammered 41:24</p> <p>hands 26:13,18</p> <p>happen 20:16 28:15 40:10</p> <p>happening 36:13</p> <p>happens 26:16</p> <p>happy 18:23 35:20 43:11</p> <p>hard 12:4 25:20</p> <p>harder 8:20,21 29:20</p> <p>head 41:11</p> <p>headlines 41:21</p> <p>health 10:21 11:7 11:9 14:21 16:21 18:13 38:25 39:4 39:5</p> <p>healthcare 18:8</p> <p>hear 2:5 19:19 38:14</p>	<p>heard 38:24</p> <p>held 2:23</p> <p>helm 26:14</p> <p>help 15:24 16:1 29:10 30:2,10,14 31:24 32:17,23 35:12 39:8 43:9</p> <p>helped 45:7</p> <p>helps 35:6,23</p> <p>hi 19:16 26:10 38:12 40:20</p> <p>high 5:5 9:11 13:18 17:24</p> <p>higher 5:21 14:25 15:2,2 28:11,12</p> <p>highest 12:1 39:16</p> <p>hire 16:4</p> <p>hiring 12:18</p> <p>hispanics 17:19</p> <p>history 20:3</p> <p>hit 10:9</p> <p>hold 38:7,8</p> <p>homecoming 15:6</p> <p>honestly 42:13</p> <p>honor 3:24 26:23 33:15</p> <p>honored 33:4,5</p> <p>hope 16:3 36:5</p> <p>hopeful 42:15</p> <p>hopefully 26:24</p> <p>hosting 38:1,4</p> <p>hotel 28:9</p> <p>hour 2:19</p> <p>housing 15:8 28:1</p> <p>human 3:7 11:21 12:3 13:20</p>
---	---	---	--

hundred 20:17 39:19 43:23	increased 14:6 increases 22:24 24:18	interdisciplinary 10:23 11:11 interested 36:14 45:12	21:20 22:10 23:10 24:4,6 27:21 30:3,16 34:2 35:15 36:18 38:8,17 41:8,12
i	increasing 33:25 incredibly 36:6 incremental 8:9 industry 11:15,17 22:12 27:23	interesting 21:18 interim 2:22,25 3:8 4:7 international 1:1 2:23 27:4	job 6:7,8 14:9 15:24 22:3,10 23:18
ideas 15:13 44:22 ignore 31:4 imagine 16:13 imagined 4:9 immense 16:3 impact 16:13 31:5 importance 12:20 important 5:23 7:5,22 28:18 31:8 33:2,18 34:25 35:8,10 36:6 38:19 39:21 42:5 44:7 importantly 43:18 impressed 43:15 impressive 9:17 improve 12:23 15:3,24 35:6 improving 9:15 9:17 include 11:5 included 12:12 12:17 24:15,18 24:25 including 7:1 8:2 8:25 13:20 inclusion 3:6 inclusive 6:16 increase 8:21 21:8,11 22:23 24:21	information 13:20 infrastructure 10:18 42:11 43:1 initial 30:19 initiatives 3:6 13:9 27:15 36:15 37:23 39:1 innovate 6:22 innovation 7:7 9:2 15:14 innovative 10:2 innovators 18:9 40:6 insight 24:1 instances 23:4 institution 14:24 17:14 25:18 33:21 35:1 36:21 39:2,8 institutional 40:24 41:1 institutions 13:6 31:19 39:25 intelligence 7:15 7:15 intending 4:2 interacted 4:16 intercollegiate 3:5	internship 15:23 36:23 introduce 3:18 introduction 3:22 intrusion 11:2 invest 6:10 investment 9:2 9:25 investments 8:23 10:13 12:22 31:9 31:12 involved 27:6 33:22 involvement 36:22 involves 10:23 issue 23:12,15 issued 37:17 issues 26:4	jobs 7:22,22 37:4 john 5:9 join 18:25 joining 2:4,13 18:21 19:13 justify 21:7
		j	k
		james 5:11 january 2:24 jeffrey 5:10 jessell 2:7,25 3:9 3:16,19,21 4:18 19:16,19 20:5,25	k 5:3 keen 8:6 34:12 keeping 7:6 ken 4:18 44:22 kenneth 2:6,22 key 8:4 30:9 34:8 kind 3:22 know 4:2 7:10 8:20,22 9:10 11:15 12:20 16:5 16:6,7,23 19:24 24:9,20,23 25:12 25:16,21 26:2,13 26:15 27:22 28:5 28:9 29:11,18 32:7,15 34:5 38:18 41:3,18 43:23 44:13,14 knowledge 5:25 6:21 7:23 10:2 known 26:11

krista 38:12	levels 40:3	main 11:10	members 2:3
kudos 36:9	licenses 37:17	maintaining 9:4	17:1 18:24 29:10
I	life 14:17,22 41:1	major 31:4	42:4,19 43:10
lab 6:20 40:6	42:23,24	making 21:10	45:7
labor 28:12	limitations 27:13	26:2 31:13 42:25	membership 42:6
lack 22:22	listen 21:17 42:22	man 44:2	mental 14:21
large 41:8	little 6:3 22:23	management 3:7	mentioned 24:10
larger 16:20	23:11 24:1 25:4	3:13	35:2 37:6,6
largest 16:25	25:10,20 26:12	manner 45:9	mentoring 15:12
17:13	28:13 29:20,22	march 44:17,19	15:23
laser 32:10	33:24 38:14	marching 14:17	methods 6:24
lauderdale 4:19	live 10:4 18:14	mark 10:9 20:3	metrics 8:4 15:3
5:5	38:11	market 12:2	meyer 26:19
law 5:10 11:9	lived 4:24	28:11	miami 5:2 37:18
38:13,13,15,18	lives 9:15 16:21	markets 40:13	46:6
38:22 39:11,12	lofty 17:24	married 5:9	micro 7:3,16
39:13,18	long 2:20 23:6	master 17:15	microphone 19:9
lawns 15:17	look 21:19,25	mater 14:25 17:8	million 8:11 10:6
lawyers 18:9	22:2,13 27:21,23	materials 28:12	10:9 12:8,12,17
leader 7:7 18:12	31:8,9 39:14	matter 5:22	12:18,22 17:17
leaders 18:7	looked 21:22,24	maximize 11:12	24:14,15 32:15
leadership 13:1	looking 25:3 28:8	mba 4:23	32:16,25,25
21:12 41:16	28:25 29:17	mean 32:12 40:8	mind 43:3
42:12	lori 5:8	meaningful 6:25	mini 22:5
learned 4:7 6:19	losing 12:5 14:11	meant 36:20	minority 35:24
learners 7:1	loss 22:24	measure 7:25	mission 11:23
learning 6:18,24	lot 22:25 25:17	med 38:15,17	14:2 17:3
7:1,2,8 14:20	28:5,21 30:19	39:10	mitigation 11:3
35:4	32:19 37:13	medical 38:21	mobility 9:1,13
legislative 12:9	42:19	39:4	mode 37:20,21
12:25	loud 18:4	meet 2:5 14:1	model 14:16
legislature 22:21	love 4:8 35:9	34:3 35:8 43:11	mom 5:13
24:17	lowest 25:23	43:25	money 31:6
level 11:1 13:4	m	meeting 41:15	month 5:11 12:8
25:11 31:2 39:20	mackenzie 8:11	member 21:15	monthly 9:14
42:1	magic 22:17	26:8,25 33:12	months 4:7 42:17
		34:5 35:18 38:11	move 30:10 32:17
		40:22	40:2

<p>moving 28:14 multiple 22:7 multiplied 15:10 myrna 35:18</p>	<p>22:2 34:2 41:9,9 43:15 nursing 39:6</p>	<p>26:21 28:16 29:4 35:21 36:23 optimistic 28:15 option 40:9 organization 35:22 organizations 14:16 19:22 43:12 outside 5:18 outstanding 11:23 12:13 16:15,15,16 24:11 overnight 20:16</p>	<p>partners 35:25 partnership 28:1 37:12 partnerships 11:15 16:22 27:24 parts 6:8 24:7 passage 39:16 path 6:15 pell 9:5,9 people 18:13 20:13 23:2,3,7 33:6 percent 9:7,21 24:21 25:15,16 25:16,25 37:16 43:24 perception 38:25 performance 8:1 8:6,10 12:15 28:2 periods 42:7 permanent 4:3 persistent 38:21 person 2:18 3:23 4:16 18:22 45:5 personal 34:17 ph.d. 4:24 phi 34:6 40:21 philanthropic 8:10 philanthropy 13:16 physical 11:22 pie 22:19 pig 34:9,10 place 15:13 31:22 37:6 40:1 42:11 43:1,4</p>
<p>n</p>	<p>o</p>	<p>p</p>	
<p>name 2:2 11:3 19:16 33:14 35:18 36:1 38:12 40:20 nation 11:18 40:4 national 6:9 8:8 17:21 nationally 10:18 nationwide 14:6 navigator 36:5,9 nearly 25:22 need 9:7 11:17 12:5,20 16:17 20:25 29:16 31:1 32:4 39:24 42:3,3 needs 6:23 net 13:16 31:11 31:15 32:17 never 4:5 5:16 new 13:9 news 8:15,17 9:13 nice 32:14 night 34:8 41:23 nine 4:7 nodding 41:11 nomination 27:2 35:14 non 9:9 notes 46:14 number 8:19 9:12,13 17:18</p>	<p>observation 37:16 observed 15:5 october 1:12 46:16 offender 26:19 office 33:16 officer 3:1,11 offices 15:15 40:8 oftentimes 13:10 okay 23:23 old 5:11 38:23 39:19 older 17:22 once 14:25 15:25 35:13 ones 29:20 36:15 ongoing 22:8 open 2:21 opening 17:13 20:18 operating 30:8,14 31:25 operational 12:10,23 operations 3:15 opportunities 4:10 6:1 7:21 9:5 10:1,14 11:12 15:23 25:3 27:9 28:8 29:16 42:20 opportunity 2:5 6:5 18:11,16 20:2</p>	<p>p.m. 1:14,14 45:16 p3 27:9 28:4 pager 20:9 paid 22:1,13 23:10 25:23 43:14 panelist 42:18 panther 14:17 17:4 18:11 34:1 panthers 16:4,4 29:13 part 6:7,16 14:2 23:18 24:8 33:7 36:13 participated 42:18 particular 36:4 particularly 13:15 15:6 38:20</p>	

<p>placement 15:25 places 22:20 plan 14:3 planned 9:25 plans 4:4 33:25 plate 40:2 platform 19:14 plazas 15:8,17 please 19:9 24:5 40:19 pleasure 2:3 3:18 pledge 42:7 point 36:11 37:15 points 43:6 poised 10:9 political 4:22 population 41:2 portion 23:12 position 2:23 3:12 4:3,10 positions 4:12 25:2 positive 31:11 possible 4:14 potential 21:14 practice 31:17 practices 6:14 practicing 37:25 preach 38:1 preeminent 10:11 prepared 14:22 19:11 preparing 5:25 present 18:17 31:11,15 presentation 2:20 32:1</p>	<p>presented 26:12 presents 4:5 president 2:9,22 2:25 3:8,9,25 4:4 4:7 6:6 19:17,21 21:5,5,9 23:15,19 26:20,22,24 27:1 27:3 30:12 33:13 33:15 35:22 president's 35:19 presidential 1:2 2:6 21:3 26:14 45:15 presidents 2:11 22:1 previously 23:18 pricing 40:9 pride 16:4 34:1 34:22 primary 8:7 prior 3:8 priorities 6:4 12:1 13:8 14:1 18:17 prioritize 13:24 priority 24:12 private 22:11 27:22,23 28:1,4 privileged 33:4,5 probably 22:12 35:7 problem 41:20 42:1 problems 6:21 10:3 11:14,18 18:12 41:18 proceedings 46:13</p>	<p>process 2:15 19:7 24:2 33:7 45:10 procurement 36:2 produce 18:7 producer 17:19 17:20 product 5:3 production 9:22 28:2 productivity 25:8 professional 46:9 professionally 4:13 professor 3:16 professoriat 39:25 professorships 30:11 proficient 6:13 program 7:19 29:9,25 30:21 36:1 grammatical... 30:1 programs 3:3 10:20,24 35:25 37:5 38:16,18 39:22 43:20 progress 8:1 project 13:12 28:5,14 projects 22:8 29:22 30:12 promenade 34:21 43:3 promenades 15:8</p>	<p>promising 16:2 promote 14:23 16:14 proposal 21:7 proposed 12:7 proposition 7:10 16:7 31:10,22 32:7 prospera 35:22 proud 5:2,4 17:11,11 29:12 40:21 provide 13:17 15:23 30:24 providers 18:9 providing 9:4 24:1 31:1 provision 30:20 public 5:4 6:9 8:17,19 9:20 10:7 27:23 28:1 39:5 puerto 26:16,17 put 20:2,7 21:1</p>
			q
			<p>qep 7:8,12 quality 10:13 11:2 12:15 13:18 16:5 29:25 question 2:14 13:12,13 20:2,6 21:2,18 23:21 24:7 26:8 27:5 30:5 33:11,11,17 38:10 40:23 questions 19:3,6 19:8,10,11,14 32:13 37:2 40:17</p>

quickly 9:9	receive 16:6	report 8:15 29:3	responsible 3:2
r	received 8:9,12 13:6 24:21 36:7	46:12	3:12
r 2:7	reciprocate 16:23	reported 1:22	restricted 9:11
r1 9:20 10:7	recognize 26:4 32:6 34:25	reporter 46:10,10	restructure 25:4
radar 28:7	recognized 10:19	reporter's 46:2	restructuring
raised 26:15	record 46:14	represents 20:15	25:5
raises 23:2	recruiting 14:12 43:9 44:24	request 12:9,10 12:12	retain 12:13 23:2 35:4
raising 31:24	recruitment	required 10:11 14:6	retaining 14:7 26:5
range 21:4,8,25	11:25	requires 10:13	retention 8:2 11:25 15:2 24:10
ranked 8:19	recurring 12:24 25:22 26:3	research 3:3 6:9 6:15 8:4 9:2,19 9:20,22,24 10:1,1 10:5,7,10,11,13 10:15,20,23 11:5 11:11,13,16,23 12:16 13:22 15:14 16:16,22 17:18 18:6 30:11 39:3,3 40:7	return 9:1 25:10
ranking 9:12,13	redistribute 25:4	researchers 18:8 40:1,5	revenue 27:11,19
rankings 8:8,15 8:17,21,22,25 9:17 15:4 17:22 32:23	reduce 31:25	reserved 17:22	revenues 13:15 13:16
rate 39:16	reduction 25:15 25:17	resident 5:2	rewarded 4:13
rates 8:3 14:25 15:2,25 28:13	reflect 9:14	residents 16:21	rewarding 4:11 6:8 26:5
ratios 12:21	regarding 2:15 19:6	resides 27:5	rican 26:17
read 24:24	regardless 23:10	resilience 10:25	rico 26:16
reading 19:12,15 45:12	regards 36:3,11	resolve 23:12 42:23	right 8:23,23 16:12 28:21 29:6 31:22 39:5,23,24 42:11 43:1,7,19 43:20
ready 37:3	regional 35:21	resources 3:7 9:12,25 11:20,22 13:11,20	rise 8:21 11:1
realignment 43:2	registered 19:22 46:9	respect 27:13	rising 8:16
reality 31:1	regular 30:23	respectful 45:10	river 44:20
really 5:16 19:1 20:14 21:24 24:6 27:5,17,24 30:2 32:17,20,21,22 32:23 36:20,20 37:8 39:2 40:11 40:13 41:24 42:4 42:5 43:13	regulations 27:14 29:19	responsibility	road 43:2
realtime 46:10	rehearsal 28:3	34:12 41:18,24	roast 34:10
reared 4:18	related 7:14 8:4 33:17		rodriguez 1:22 46:9,19
reason 8:7	relation 30:6		roi 13:12
	relationships		room 15:7
	31:7		rosc 19:17,21
	relevant 7:6		
	remain 9:3,23		

royal 28:2 rpr 1:22 46:19 rubido 33:14 rules 27:14 running 22:4 runs 33:21	sciences 11:6 39:6 scientific 40:3 scientists 18:8 40:5 scott 8:11 screen 28:7 sea 11:1 search 2:8,15 19:4,6 21:3 26:14 45:15 searches 2:11 second 9:19 24:8 33:4 43:17 secondly 25:3 32:10 38:24 42:10 sector 27:22 36:6 see 20:13 31:18 37:21 42:8 seeing 7:17 seen 27:10 40:25 select 20:8,22 selected 2:8 26:22 selection 27:3 semester 36:23 senator 19:23 senior 3:9 sense 29:25 32:19 36:14 serve 6:5 23:20 29:7 served 3:9 serves 2:25 service 3:14 16:22 services 13:18,19 13:21	serving 16:1 33:15 session 1:11 2:19 2:21 18:19 19:2 19:12 40:18 45:16 sessions 1:2 2:16 18:25 45:14 set 21:19 42:4,5 share 19:4 shared 7:3 13:19 sharing 33:10 shoulder 15:8,9 shout 37:24 show 34:24 43:8 shows 38:20 side 17:9,9 27:17 signature 46:19 significant 7:20 8:9 significantly 14:11 single 7:19 sir 35:17 sister 13:6 sisters 34:17,17 sit 22:18 six 45:13 sixth 2:9 3:25 6:6 26:24 27:3 skills 7:13,14,21 small 37:8,16 smaller 41:9 social 9:12 society 18:13 40:14 sociology 11:7	sofia 2:2 3:21 18:18 23:21 solutions 10:3 solve 11:13,17 solving 6:21 18:12 son 5:9,10 44:3 sonora 35:18 sorority 34:20 44:24 sorry 19:19 sound 29:21 source 16:3 sources 13:15 south 4:24 5:18 16:12 37:8 southeast 36:8 space 38:5 speak 18:3 speaker 19:16,21 20:24 21:2 26:10 30:3 33:13 34:8 35:13,17 37:15 38:9,12 40:15,20 41:11 speaking 18:4 specific 33:25 specifically 19:7 spend 6:3 31:6,14 32:25 spent 4:20 5:17 spots 8:18 stadium 43:18 staff 12:1,13 15:11 16:19 17:8 22:6,14 24:11 26:5,6 38:1
s			
saddened 24:23 sadly 28:10 41:9 salary 21:6,7 24:15,18,21 25:25 saltwater 11:2 saturday 15:7 savings 13:19 25:5 says 17:8 sba 36:5 sbdc 35:25 36:3 37:7 scarce 13:10 schedule 44:9 schmidt 38:12 scholar 17:9 scholars 6:12 scholarship 12:17 13:24 32:3 32:3 scholarships 30:11 school 5:5 38:15 38:16,17,18,21 38:22 39:4,10,11 39:12,13 40:11 schools 5:4 39:18 science 4:22,22 11:7,9			

<p>staffed 14:20 stakeholders 7:25 standards 20:19 standing 15:7 stangl 40:21 start 35:24 42:8 started 41:10 starting 17:12 43:11 startup 36:1 37:6 state 4:20 5:17 8:8,9 21:24 24:19 24:20 27:9,10 39:17 46:5 states 38:3 stay 13:8 16:17 43:21 stenographic 46:14 stenographically 1:22 46:12 step 40:1 story 16:2 strategic 8:3 12:19 13:8,10 14:1 32:18,19,21 32:24 strong 34:7 40:1 stronger 14:21 15:18 39:7 structure 5:7 structures 23:7 student 4:21,23 5:6 6:6 7:13 12:16,21 13:24 14:7,11,13,15,16 14:18 18:6 19:22 26:20 27:1 33:14</p>	<p>33:18,19,20,25 34:3 36:22 38:13 40:22 students 6:1,10 6:18 7:10 8:2 9:6 9:6,8,9,11,15 12:18 14:10,14 15:3,12,20,24,25 16:6,19 17:3,7,16 17:17 22:4,6 29:9 32:4,5 33:21 35:2 35:2 37:10 41:3 stuff 24:16 submitted 12:11 success 6:6 12:16 18:6 30:9,15 34:25 35:1 successes 6:11 18:3 20:10 successful 7:9 14:10 36:4,17 37:12 sufficient 11:21 25:22 support 5:7 12:10 12:18 13:1,18 16:9,16 27:2 28:22 30:8,13 36:14 37:15,22 38:15 39:13,21 40:15 41:7 45:2 supporter 34:7 supporting 16:24 34:15 supportive 15:21 39:12 supports 30:7</p>	<p>sure 19:24 23:7 26:2 31:21 42:10 42:25 43:19 45:8 surpassed 10:5 sustain 35:24 sustainable 11:20 11:21 sustained 12:14 swimming 29:8 system 7:3 21:24 22:16 27:10 34:7 42:9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">t</p> <p>table 11:17 tailgating 43:17 take 6:19 13:9 15:13 17:10 20:8 21:21 32:24 taken 23:5 takes 23:17 talent 12:4,5 39:24 talk 3:25 9:19 22:22 24:8 27:11 33:18,24 41:16 42:20 44:23,23 talked 31:4 36:19 43:12 talking 44:12 talks 20:9 tamiami 43:2 teachers 18:8 teaching 6:13,16 6:17 11:23 12:15 16:15 team 2:12 12:7 37:25 41:16</p>	<p>42:12 teams 33:9 technology 11:9 12:23 13:21 tell 4:17 5:16 22:12 26:18 35:9 telling 16:2 tells 41:12 ten 8:18 10:8 22:13 tent 34:20 term 23:6 terms 25:21 29:1 31:18 32:2 39:2,8 40:7,12 thank 3:21,22 18:15,15,19,21 20:24 23:23,24 23:25 26:7 27:19 30:3 33:10,13 35:13,15,17 38:4 38:4,9 40:15 45:2 45:3,6,11,15 theta 40:22 thing 20:23 28:18 31:8 35:8 things 4:17 5:21 5:22,24 20:7 21:19 29:18 32:11 33:1 39:11 40:10,13 41:16 think 7:18 18:18 20:4,12,20 21:17 22:23 23:10,16 29:3,24 30:20 31:23 34:19 35:7 36:11,25 40:8 42:21 43:10</p>
--	--	---	--

<p>thinkers 6:18 thinking 25:6 third 11:20 thirdly 42:17 thought 4:14 29:21 thousand 18:24 20:7 41:3 three 5:14 8:16 31:16 time 4:16,20 5:17 6:3 13:13 17:15 19:25 20:13 21:9 26:19 27:11 29:22 32:12,13 32:24 39:20,20 40:16 44:5 times 22:13 tirelessly 13:14 today 2:4,13,19 3:24 7:23 17:16 18:13 19:1,5 20:12 26:12 28:11 44:1 45:8 today's 2:16 6:25 19:12 told 43:24 tone 42:4,5 top 8:14,25 9:21 10:6 12:9 16:10 17:19 22:1 24:12 tough 20:6 tovar 21:16,17 23:23 26:11 tradition 18:2 32:9 trained 40:5,5,6</p>	<p>training 5:25 transcript 46:13 transcripts 45:12 translate 7:21 translates 15:1 15:18 25:25 traveler 5:16 trelles 2:2 tressell 2:1 18:21 21:15 23:22,25 24:5 26:7 33:10 35:16 38:10 40:16 45:2 true 4:6 10:22 46:13 truly 38:23 trustee 21:16,17 23:23 26:10 trustees 12:8 24:13 26:22 32:14 try 22:19 trying 23:2,3 24:9 turned 33:20 turns 41:19 two 21:18 24:6 25:7 26:19 29:2 29:12 31:15 36:2 36:7 42:17 44:15 44:19 type 22:10 37:2 types 29:15 31:19 37:2,3,9 43:20 typically 14:19 17:22</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">u</p> <p>u.s. 8:15,17 9:13 un 14:16 undergraduate 4:21 understand 12:2 14:8 26:17 36:6 understanding 7:11 10:4 27:13 41:5 unfortunately 22:15 40:17 unique 27:17 41:19 united 38:3 universities 8:19 9:22 10:8 17:23 21:23 39:17,18 university 1:1 2:8 2:11,23 3:1,15 4:20 5:23 6:9 8:14,14,17 9:21 9:24 10:11 14:4 14:15 21:5 22:1 24:22,25 27:4,8 27:10,18,19 28:20,20 30:2,17 30:18,22 32:6,12 32:21 33:9,19 34:10 35:10 36:9 38:19,22 39:9 41:3 upper 17:15 urban 6:9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v</p> <p>vacation 44:17</p>	<p>vacationed 44:16 value 7:10 16:6 30:20 31:10,11 31:15,22 32:7 34:24 40:14 vice 3:9 35:21 videos 45:13 village 43:4 virtually 3:23 4:17 voice 18:4 volunteers 33:3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">w</p> <p>wage 23:8 wand 22:17 want 14:13 22:9 22:9 31:3,23 32:8 32:10,20 34:2,4 36:22 37:13,22 42:2,10,24 43:19 wanted 21:20 25:23 34:14 38:14 43:4,7 warm 2:3 washington 9:14 watching 38:6 45:13 water 11:2 wave 22:16 way 13:13 ways 13:17 15:22 26:2 we've 19:24 22:25,25 23:5 25:11 weather 11:3</p>
---	--	--	--

<p>webcast 2:18 18:22 45:5</p> <p>website 45:15</p> <p>wedding 44:2,6 44:10,12,13</p> <p>wednesday 1:12</p> <p>week 15:6 41:14</p> <p>weekend 34:18</p> <p>weeks 5:14 29:3 44:19</p> <p>weighted 36:24</p> <p>welcome 2:3</p> <p>went 34:19</p> <p>wife 5:8 26:16 44:15</p> <p>william 2:7</p> <p>willing 25:10</p> <p>willingness 23:19</p> <p>wise 12:4</p> <p>wish 22:16 26:11</p> <p>wives 44:6,7</p> <p>wolfe 15:15</p> <p>wonderful 5:7</p> <p>word 38:7,8</p> <p>wording 7:21</p> <p>work 13:14 17:5 25:10 28:6 33:5,6 33:8 36:2,10 37:2 42:16</p> <p>worked 42:14</p> <p>working 19:25 25:19 31:21</p> <p>world 8:15 10:4 11:19 18:12 29:6</p>	<p>year 4:12 8:12 20:1 24:19 25:13 25:21 26:1 30:7 33:16 34:13 36:24 44:14</p> <p>years 4:15,25,25 5:9,19,20,20,21 6:2 8:16,18,25 9:18 10:8 17:12 18:2 20:14,15,16 21:11 38:23 39:19 43:25 44:15</p> <p>yesterday 19:1 45:8</p> <p>yesterday's 2:16</p> <p>young 33:19 39:10,14</p>
	z
	<p>zachary 40:21</p> <p>zoom 2:13,18 18:23 19:5,13 45:5</p>
y	
<p>yeah 32:14 34:2</p>	