

1 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY  
2 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMMUNITY SESSIONS  
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10 GENERAL SESSION #2

11 Wednesday, October 12, 2022

12 Graham Center Ballrooms

13 10:00 a.m. - 11:18 a.m.  
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21 Stenographically Reported By:

22 Gina Rodriguez, RPR, CRR  
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1 DR. TRELLES: Good morning, everyone. Good  
2 morning, everyone. My name is  
3 Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my pleasure to  
4 extend a warm welcome to the members of the FIU  
5 community who are joining us today for an  
6 opportunity to meet and hear from presidential  
7 finalist, Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell.  
8 R. William Funk & Associates, who are based out  
9 of Dallas, Texas, have been selected to assist  
10 us with our search for FIU's sixth president.

11 The firm has conducted more than 430  
12 searches for colleges and university presidents  
13 and chancellors. Mr. Funk and his team are  
14 joining us today through Zoom and are here to  
15 answer any questions that any of you may have  
16 both virtually and in person regarding the  
17 search. Today's sessions will be available to  
18 you to attend in person, Zoom, as well as  
19 through FIU's WebCast. Our session will be  
20 approximately an hour and a half and after our  
21 candidate's presentation, you will have an  
22 opportunity for questions and answers.

23 Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell is interim president  
24 for FIU, a position he has held since his  
25 appointment on January 21st, 2022. As interim

1 president, Dr. Jessell serves as chief executive  
2 officer of the university and is responsible for  
3 academic and educational programs, research  
4 enterprises and economic development,  
5 advancement and fundraising, community  
6 engagement, intercollegiate athletics,  
7 diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives as  
8 well as human resources and facilities  
9 management.

10 Prior to his appointment as interim  
11 president, Dr. Jessell served as our senior vice  
12 president for finance and administration as well  
13 as chief financial officer at FIU from 2009 to  
14 2022. In his position, he was responsible for  
15 the management and administration of financials,  
16 facility and business service operations at the  
17 university. Dr. Jessell is also a professor of  
18 finance in the college of business  
19 administration at FIU. It is my pleasure to  
20 introduce you to Dr. Jessell.

21 DR. JESSELL: Thank you, Sofia, for your  
22 kind introduction.

23 And thank you, colleagues, for being here  
24 this morning. I really appreciate you turning  
25 out in person and thank all of you that are

1 joining us virtually. I am honored and humbled  
2 to be addressing you today as a candidate for  
3 the sixth president of FIU. As most of you  
4 know, I was not intending to be a candidate for  
5 the permanent position; however, sometimes our  
6 plans change and something that was never  
7 dreamed of presents itself as a dream come true.

8 Over the past nine months as interim  
9 president, I have learned to love FIU more than  
10 I could have imagined, and I found both the  
11 opportunities and challenges of the position  
12 more rewarding than any of my prior positions.  
13 I have been rewarded professionally more than I  
14 thought possible.

15 While I have been at FIU for 13 years  
16 already, for some of you, this may be the first  
17 time that we have interacted in person or  
18 virtually. Let me tell you just a few things  
19 about me. First, I was born and reared in  
20 South Florida, Fort Lauderdale, and except for  
21 my time as a student at Florida State University  
22 in Tallahassee, I have lived my entire life in  
23 either Broward County or, beginning in 2009,  
24 Miami-Dade County. I am a product of  
25 Broward County's K-12 public school system and a

1 proud graduate of Fort Lauderdale High School,  
2 the flying elves.

3 I am a first generation student. I  
4 attended Florida State University, where I  
5 obtained three degrees, a bachelor's in  
6 political science, an MBA in finance and a Ph.D.  
7 in finance. I started my professional career at  
8 Florida Atlantic University in 1983 where I  
9 spent 26 amazing years, and I started my career  
10 at FIU in 2009 where I have had an amazing  
11 career and an amazing time being a Panther.

12 I have a wonderful wife, Lori. And in  
13 December, we will have been married 46 years. I  
14 have a son, John; a daughter, Amanda; a  
15 son-in-law, Jeffrey; and a beautiful  
16 18-month-old grandson, James. And my mother  
17 will be 93 in three or four weeks, so she is a  
18 November birthday, so momma is still here. So  
19 for some of you it may not be very exciting to  
20 read about my background, kind of boring, not a  
21 lot of international traveling or even further  
22 domestic locations, but for me it has been an  
23 amazing journey.

24 I would now like to spend a little time  
25 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on

1 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its  
2 next president.

3 The first is student success. As a  
4 national urban public research university, FIU  
5 will continue to invest in our students and  
6 their academic and career successes. Our  
7 faculty must be not only excellent scholars, but  
8 also proficient in evidence-based teaching  
9 practices. We embrace faculty who bring  
10 path-breaking research into the classroom as  
11 part of evidence-based and inclusive teaching.  
12 Our culture of teaching excellence facilitates  
13 learning so our students are critical thinkers  
14 who can take what they have learned in the  
15 classroom or in the lab and apply their  
16 knowledge to solving problems.

17 We must continue to innovate our curriculum  
18 so it's aligned with career needs and to adopt  
19 different designs and methods for learning that  
20 are more meaningful for 21st century learners,  
21 including experiential learning,  
22 competency-based learning and  
23 micro-credentialing. Our system of shared  
24 governments and collegial discussions and  
25 cooperation are more important than ever in

1 keeping our curriculum relevant.

2 FIU continues to be a leader in innovation.  
3 Our global learning for global citizenship, QEP,  
4 that we adopted in 2010, is successful because  
5 we know the value proposition of our students  
6 understanding both culture and cultures within a  
7 global framework.

8 Our 2021 critical skills for 21st century,  
9 QEP, focused on student attainment of skills  
10 related to artificial intelligence data and  
11 emotional intelligence through  
12 micro-credentialing courses. However, we are  
13 already seeing the expansion of A.I. and E.I.  
14 throughout our curriculum. I cannot think of a  
15 single program that does not have significant  
16 A.I. and E.I. applications and learning  
17 opportunities and these skills transfer to jobs,  
18 the jobs that we are going to need in this 21st  
19 century knowledge-based economy.

20 We will continue to be accountable to our  
21 stakeholders and measure our progress and  
22 performance in educating our students, including  
23 retention and graduation rates, employment and  
24 strategic degrees as well as other key metrics  
25 related to research and access.

1 FIU's key focus on performance has been the  
2 primary reason why we have excelled in both  
3 state and national rankings as well as why we  
4 have received significant incremental state  
5 performance funding and philanthropic funding  
6 such as the \$40 million MacKenzie Scott gift  
7 that we received last year. I am committed to  
8 our goal of achieving Top 50 Public University  
9 in U.S. News & World Report rankings in  
10 three years.

11 We are the fastest rising university in  
12 U.S. News public rankings in the last ten years,  
13 up 62 spots and now ranked Number 72. I know it  
14 gets harder and harder to increase as we rise in  
15 the ranking, but I know we can get there with  
16 the right focus and the right investments.

17 Indeed, we have already achieved many  
18 Top 50 rankings in the past few years, including  
19 those focusing on economic mobility, return on  
20 investment, innovation, and research expenditure  
21 growth.

22 FIU will remain committed to maintaining  
23 our focus on access by providing educational  
24 opportunities to Pell-eligible students, our  
25 students with the greatest financial need, and



1 ensuring that they graduate as quickly as our  
2 non-Pell students.

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

12 Second, Research Excellence.

13 FIU is an R1 public research university and  
14 is in the Top 3 percent in research production  
15 of all universities and colleges in the country,  
16 and I remain committed to the research  
17 enterprise of our university and the planned  
18 investment of resources to expand research  
19 opportunities. Research is critical to  
20 expanding knowledge, developing innovative  
21 solutions to problems and gaining a better  
22 understanding of the complex world we live in.

23 Our research expenditures have surpassed  
24 \$245 million, and we are in the Top 10 of  
25 research expenditure growth of R1 public

1 universities over the past ten years, and we are  
2 poised to hit the \$400 million mark by 2025, and  
3 we have already exceeded the research  
4 expenditures required for preeminent research  
5 university designation by the Florida Board of  
6 Governors.

7           Quality research requires investments, and  
8 I believe the greatest opportunities for  
9 expanded external research funding at FIU are in  
10 the areas where we have already achieved a  
11 competitive advantage to establish  
12 infrastructure and nationally and  
13 internationally recognize an acclaimed academic  
14 and research programs such as those in  
15 environment and health. This is especially true  
16 when we focus on interdisciplinary research that  
17 involves most, if not all, academic programs at  
18 FIU.

19           For example, environmental resilience  
20 covers everything from sea-level rise,  
21 ecosystems, saltwater intrusion and water  
22 quality, extreme weather events and building  
23 mitigation to name just a few. Environmental  
24 research, therefore, will include the sciences,  
25 architectural design, business education,

1 sociology, health, forensic science,  
2 engineering, construction, global affairs,  
3 technology and computer science, law, and health  
4 as well as many other disciplines. I believe  
5 that this focus on interdisciplinary research  
6 will enable us to maximize the opportunities for  
7 grant awards and research that will solve global  
8 problems.

9 We know, too, that industry partnerships  
10 are critical to both basic and applied research.  
11 We will need industry at the table to solve the  
12 challenging problems we, as a community, nation  
13 and world are facing.

14 Third, Sustainable Resources.

15 FIU must have sufficient and sustainable  
16 human physical and financial resources to  
17 fulfill our mission of outstanding teaching,  
18 research excellence and community engagement.  
19 The recruitment and retention of our best  
20 faculty and staff are my highest priorities. I  
21 understand the difficulties of the current  
22 market conditions, both financially and human  
23 capital. Our team proposed and the FIU Board of  
24 Trustees approved last month a \$60.7 million  
25 legislative budget request for Top 50

1 operational support.

2 This request has already been submitted to  
3 the Florida Board of Governors. Included in  
4 this request is almost \$26 million to retain our  
5 outstanding faculty and staff who have  
6 continuously demonstrated sustained exceptional  
7 performance and commitment to quality teaching,  
8 student success, and research.

9 Also included is \$15 million in scholarship  
10 support for students, \$5 million for hiring of  
11 additional faculty in areas of strategic  
12 importance and in areas where we know we need to  
13 decrease the student-to-faculty ratios, and  
14 \$12.5 million for investments in technology to  
15 improve operational efficiencies and cover  
16 recurring costs. I will advocate to the Board  
17 of Governors and legislative leadership for  
18 these additional funds to support FIU, and I  
19 have already done so.

20 Additionally, I will advocate for  
21 additional funding to achieve a level that is  
22 fair and equitable for FIU compared to the  
23 funding received by our sister institutions.  
24 You have my commitment that I will stay focused  
25 on FIU's strategic priorities and not take on

1 new initiatives that are not strategic and that  
2 oftentimes will dilute the scarce resources we  
3 already have. I will be asking the question:  
4 What is the ROI on this project every time.  
5 This question is in my DNA.

6 I will also work tirelessly on expanding  
7 our sources of revenues, particularly  
8 philanthropy, net auxiliary revenues and  
9 external grant funding and find ways to provide  
10 high-quality administrative support services and  
11 achieve cost savings through shared services  
12 including human resources, information  
13 technology, business and financial services and  
14 research administration.

15 Additionally, I have already asked the FIU  
16 foundation to prioritize student scholarship  
17 funding in their annual development goals and to  
18 focus on gifts that meet strategic priorities  
19 for FIU as part of their annual development  
20 plan.

21 Fourth, University Affinity and Engagement.

22 Declining college enrollments nationwide  
23 have required increased efforts on retaining and  
24 graduating every student we admit. We  
25 understand better than ever before that we must

1 do a better job of ensuring our students are  
2 successful in college and that the cost of  
3 losing a student is significantly more than the  
4 cost of recruiting one.

5 Students who are engaged with their  
6 university through student clubs and  
7 organizations, Model UN, Student Ambassadors,  
8 Greek Life, Athletics, Marching Band, Panther  
9 Camp and the dozens of other student groups we  
10 have at FIU, typically achieve greater gains in  
11 learning, are more satisfied with their college  
12 experiences, experience stronger mental health  
13 and well-being, feel more prepared for life  
14 after college, are more likely to promote their  
15 institution and give back financially to their  
16 alma mater at higher rates once they graduate  
17 and this engagement translates to higher  
18 retention and graduation rates of our students,  
19 which improve our metrics and our rankings.

20 You may have observed this affinity over  
21 homecoming week, particularly on Saturday where  
22 it was standing room only on our housing  
23 promenades and plazas. These benefits are  
24 multiplied when we create an engaged FIU  
25 community of faculty and staff along with our

1 students where mentoring, collegiate discussions  
2 and encouragement take place and where ideas for  
3 research and innovation emerge through our great  
4 halls, in our offices, in our Wolfe and Graham  
5 Centers, in our food courts, in our plazas and  
6 lawns and on the bay.

7 This affinity also translates to stronger  
8 alumni engagement. The experiences of our  
9 students while they are here will define how  
10 active and supportive our alumni are after they  
11 graduate. And our alumni give back in many  
12 ways. They are providing mentoring and  
13 internship opportunities for our current  
14 students and help improve job placement rates  
15 once our students graduate and they help with  
16 admissions by serving as ambassadors and telling  
17 our remarkable FIU story.

18 It is a source of immense pride for  
19 employer Panthers who hire Panthers. They know  
20 the quality of the education our students  
21 receive. They know the value proposition of an  
22 FIU degree. Engaged alumni also support FIU  
23 financially. Our alums are among the top donors  
24 to FIU. We have almost 300,000 alumni and most  
25 of them are here in South Florida, right in our

1 own backyard. Imagine the impact of their  
2 advocacy in supporting FIU.

3 And, finally, we need to stay engaged with  
4 our community. Our community and FIU are better  
5 off when our students, faculty and staff  
6 collaborate with a larger community. We can  
7 enrich the lives of our residents through health  
8 and civic partnerships, service and research,  
9 and we know the community will reciprocate by  
10 supporting FIU.

11 Many of the largest gifts to FIU are from  
12 members of our community who were not FIU  
13 alumni, benefactors who believe in FIU and its  
14 mission and believe in our students.

15 Let's face it, we are a Panther family and  
16 a Panther community, and we work better  
17 together. We will have greater affinity for FIU  
18 as an engaged community of students, faculty and  
19 staff, just like our alma mater: "Every  
20 scholar, side by side."

21 So where does this take us? We can be  
22 proud, very proud of what FIU has accomplished  
23 over the last 50 years, starting on an abandoned  
24 airfield opening to the largest enrollment of  
25 any educational institution at that time,



1 5,667 upper division and master students.

2 And now, today, we are educating over  
3 56,000 students, achieving \$246 million in  
4 research expenditures, being the number one  
5 producer of degrees to Hispanics, being a Top 10  
6 producer of baccalaureate degrees to  
7 African-Americans and achieving national  
8 rankings typically reserved for much older  
9 institutions. FIU has always had lofty goals  
10 and high expectations, and these have always  
11 been exceeded, and we will continue with that  
12 great tradition.

13 Our successes speak for themselves, and  
14 they are speaking in a loud voice and yet the  
15 best is yet to come. We will continue to focus  
16 on student success and research excellence. We  
17 will continue to produce great leaders,  
18 teachers, researchers, scientists, healthcare  
19 providers, lawyers, innovators, and  
20 entrepreneurs, and I believe together as a  
21 Panther family, we have the opportunity to be  
22 the world leader in solving the biggest problems  
23 facing society today, the health of its people  
24 and the environment we live in.

25 Thank you all very much for the opportunity

1 to be with you today. Thank you for those that  
2 showed up in person and thank you for those that  
3 are joining virtually. I think now we go into  
4 the Q & A session.

5 DR. TRELLES: So, before we get started  
6 with our Q & A session, please feel free to just  
7 approach any of our microphones that are here if  
8 you would like to ask a question. We are having  
9 some questions on Zoom. We have approximately  
10 150 people who are joining us through Zoom and  
11 WebCast, so we'll see if anybody here has a  
12 question, please just feel free to approach.

13 A member of our audience is approaching the  
14 microphone.

15 SPEAKER: Hi, good morning, Dr. Jessell.  
16 Thank you so much for your presentation. I'm  
17 Kerrie Montgomery, I'm also the director of  
18 campus life. And I'm just curious to know in  
19 your, I guess, months now in interim role, what  
20 has been the most surprising challenge that  
21 you've faced transitioning from your previous  
22 role at FIU to the interim presidency, and how  
23 have you navigated that situation and then how  
24 does that translate into potentially, you know,  
25 the next several months if you're appointed to

1 the permanent presidency?

2 DR. JESSELL: So, I think the biggest  
3 challenge that I knew about but didn't fully  
4 appreciate is the tremendous amount of effort  
5 that is needed to engage both within and outside  
6 the FIU Panther community. We have so many  
7 opportunities to promote FIU at all different  
8 levels in state government, for the governors,  
9 our community supporters, our alumni, the donors  
10 and the like, and it really is a tremendous work  
11 effort, but is also an effort of great joy and  
12 pleasure, particularly when you see results from  
13 the efforts that have gone in. And it's not  
14 just me, it's really a team effort because it  
15 takes a lot of people to not only set these up,  
16 but to prepare the important points so we can  
17 get them across very, very quickly. We often  
18 don't have that time. So, I think that's  
19 probably been the biggest, you know, surprising  
20 challenge. Again, we all know how important  
21 those things are, but actually doing it as  
22 compared to watching it, there is a very, very  
23 big difference.

24 DR. TRELLES: Dr. Jessell, we do have a  
25 couple of questions online that I would like to

1 take the opportunity to ask you.

2 "What are your specific goals to retain and  
3 recruit African-American students?"

4 DR. JESSELL: That is a very, very  
5 important priority. We have as a university  
6 goal the desire to have not only our student  
7 population reflect society as a whole, but also  
8 our faculty and staff reflect society as a  
9 whole. I'm very proud of the fact that we are  
10 the number one producer of Hispanic degrees and  
11 the Top 10 producer of African-American degrees,  
12 but we have a lot more work to do at the  
13 effort -- at the level of faculty and staff. We  
14 are going to recruit more, we're going to make  
15 the investments, we have a very ambitious DEI  
16 program to ensure that we have the diversity  
17 that we need as an institution, and we are  
18 working with other partners. One very nice  
19 initiative that started in June of this year is  
20 The Alliance of Hispanic Serving, you know,  
21 Institutions that are R1 status, and we are  
22 advocating very significantly for two things,  
23 number one, increasing funding so we can  
24 increase the number of Ph.D. students in our  
25 programs. By producing more Ph.D. students, we

1 will also increase the number of diverse faculty  
2 at the institution and that will help us not  
3 only attract a more diverse student body, but  
4 more importantly retain a diverse student body.  
5 It really makes a difference when you have  
6 students and they are seeing people like them,  
7 they are seeing the various opportunities.

8 And I remember several years ago in the  
9 White Coat Ceremony for the College of Medicine  
10 an African-American student that was talking,  
11 and he said, "You know, growing up, I never  
12 thought I could be a physician because I never  
13 saw an African-American doctor." And then it  
14 happened. And then I knew it was something that  
15 I can achieve. So, it is very important. We  
16 have ambitious goals, we monitor, you know,  
17 every year in terms of the enrollment and the  
18 diversity of the enrollment, and we also measure  
19 and monitor how well we're doing in our hiring  
20 practices and how we can improve how we market,  
21 how we promote, how we recruit, how we advertise  
22 and how we go through the employee sign-on  
23 process to make sure we're doing all we can to  
24 achieve that diversity.

25 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for your answer.

1           A follow-up question: "Can you, please,  
2           speak to your plans and ideas for DEI  
3           initiatives as a whole at FIU, specifically how  
4           you will work to make FIU a safer, brave space  
5           for our LGBTQIA+ students?"

6           DR. JESSELL: So, for anyone that knows me,  
7           they know that I believe, you know, safety,  
8           security and respect are the most important  
9           things that we can do as a university. If we  
10          don't have that environment, if we don't have an  
11          environment where faculty can teach and students  
12          can learn and where staff can support their  
13          faculty, their fellow staff members and most  
14          importantly our students. We made very  
15          significant investments in DEI opportunities at  
16          the university two years ago, and we expanded  
17          those even as part of the budget cycle this  
18          year, and we are going to certainly monitor and  
19          manage the progress that we're making.

20          I alluded to some of this as part of  
21          improving diversity within the community, and  
22          that's something that's very, very important. I  
23          believe everyone is important at FIU. No group,  
24          no individual should be excluded.

25          So, in January, as you know, I was out on

1 the FIU parade float for Pride Day, and it was  
2 amazing to see all of the amazing individuals  
3 out there celebrating the diversity of this  
4 community, and we need to do a lot more of that.

5 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

6 So in an opportunity to prep- -- actually,  
7 we have a member of our audience who has a  
8 question. We are definitely going to go to  
9 Michelle first.

10 SPEAKER: All right. Thank you. My name  
11 is Michelle Horvath. It seems that higher  
12 education has become a political issue in a  
13 novel way in the last few years, specifically  
14 regarding the academic freedom, matters related  
15 to speech, identity and funding issues that are  
16 likely to be impacted by legislative and  
17 judicial actions. How do you plan to  
18 meaningfully advocate for the mission of FIU in  
19 that political sphere and build alliances with  
20 your U.S. counterparts to ensure that higher ed  
21 remains a nonpartisan public good even if doing  
22 so may make you unpopular or open you to  
23 criticism?

24 DR. JESSELL: So, I will tell you that in  
25 39 years in higher education in Florida, I don't

1 think there's ever been a time where there  
2 hasn't been some type of, you know, political  
3 flavor, if you will, going on. We are going to  
4 do everything that we have always done at FIU,  
5 and that is focus on objective outstanding  
6 teaching and objective research. We are not  
7 going to deviate from that. I think just by  
8 staying the course, we all believe in academic  
9 freedom, I am a firm believer in academic  
10 freedom. I want to preserve the rights of  
11 faculty to teach objectively, to teach according  
12 to facts. We absolutely must have faculty that  
13 talk about the important aspects of society,  
14 good and bad, at all levels, because we want our  
15 students to know the facts, know the  
16 information, know the objectivity and then make  
17 decisions on their own. As a faculty member  
18 myself, I would never promote any one position  
19 because that will lead to the downfall not only  
20 of higher education, but, in my view, society as  
21 a whole. We want critical thinkers. We want  
22 people that will look at the evidence and make  
23 decisions. So, as long as researchers were  
24 being objective, as long as faculty members in  
25 teaching we are being objective, talking about



1 the facts, talking about what really happened, I  
2 think we are going to be absolutely fine. And  
3 even if that would be an unpopular approach for  
4 some, I will fully defend that position.

5 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for taking the time  
6 to answer that question. We have one more  
7 question from our Zoom audience.

8 "How do you plan to support our online  
9 students and retain our online faculty?"

10 And then they did have a follow-up  
11 question: "Are there any exciting initiatives  
12 on the horizon to expand our online services and  
13 programs for our students?"

14 SPEAKER: So, retain online faculty and  
15 retain online students, okay?

16 So, we have different types of online  
17 programs. We have programs that are exclusively  
18 100 percent online, right? And, so, I would  
19 assume that those students that are looking at  
20 100 percent online courses and programs are  
21 fully motivated in their online environment.  
22 They are not looking for the other aspects of  
23 university life. And usually these are older  
24 students or returning students or continuing  
25 students that want to get a degree in that -- in

1           that fashion. Our faculty teach both. They are  
2           not teaching only as online faculty 2.0, which  
3           is the fully online or online courses that are  
4           1.0 where they're doing some face-to-face and  
5           some online. I believe in terms of the  
6           engagement of the community, we have a lot of  
7           infrastructure in place. I mentioned that in my  
8           comments. I am really concerned about affinity  
9           of this institution, and that affinity expands  
10          when we are here as a full community. You are  
11          going to be more successful as a faculty member  
12          when you are interacting with your colleagues in  
13          person, you are interacting with your students  
14          in person.

15                 Now, for students, I think exactly the same  
16          way. Most of our students are looking for an  
17          in-person environment, but they also want to  
18          have the opportunity to increase their course  
19          offering potential by taking online courses.  
20          So, it is not unusual to see students that would  
21          be taking three or four classes in person and  
22          then one class online so they can get a full  
23          15 credits or perhaps, you know, 18 credits.  
24          And, for those students, we absolutely must  
25          continue to focus on affinity for our students.

1 We have to provide great advisory, we have to  
2 have those great mentorship opportunities  
3 between faculty and students, we must have great  
4 support services, we must have great athletic  
5 and extracurricular activities for these  
6 students. So, by doing that, that will improve  
7 our retention and graduation not only of  
8 students that are taking a combination of online  
9 and face-to-face, but face-to-face students  
10 exclusively. We need that level of affinity,  
11 and it's every aspect of our jobs as faculty  
12 members and staff contributing to that  
13 experience for our students.

14 DR. TRELLES: "So, in regards to  
15 contributing to that experience for our students  
16 and being there to support them, what  
17 initiatives do you envision to support the  
18 mental health and wellness, resilience and  
19 burnout of our faculty and staff and students?"

20 DR. JESSELL: I know this is a very, very  
21 big issue. For many years, with respect to  
22 students, mental health has been a big challenge  
23 and, unfortunately, the issues are becoming more  
24 pronounced, partially because of COVID, the  
25 isolation, the difficulties getting back into

1 the regular types of conversations and  
2 discussions, I see a lot of it with respect to  
3 students coming in from high school that are not  
4 fully prepared on a mental basis for the  
5 challenges of university work. Some people  
6 start by thinking it's really no more than an  
7 extension of high school, and it really isn't.  
8 So, we have to have professional staff available  
9 to assist these students. I believe we have an  
10 amazing mental health program for our students  
11 to help them navigate this process, and we spent  
12 time during orientation to make sure they  
13 understand what programs and services are  
14 available to them. We do a lot of reach-out  
15 even during the semester. So, if by chance  
16 they're having a hard time, they're struggling,  
17 they're going into a little bit of depression,  
18 they're worried about midterms or finals or  
19 graduation, we constantly interact with the  
20 students through messaging to let them know that  
21 our students are available and we do the same  
22 thing for our faculty and staff. I get the  
23 burnout. My God, this has been an incredible  
24 two and a half years in terms of work effort, in  
25 terms of just getting society back to normal for

1 everyone. So, yes, we are going to have those  
2 types of challenges, but we do have good  
3 programs for students, we do have good programs  
4 for our faculty and staff and we have outside  
5 groups that can come in and help. I know even  
6 those groups are a little taxed. So, I just  
7 recently had a conversation with our senior vice  
8 president of human resources about having  
9 outsourcing opportunities so faculty and staff  
10 can get immediate access to professionals that  
11 can assist them with mental health issues.

12 So, I get it. I mean, I understand and --  
13 a lot of struggles.

14 DR. TRELLES: Thank you.

15 "I know that you are aware of the increase  
16 in current standards of living. And based off  
17 of that, what is your projection or strategy to  
18 be able to increase the salaries, especially of  
19 facility workers who are the ones with the  
20 lowest salaries?"

21 DR. JESSELL: Well, I mentioned that this  
22 is my highest priority. We have to have the  
23 best faculty and the best staff, and you can  
24 only get that by having fair pay, fair  
25 compensation for the services that they provide.

1 FIU is an amazing university. It is the  
2 best place to work and that does have some  
3 value, but, let's face it, it's not going to  
4 solve all of the problems. That will help, but  
5 that's not going to solve all of the problems.  
6 We were all very disappointed this past  
7 legislative session when we did not get the same  
8 salary package as every other state worker.  
9 They got 5.28 percent across the board  
10 recurring. Our hearts dropped when we're  
11 reading the appropriation language seeing that  
12 all state universities were excluded from that  
13 package. We are going to be advocating for that  
14 this year as well. Give us the same salary  
15 package that you gave to all other state  
16 employees as well as advocating for a  
17 legislative budget request that will bring in  
18 \$20 million.

19 We are working on being more efficient.  
20 We've already done some rearranging of some  
21 areas. Our division of engagement that was a  
22 separate division under a vice president has  
23 been restructured so that we have moved those  
24 positions and responsibilities into two areas  
25 under academic affairs and strategic

1           communications and governmental relations  
2           because the advocacy is still very important.

3           The engagement is still very, very  
4           important, but we eliminated the administrative  
5           positions in the division, and we could -- and  
6           we used those to help offset the budget  
7           reduction that we had this year. And we did  
8           that for a few other areas as well. We should  
9           have been looking at about a two and a half  
10          percent budget reduction overall, and we were  
11          able to get it down to one and a half, you know,  
12          percent by looking at some of these  
13          restructuring opportunities.

14          So, that is -- you know, those are the  
15          things that we're working on. We try to give --  
16          for our lowest paid employees this year, you  
17          know, a nice one-time bonus that I think  
18          averaged about 10 percent. It's not recurring,  
19          but we gave, you know, a 10 percent for one year  
20          to help. Because we can see it ourselves what  
21          was happening to the price of gasoline, and we  
22          know what's going to be happening to the price  
23          of windstorm insurance, and we can see it in  
24          terms of what's happening to other types of  
25          insurance and what's happening to rents in this

1 community. We know we are the least affordable  
2 community in the country in terms of the  
3 percentage of salary that has to go to housing  
4 cost. So it is a priority. If we don't make  
5 these investments, we will lose the great people  
6 that have made the achievements that I alluded  
7 to and talked about in my presentation possible,  
8 okay? Because it's not just an algorithm; it's  
9 people that make it happen. And if you lose  
10 them, you're going to unwind everything that  
11 we've done.

12 SPEAKER: Good morning. Breny Garcia,  
13 Associate Vice President for Student Health &  
14 Wellness.

15 My question relates to your comment in your  
16 presentation about ROI. So, over the last  
17 several years, the university has expanded its  
18 footprint across the state. Outside of the  
19 research facilities, which obviously should, in  
20 theory, remain sustainable, could you share your  
21 philosophy around how success would be defined  
22 for some of our sites and campuses?

23 DR. JESSELL: So, you're absolutely right.  
24 In terms of the centers like the NFSTC that we  
25 opened up a couple of years ago in Largo, that



1 is a research center. And when we did the  
2 evaluation of that, we had a profit and loss  
3 statement. And it has been very, very  
4 successful. In our Torrey Pines center, the  
5 Center for Translational Research up in  
6 Port St. Lucie is also one that is  
7 self-sufficient. And our Washington, D.C.  
8 program was carefully evaluated because that was  
9 one of the questions that we knew was going to  
10 be coming from the Board of Trustees.

11 I am concerned about our educational sites  
12 that we have, particularly I-75. We have been  
13 seeing significant declines in enrollment. Now,  
14 when I visit there, the students that are there  
15 actually love being there, but we have not  
16 achieved what we anticipated when we went into a  
17 partnership with Broward College for that site.  
18 And a few weeks ago, Pablo Ortiz, Provost Bejar  
19 and I met with the president of Broward College  
20 and his key administrators to develop a vision  
21 for that campus. Honestly, I don't think that  
22 they've had one well articulated. And because  
23 it is a 2 plus 2 connect for success program, we  
24 can't be successful if they're not successful,  
25 so we absolutely have to get that right. We are

1 required to make the rental payments on that  
2 site if we have one student or 15,000 students  
3 on that site. I obviously want to pay rent  
4 supporting thousands and thousands of students.  
5 I believe we have the opportunity to capture a  
6 lot more incremental students, not just moving  
7 them from MMC to I-75, but pick up incremental  
8 students in that community for that campus.

9 So, we are working on that plan, we are  
10 continuing to have the dialogue. On BBC, I  
11 think this fall we're actually seeing some  
12 improvements. I want to get those programs way  
13 up. I think we have a lot of capacity. I know  
14 we have a lot of capacity. We're doing a  
15 master's program of nursing there, we have  
16 beautiful facilities, that's because of the  
17 additional dollars that we received from  
18 the state this year. Our Bayview housing that  
19 we did several years ago, I think it's around  
20 92 percent occupied this year. That is the  
21 highest level of occupancy that we have had.  
22 And the three or four times that I've already  
23 been to the campus this fall, I can see the  
24 excitement. But we need to do more. So, we  
25 will be continually evaluating that. This is

1 under the provost. It comes with the  
2 responsibilities of the chairs to make sure that  
3 we have the right programming on that campus.  
4 So, students that want a degree there or they  
5 have degree programs there, they can get -- they  
6 can meet all of their degree requirements right  
7 there on the campus.

8 DR. TRELLES: "Dr. Jessell, what is your  
9 vision for the international endeavors of FIU  
10 considering that it is our middle name?"

11 DR. JESSELL: Yes, yes,  
12 florida International University, absolutely.  
13 And that is a very, very important part not only  
14 of our name but who we are and what we are, so  
15 we cannot ignore that. I had mentioned that at  
16 a prior session when a similar question came up.  
17 Back in 1973, there was an article about: What  
18 does "international" mean for FIU? And this is  
19 when Charles Perry, you know, was president.  
20 So, they were struggling even back then to  
21 figure out what does this really mean and what  
22 types of investments need to be made by the  
23 institution, but it was clear even back then  
24 that international didn't mean simply having  
25 international students. You can have

1 international students, but does that mean  
2 you're going to have an international or global  
3 curriculum? Absolutely not. And unless you  
4 have an internationally defined or globally  
5 defined curriculum, you are not going to be  
6 preparing students for the challenges of a  
7 global society, a global economy and a global  
8 migration of people that we see time and time  
9 again.

10 So, that is my vision, to make sure that we  
11 have global throughout every aspect of our  
12 university and that includes even the support  
13 services that we have. We probably have to have  
14 different types of support services to different  
15 types of students based upon their backgrounds,  
16 because some things are more important to some  
17 students than to others. So we want to have a  
18 broad range of support for our students. It  
19 never should be a one-size-fits-all in terms of  
20 support and in terms of engagement and advocacy  
21 for our students.

22 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.  
23 I just want to remind our members in our  
24 audiences that please feel free to ask any  
25 questions whether you're in person or using our

1 Zoom platform.

2 So, one of the questions that we received  
3 yesterday that I think shared a lot of insight  
4 as to who you are as an individual was: "What  
5 attracted you to pursue an academic career  
6 teaching finance than likely a more lucrative  
7 path, like going directly into finance?"

8 DR. JESSELL: So you know, I think it goes  
9 to my introductory, you know, comments. It was  
10 not my intent to apply for the permanent  
11 position of university president, but sometimes  
12 paths change a little bit. Some things is  
13 making that path change and we follow that new  
14 path. So, my undergraduate degree was in  
15 political science. When I started as a freshman  
16 at Florida State University, I was with that  
17 35 percent that raised their hand, you know,  
18 "We're going to be lawyers." And the 60 percent  
19 that raised their hand that said, "I'm going to  
20 be a doctor, premed, premed, here," and then the  
21 5 percent that was everything else. And that  
22 was really my goal.

23 So, two things happened. Number one, I  
24 took a real estate class with a professor in the  
25 college of business that was absolutely amazing.

1 I mean, I learned things that were just  
2 incredible, and I loved the quantitative aspect  
3 of real estate because it's not just -- people  
4 think that real estate is just selling, but the  
5 physical asset, the finance of real estate, the  
6 investment of real estate. That was probably,  
7 I'm sad to say, the highest level of mathematics  
8 and computation that I had at the university. I  
9 exempted out of the, you know, basic math stuff  
10 because of my, you know, high school, you know,  
11 performance. It was very, very challenging.

12 And then I had a job offer from EDS in  
13 Dallas, and I thought to myself, "If I'm going  
14 to go into the business side rather than law, I  
15 should probably do an MBA." So I forgot about  
16 the LSAT and took the GMAT and pursued the  
17 degree in business, the MBA. I interacted with  
18 the same faculty member and many, many others as  
19 an MBA student, and I really was attracted to  
20 the quantitative side of business and that led  
21 me into finance, and that attraction grew to the  
22 point that with the great mentors that I had, I  
23 decided to stay on for the Ph.D. I just loved  
24 the research, I loved the teaching that I was  
25 doing as an MBA and then the rest is history. I

1 will tell you that you always have the  
2 opportunity to change course if you put the time  
3 and effort into it. Again, starting out, I  
4 never thought I would be, you know, here today.

5 I think my first semester in the MBA  
6 program I had calculus, Fortran, econometrics  
7 and statistics, and one other class, I can't  
8 remember what it was, but it was not that easy.  
9 So, I think I was, you know, studying like  
10 20 hours a day, particularly for someone, like I  
11 said, really didn't have a quantitative  
12 undergraduate background, but I put the time and  
13 effort in. And, so, by the time I got to  
14 differential equations as a Ph.D. student, I was  
15 able to do it. Now I couldn't do it today  
16 without going back and doing some significant  
17 refreshers, but the nice thing is in my  
18 experience here at FIU, I see that same level of  
19 commitment and determination for our students.

20 I mean, let's face it, when you look at  
21 50 percent Pell-eligible students, you know you  
22 have to have strong drive, you have to have  
23 strong commitment, and I see it day in and day  
24 out. And I just love talking to alums that I  
25 got to meet and know early on when I was here

1 and see how successful they are in business, in  
2 other universities because they have Ph.D.s and  
3 they're doing great teaching and great research  
4 in the medical profession. I always talk about,  
5 you know, Dr. Sandor Toledo, who was the first  
6 people that I met, you know, came from Cuba,  
7 Miami-Dade College, FIU, and went into medicine.  
8 After he did his -- the first two years of  
9 medical training at Ross University School of  
10 Medicine, he said, "Not only do I want to be a  
11 great physician, I want to be a great  
12 businessperson" and then was doing his MBA at  
13 the same time. So, that's just one example, but  
14 there are thousands and thousands of stories  
15 just like that.

16 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing a  
17 little bit about your background here today. I  
18 did receive another question from a member of  
19 our Zoom audience.

20 "African-American faculty and staff are  
21 disproportionately compensated and promoted. As  
22 a result, the university has lost a large number  
23 of exceptional employees. What are your plans  
24 to change this?"

25 DR. JESSELL: So, I think I already



1 addressed that in terms of our commitment to  
2 have a diverse faculty. We do monitor as part  
3 of our annual equity report the progress that  
4 we're making in that area. So, this is  
5 something that I will be discussing if this is  
6 coming up as an area of concern with the provost  
7 and her team to make sure we have the right  
8 programs in place and the right and fair  
9 compensation.

10 I believe everyone should be compensated as  
11 fairly and equitably as we possibly can. There  
12 should be no differentials based upon race or  
13 gender or anything else at the university, and I  
14 believe we are all committed to that. So, we  
15 will look at the data. We will see if there are  
16 instances of greater loss of faculty where we  
17 have retention issues and certainly, you know,  
18 address that. We are committed to having  
19 faculty and staff that represent our student  
20 body, okay, because that's going to make us a  
21 much better institution.

22 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

23 "The public time and again questions the  
24 value of higher education degrees. How do you  
25 plan to make the case and publicly demonstrate

1 that the undergraduate and graduate degrees not  
2 only have an economic value but an intellectual  
3 one as well?"

4 DR. JESSELL: So, I think if you look at,  
5 you know, years and years of data, you will find  
6 that having a college degree gives you much  
7 greater earnings over your lifetime as compared  
8 to someone that does not have a degree and every  
9 year of education helps. We want every student  
10 that starts a four-year degree at FIU to obtain  
11 a four-year degree at FIU.

12 And for years and years the economic report  
13 of the president has given very documented  
14 evidence of the value of education, but we don't  
15 have to look at just that. I had mentioned  
16 yesterday, as part of degree choices, which is  
17 really a return on investment for, you know, for  
18 education. And there are two parts of that.

19 Number one, the payback, which looks at the  
20 net cost of the student to obtain a degree and  
21 how many years it takes them to pay back that  
22 cost based upon the delta or the difference  
23 between how much they would make as a high  
24 school graduate versus how much they're making  
25 as a college graduate. So, if it cost you

1 20,000 and you're making 5,000 more as an FIU  
2 graduate as compared to a high school graduate,  
3 it would be four years. 20,000 divided by 5,000  
4 or 4. Then, they adjust that by looking out  
5 ten years to make sure that we still have that  
6 same quality earning power.

7 So, they look at the average salary of FIU  
8 graduates ten years out and compare that to the  
9 average salaries of other, all other college  
10 graduates ten years out. And that's where we  
11 really shine because our graduates ten years out  
12 are performing significantly better than the  
13 average for all other college graduates, so that  
14 shows you the value of an FIU degree.

15 In Florida, because the tuition is  
16 essentially the same for all the state  
17 universities; and, therefore, the net cost is  
18 probably close to being the same for all of the  
19 universities, we would have expected to see --  
20 if we all did the same ten years out, we would  
21 have expected to see all of those in the Top 25.  
22 We ended up at 23 and there was only one other  
23 university in Florida that was in that Top 25,  
24 so that's pretty impressive. So, that talks  
25 about the specific value of an FIU degree.

1           We're doing a tremendous amount on other  
2 opportunities to increase the value proposition.  
3 I had mentioned the micro-credentialing courses  
4 that we have under our A.I. and E.I. QEP, and  
5 we're trying to get more and more students to do  
6 those micro-credentialing courses at every stage  
7 of their program.

8           So, you should do one every semester if you  
9 possibly can because that means when you get  
10 out, you're going to have more up-to-date skill  
11 sets than your peers, and that means you are  
12 going to get, you know, a better job, a higher  
13 paying job, because you are more prepared  
14 academically.

15           DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

16           "What are your views on the student loan  
17 crisis and what do you think FIU could do or  
18 should do to help our alumni and our current  
19 students?"

20           DR. JESSELL: So, number one, I believe we  
21 need to make more investments in scholarship  
22 support for our students. We have been strong  
23 advocates over many years of increasing the  
24 amount of the Pell Grants. That's very, very  
25 important, particularly when we're looking at

1 the cost increases that we have had this past  
2 year and what we expect to see over the next few  
3 years.

4 Secondly, I talked about in my discussion  
5 that scholarships are critical, and I want our  
6 foundation to really focus on scholarship  
7 support to students. Again, with 50 percent of  
8 our students being Pell eligible, we know those  
9 are the neediest students. And research has  
10 shown that you could have students with the same  
11 preparation, the same SATs, the same GPA go into  
12 the same schools, et cetera, but if you are in  
13 the lower income, you are not going to graduate  
14 as effectively as those students with means.  
15 So, it's very, very important to have those  
16 dollars. So, we absolutely want to do that. We  
17 have been doing that. I think we have done a  
18 very, very good job, but we can always do  
19 better. It's a question of resources.

20 With respect to the discussion on  
21 elimination of debt, you know, I have my own  
22 personal perspective on this. When I was a  
23 student, I didn't have great means, so I worked  
24 in the Strozier library at FSU. I worked  
25 20 hours a week, and that helped me pay for my

1 college education so I really didn't have to go  
2 into debt, but I had a lot of friends that took  
3 a little bit different approach. They wanted to  
4 have a little bit more fun in college and so  
5 they did the debt route rather than -- rather  
6 than working. So, I mean, some of it's, you  
7 know, a personal choice. And then you look at  
8 the distribution of outstanding debt. Where is  
9 that debt currently being held? Well, you're  
10 finding that a very large amount of that debt is  
11 being held by individuals that have advanced  
12 degrees, graduate degrees with greater earning  
13 potential. So, in essence, it could be  
14 considered a subsidy for those students that  
15 would have more ability to pay.

16 So, for me, personally, I would rather see  
17 those dollars being redirected into expanded  
18 Pell awards or other types of financial support  
19 for students so they can get through college,  
20 they can get through as quickly as they possibly  
21 can and then start making contributions back to  
22 society. For us, because so many of our  
23 students come from Miami-Dade and so many of our  
24 students stay in Miami-Dade, if we can get them  
25 out a semester or two earlier, then they

1 would -- they would have to graduate because  
2 they have to work part-time to get through or  
3 work full-time to get through. What does that  
4 mean in terms of the economic contribution to  
5 this community? What does it mean to them  
6 personally by having an additional two semesters  
7 of earnings under their belt rather than two  
8 semesters of expenses under their belt?

9 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

10 "You mentioned the contribution of our  
11 students to our community. What is your vision  
12 of FIU in our community and how we're going to  
13 impact it?"

14 DR. JESSELL: So, from my perspective, FIU  
15 is our community, right? Our students come  
16 primarily from FIU and our faculty and staff  
17 live in this community; and, therefore, it's a  
18 two-way street. We are the community and the  
19 community is FIU. I had mentioned, I think the  
20 interaction with our community, the engagement  
21 with our community is absolutely critical. It's  
22 important for our students to have opportunities  
23 for internships and other types of  
24 extracurricular and cultural programs that  
25 really add to their educational experience. And

1 I think it's a great opportunity for our faculty  
2 and staff to not only go into the community to  
3 make it better, but also to show the community  
4 what we can do. And this really comes back to  
5 greater community support, as I had mentioned.  
6 Some of our very, very largest donors are people  
7 from the community that just saw what we could  
8 do. So, the more we can get that story out, the  
9 more we can help the community, the more the  
10 community can help us.

11 DR. TRELLES: "Is there a system in place  
12 for the Panther community to share with you any  
13 potential ideas to increase FIU affinity,  
14 collaboration, funding, partnerships?"

15 DR. JESSELL: Well, I don't know that we  
16 have, like, an idea, but I'll -- does anyone  
17 know the answer to that? If not, we will get  
18 one. We used to. Okay. So Breny Garcia is --  
19 okay. So now we have a new manager, so we will  
20 get this out. So we will do some kind of  
21 announcement.

22 We always -- we always love to have ideas,  
23 okay? We need feedback. We believe we're doing  
24 well and honestly we do a lot of great surveys  
25 within the university. We do the graduating



1 student survey, we do surveys of our food  
2 service. We do many, many types of surveys to  
3 see how well we're doing. Unless we get  
4 feedback, we may think it's going well, only to  
5 find out that it's not going as well. So, we  
6 will get this out. Give us your ideas. I am a  
7 firm believer of affinity. I would not be here  
8 today if it wasn't for the opportunities, you  
9 know, that I had in my fraternity. I was in  
10 Gold Key, I was in Garnet Key and a few other  
11 organizations. I was in the political science  
12 club. I mean, it all adds and, in fact, in many  
13 ways I learned more outside of the classroom  
14 than I did inside of the classroom. I mean,  
15 let's face it, particularly when I was in  
16 college, practically in the stone ages with  
17 respect how much knowledge we had, I mean, the  
18 knowledge that you learn is going to be obsolete  
19 in a few years. And, so, having the ability to  
20 continually upgrade in your knowledge and  
21 dissect and add to it, I mean, it really, it  
22 really happens because of these other  
23 activities. So, send us your ideas and we'll  
24 get it out there.

25 I don't know how we let you go, Breny, and

1           how you didn't continue to monitor that.

2           DR. TRELLES:   Okay.   One more question.

3           " How do you plan to lead our community, our  
4           university faculty and staff and students be  
5           ethical, to be responsible people who do the  
6           right thing?  And what about the consequences  
7           for those who are being unethical?"

8           DR. JESSELL:   So, we have spent a  
9           tremendous amount of effort in getting that  
10          information out.  We have the report.fiu.edu.  I  
11          did a video promotion of our new ethics  
12          requirements.  We want everyone to do the right  
13          thing every time, and if you happen to see an  
14          activity that is not ethical, remember, you have  
15          an obligation, in my view, to report that,  
16          because they are hurting not only you  
17          personally, but the entire FIU community.  
18          Everything that is stolen, everything that is  
19          redirected hurts us because it takes away  
20          resources that we know we need elsewhere.

21          So, I think we've been doing a very, very  
22          good job.  I know for me personally, it is  
23          something that is very, very important.  When I  
24          first came here to FIU in 2009, I was surprised  
25          that we didn't have a fraud policy, and that was

1 one of the things that we worked on through the  
2 office of compliance. And we did a big rollout  
3 even back then. It's all been improved. You  
4 have to continue to improve, and you have to  
5 improve the reporting mechanisms. But, if you  
6 have any doubt about our sincerity in making  
7 sure that we have opportunities for people to  
8 report, just go online and look, we have  
9 hotlines and -- particularly report.fiu.edu.  
10 Please, please, do it. It just harms the  
11 university more than you can imagine.

12 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for that.

13 In preparation for today's meeting, we had  
14 an opportunity to collect some questions from  
15 our audience and there were a couple themes that  
16 have emerged and one of them was remote work and  
17 what that means. I know you had previously  
18 addressed it in regards to our faculty, but if  
19 you could continue to share your vision on that.

20 DR. JESSELL: Yes. Well, you know, I  
21 talked about it with, you know, with faculty.  
22 Faculty have never been, you know, 9 to 5,  
23 clock in, clock out. Most faculty would tell me  
24 if I said, "You're 9 to 5," they would say,  
25 "Thank you because I work a lot more than 9 to 5

1 right now."

2 I do believe in the affinity, I do believe  
3 in the engagement. I think we are better off as  
4 faculty when we have engagement with our  
5 colleagues, when we have engagement with  
6 students, when we have engagement with staff  
7 members, and we do that at all different arenas  
8 within the university.

9 As an assistant professor of finance in  
10 1983, I know that I did a much better job, I was  
11 more successful in the classroom and more  
12 successful in my research enterprise because of  
13 the mentoring that I had with the senior  
14 faculty. I mean, that was truly amazing. We  
15 just would not see the great achievements of  
16 junior faculty without that mentoring, but I  
17 also recognize for faculty that there are  
18 opportunities where not being on campus are more  
19 beneficial and more productive and more  
20 efficient for the university. Do I want faculty  
21 living outside of our area? No. I believe it  
22 is important for faculty to come to campus to do  
23 these types of things, to gain that affinity, to  
24 gain that productivity, to put it in a  
25 financial -- finance perspective. You know, you

1       could look at, you know, different portfolios,  
2       but it's a combination of those securities and  
3       assets in the portfolio that increase the value  
4       proposition. And being here in person says,  
5       "Hey, it's not just the individual productivity,  
6       but it's the productivity of  
7       Florida International University."

8               With respect to our staff, we have a very  
9       robust remote work policy. We were one of the  
10      first institutions, I believe, to actually  
11      develop a very, very good policy. At the end of  
12      the day, that policy says: We must do, we have  
13      an obligation to do whatever what is in the best  
14      interest of our university, what is in the best  
15      interest of our students, what is in the best  
16      interest of our faculty, what is in the best  
17      interest of our staff, and what is in the best  
18      interest of our community.

19             I get it that it may not always be perfect,  
20      but we have to have that absolutely first and  
21      foremost. Within that context, we do have  
22      opportunities for remote work. Again, do I want  
23      people living outside of the area? No. And we  
24      know just from the recent storms that we had on  
25      the west coast of Florida, talk to the people at

1 Florida Gulf Coast, talk to the people at New  
2 College of Florida, talk to the people at  
3 University of South Florida and talk to the  
4 people at University of Central Florida. It was  
5 all hands on deck. Everybody came together to  
6 make the university get to normal operations as  
7 quickly as they could. Everybody chipped in.  
8 And we've had those experiences here as well  
9 over the years and everybody being able to come  
10 together is very, very, you know, important.

11 But look at the policy. Work with your  
12 supervisor. Even before we had the remote  
13 policy, we had opportunities of flexibility for  
14 our staff members. I would have staff members  
15 say, "Look, I've got this going on in the  
16 morning. It makes no sense for me to drive in,  
17 drive out, drive back, et cetera, so, yeah, I'm  
18 going to stay and work at the home office." And  
19 I know that they were really working from the  
20 home office, but that wasn't a case where they  
21 are going to be permanently assigned at home  
22 forever and a day while they were employed at  
23 FIU. But we do have opportunities where maybe  
24 it's one day a week, two days a week in some  
25 cases where people can -- where our staff

1 members can do that. And when I talk to people  
2 in business, we're not alone in terms of the  
3 challenges with remote. And I know it's hard to  
4 hire sometimes if we don't offer some type of  
5 remote flexibility, but even businesses are now  
6 coming back, they're saying, "You know what, we  
7 are reevaluating that because we're seeing that  
8 it is impacting our strategic growth and  
9 development by not having these brainstorming  
10 sessions, not being able to walk up to someone  
11 at the watercooler or at the coffee stand or at  
12 the lunch counter just to have a brainstorming  
13 idea. 'Hey, I thought about this,' or, 'Oh, I  
14 saw that,' or, 'I observed something.'" That's  
15 very, very important.

16 So, it is a tough balance, but we do have a  
17 very, very good policy. So work with your  
18 supervisor if you have any questions.

19 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

20 So we did have a follow-up comment from  
21 something that you mentioned yesterday.

22 "FIU tends to have lower salaries when  
23 compared to for-profit companies, especially in  
24 finance and accounting fields. Some of our  
25 students are interested in graduate degrees,

1       which can be expensive, even at FIU and several  
2       of our employees have gone to other schools in  
3       order to obtain their master's degrees.  
4       Salaries are important, but have you thought  
5       about other benefits that could be provided to  
6       employees?"

7               DR. JESSELL:   So, we actually have a  
8       program in place where you can obtain, you know,  
9       a degree at FIU at no cost, so I'm not sure  
10      where, you know, that is coming from, if it is a  
11      market-rate program that has incremental costs.  
12      A market-rate program is a program where the  
13      revenues have to cover all of the costs.  We  
14      actually give a credit for the amount that they  
15      would receive as a university employee to help  
16      mitigate that, and so that should not be -- that  
17      should not lead to a situation where it would be  
18      more economical for an employee to go to the  
19      outside to obtain the degree.  So, I would have  
20      to look at the data to see if there are programs  
21      like that, but we have tried to be very, very  
22      flexible.  We are an educational institution.  
23      We want students -- we want employees that don't  
24      have baccalaureate degrees to get baccalaureate  
25      degrees, and we want employees that have



1       baccalaureate degrees to get master's degrees  
2       and beyond. So, that is, you know, part of our  
3       culture, that's part of who we are as an  
4       institution. So, I can't answer the specific.  
5       We value those educational opportunities. I  
6       think we have a good program that offers the  
7       free tuition, not only for the employee, but for  
8       their -- for their dependents that attend FIU,  
9       so it's a good value proposition.

10           DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing.

11           "Are there any plans to expand the age of  
12       acceptance to the Children's Creative Learning  
13       Center to assist faculty, students and staff  
14       members who have children under the age of two?"

15           DR. JESSELL: This came up as a prior  
16       question. Yeah, we will look at that. I think  
17       we have a center that is second to none. It  
18       works very, very well. We just had a big  
19       discussion on that with respect to the need to  
20       increase the rates just to be competitive. We  
21       were well below -- well below market, and we  
22       were having a hard time attracting and retaining  
23       talent there, and you have to have the right  
24       talent. You're looking at someone that has the  
25       responsibility to care for a young child. You

1 cannot take any employee that is not absolutely  
2 the best, but it was a very, very good program.  
3 We really did the ROI on this, and it is  
4 sustainable. If we have opportunities to expand  
5 that, we would be open to exploring them. So,  
6 we would look at what the -- what the demand is,  
7 what the capacity is. We need to expand  
8 capacity. We might be able to do that using  
9 dollars and then look at the revenues that would  
10 be coming in, so I'm happy to look at that. I  
11 don't have the specifics, but we have a great  
12 team here that are very familiar with what we're  
13 doing and what the opportunities would be. If  
14 that is a need that is unmet and we have the  
15 opportunity to fulfill it, I would like to do  
16 it. Not only is it a good thing to do it, but  
17 it will help, it will help attract and retain  
18 our faculty and staff and our students.

19 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

20 So, our time is coming to an end, and I  
21 wanted to share that the transcripts as well as  
22 the video for our session will be made available  
23 on the presidential search website within the  
24 end of the week. So, if you would like to  
25 review the transcripts or view the video, you

1 are welcome to do so.

2 Now, do you have any last remarks before we  
3 end our session?

4 DR. JESSELL: Well, let me just, once  
5 again, thank you all for being here in person or  
6 virtually. It was my opportunity to address you  
7 today, answer questions. I hope you got to get  
8 to know me a little bit better, and I look  
9 forward, if given the opportunity, to serving as  
10 your president. I promise to work as hard as I  
11 can to support you, our students, our faculty  
12 and staff.

13 DR. TRELLES: Thank you.

14 And thank you all for joining us both in  
15 person and virtually. It was a pleasure seeing  
16 all of you here today.

17 (APPLAUSE)

18 (General Session concluded at 11:18 a.m.)

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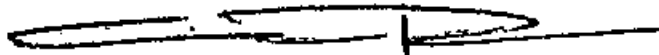
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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

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