

Florida International University Presidential Search Stakeholder Survey Summary

Priorities and Opportunities

Strategic Growth and Innovation

FIU is poised for significant institutional growth and national distinction. Strategic investments in research, infrastructure, and faculty excellence present major opportunities to advance the University's mission.

Global Engagement and Leadership

As Miami's public research university – with 'International' in its DNA -, FIU has a unique opportunity to lead national conversations around international relations and collaboration.

Community and Industry Partnerships

The University is well-positioned to expand its partnerships with local and global industries, enhancing applied research, internships, workforce development, and economic impact in South Florida.

Rising National Profile

With its R1 designation, innovative academic programs, and a growing alumni base, FIU has the potential to further elevate its national and international reputation.

Transformational Student Impact

FIU continues to be a powerful engine of social mobility for first-generation and underrepresented students. The next President can expand this impact through focused support for student success and affordability.

Desired Qualifications and Characteristics for the New President

Extensive Academic Leadership Experience

Stakeholders strongly advocate for a leader with a terminal degree and a proven track record in university administration, ideally with experience as a President, Provost, or Dean.

Political Neutrality and Institutional Independence

The next President must operate independently of political agendas, resist undue influence, and protect the University's integrity and mission.

Empathetic, Transparent, and Collaborative Leadership

Respondents seek a leader who actively engages with students, faculty, and staff, listens with empathy, and fosters a culture of inclusion and respect.

Visionary and Strategic Mindset

A strong emphasis is placed on selecting a president who is capable of leading with purpose—advancing academic excellence, securing research funding, and stewarding sustainable institutional growth.

Major Challenges

Political Interference & Institutional Autonomy

Concerns are widespread that the University is becoming politicized, particularly with the perceived appointment of candidates with close political affiliations. There is strong resistance to the idea of FIU leadership serving as a political reward rather than being based on merit.

Erosion of Academic Freedom

Respondents highlighted fears of censorship, particularly regarding race, gender, LGBTQ+ issues, and global political discussions. Preserving the right to academic inquiry and open discourse is seen as essential.

Safety & Support for Immigrant and International Students

The presence of immigration enforcement on campus has contributed to a climate of fear. Many students fear visa revocations and a broader lack of protection for marginalized communities.

Internal Morale and Transparency

Faculty and staff expressed concerns about reduced trust in leadership, staff attrition, insufficient support, and dissatisfaction with remote work policy changes. There is a desire for more transparency in decision-making processes.

Funding and Infrastructure Gaps

Challenges include reduced federal grant support, inadequate facilities (especially in high-performing units), and outdated infrastructure—particularly affecting teaching, research, and student engagement.

Anticipated Obstacles

Navigating a Complex Political Climate

The next President will need to balance state-level pressures with the academic values and cultural diversity that define FIU.

Rebuilding Trust

Due to a controversial search process and perceived pre-selection of candidates, rebuilding confidence in leadership will be essential.

Resource and Enrollment Challenges

Issues such as space limitations, declining international enrollment, and staff retention pose operational hurdles.

What Makes FIU Compelling

International Student Body

FIU's identity is deeply rooted in its international student body and multicultural community. It is widely celebrated as a leader in access and upward mobility, especially for first-generation and immigrant students.

Location and Community Impact

Situated in Miami, FIU benefits from a globally connected, bilingual, and culturally rich environment—well-positioned to lead on pressing societal challenges such as climate change, global health, and social mobility.

Research Excellence and Institutional Momentum

As an R1 research institution, FIU has growing national recognition, innovative faculty, and strong programs across disciplines. The next President has the opportunity to build on this momentum and elevate the University to even greater prominence.

