

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Presidential Candidate Community Session
Session I Community Forum
LOCATION: Graham Center Ballrooms
Florida International University
11200 S.W. 8 Street
Miami, Florida 33199

DATE: Wednesday, May 21, 2025

TIME: 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM

Executive Recruiter:

Bill Funk, Funk and Associates

Interim President/Candidate:

Jeanette Nunez

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Carlos Duarte, Committee Chair; Vice Chair

Noël Barengo, FIU Board of Trustees

Eric Eikenberg, CEO, The Everglades Foundation

Francis Hondal, FIU Board of Directors

Albert Maury, Pres/CEO, Leon Medical Centers

Jose Oliva, Florida Board of Governors

Claudia Puig, FIU Foundation, Board of Directors

Selcuk Uluagac, Eminent Scholar Professor

Marc Sarnoff, Committee Vice Chair; FIU Trustee

Francesca Casanova, FIU Board of Trustees

Gerald Grant, Jr., Vice Chair, FIU Foundation

Natasha Lowell, Senior VP Grove Bank

Carlos Migoya, CEO Jackson Health System

Yaffa Popack, FIU Board of Trustees

Alexander Rubido, JD candidate, College of Law

REPORTED BY: Chancelor Merritt, Stenographer
and Notary Public in the State of Florida at
Large

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 (Thereupon, Session I was held:)</p> <p>2 MR. FUNK: It's my pleasure to extend a warm</p> <p>3 welcome to the members of the FIU community who are</p> <p>4 joining us today for an opportunity to meet and hear</p> <p>5 from Presidential candidate finalists Ms. Jeanette</p> <p>6 M. Nunez. Our first session is a community forum.</p> <p>7 We're going to have two other forums as the day</p> <p>8 goes on but we welcome FIU Volunteer boards, alumni,</p> <p>9 and members of the community joining us this</p> <p>10 morning. As part of our university community, we</p> <p>11 strive to foster a respectful and open environment.</p> <p>12 All perspectives are welcome. Please be mindful</p> <p>13 though of maintaining decorum. Unruly, threatening,</p> <p>14 or disruptive behavior that may disrupt the forum is</p> <p>15 prohibited. I know we won't have that issue with</p> <p>16 this group this morning. Any individual violating</p> <p>17 this rule will be asked to leave the event.</p> <p>18 My name is Bill Funk and I'm the founder and</p> <p>19 president of a firm called Funk Associates. And</p> <p>20 we were privileged to be retained to assist the</p> <p>21 board in this most recent search. And our experience</p> <p>22 with Florida International really goes back 20 plus</p> <p>23 years. So we've seen the dramatic growth and</p> <p>24 ascension of Florida International, and we were just</p> <p>25 delighted to be part of this process.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 have a question that we haven't covered today, we</p> <p>2 have set aside a few minutes to take questions from</p> <p>3 members of the audience joining us in person.</p> <p>4 Mrs. Jeanette M. Nunez is Interim President of</p> <p>5 Florida International University, a position she has</p> <p>6 held since February. As interim president, Ms. Nunez</p> <p>7 serves as the Chief Executive Officer for the</p> <p>8 university and is responsible for the operation and</p> <p>9 administration of the university, including</p> <p>10 efficient and effective budget and program</p> <p>11 administration leading the university to accomplish</p> <p>12 its education, missions and goals, monitoring</p> <p>13 educational and financial performance, and serving</p> <p>14 as the university's key spokesperson. Prior to her</p> <p>15 appointment as interim president, Ms. Nunez served</p> <p>16 as the State of Florida's Lieutenant Governor. She</p> <p>17 is a proud double alumna. She earned a bachelor's</p> <p>18 degree in political science and international</p> <p>19 relations in 1994, and a master's degree in public</p> <p>20 administration also from Florida International</p> <p>21 University. Before serving as Lieutenant Governor in</p> <p>22 Florida, she represented Miami-Dade County in the</p> <p>23 Florida legislature for eight years.</p> <p>24 Ms. Nunez came to public office with years of</p> <p>25 experience as Vice President of Governmental Affairs</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 In consultation with the board of Governors,</p> <p>2 FIU Board of Trustees Chair, Roger Tovar, appointed</p> <p>3 the 15-member Presidential Search Committee. These</p> <p>4 individuals who were appointed in accordance with</p> <p>5 the Florida Board of Governors Regulations represent</p> <p>6 the Florida Board of Governors, the FIU Board of</p> <p>7 Trustees, including two former chairs, FIU</p> <p>8 Foundation Board of Directors, the current faculty</p> <p>9 senate chair, a distinguished professor, the current</p> <p>10 student government president, a former student</p> <p>11 government president as well as other distinguished</p> <p>12 members of the community. The Presidential Search</p> <p>13 Committee conducted its work in accordance with</p> <p>14 Florida statutes and Board of Governors Regulations.</p> <p>15 All of today's sessions are available to the</p> <p>16 university community to attend in person or on the</p> <p>17 FIU webcast. Each session has been scheduled for one</p> <p>18 hour. After the candidate's presentation, we will</p> <p>19 take time to address questions from the university</p> <p>20 community. Thank you to everyone who submitted</p> <p>21 questions in advance of today's session. Your</p> <p>22 questions were organized into common themes. The</p> <p>23 goal is to cover as many of those themes as possible</p> <p>24 within the time we have. If you did not submit a</p> <p>25 question in advance of today's sessions, and you</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 at Jackson Health Systems and similar leadership</p> <p>2 positions at Kendall Regional Medical Center and</p> <p>3 Aventura Hospital and Medical Center. It's now my</p> <p>4 pleasure to introduce you to Ms. Jeanette Nunez.</p> <p>5 MS. NUNEZ: Well, good morning, and it's an</p> <p>6 honor to be here. And thank you, Bill for that</p> <p>7 introduction and for the opportunity to come for</p> <p>8 this forum to talk about my interest, my desire, my</p> <p>9 experience and certainly my passion for Florida</p> <p>10 International University in serving as the seventh</p> <p>11 university president here at FIU.</p> <p>12 I figured for those of you that perhaps don't</p> <p>13 know me very well, I'll just go back in time and</p> <p>14 share a little bit about my upbringing here in this</p> <p>15 community. Born and raised a stone throw away from</p> <p>16 FIU. I was born to two Cuban immigrants that fled</p> <p>17 communism and got to this country in 1961. And what</p> <p>18 they instilled in me is the love of this country, a</p> <p>19 focus on higher education, and a work ethic</p> <p>20 unparalleled as I have an 89-year-old mother just</p> <p>21 turned 89 on Monday and still works part-time today.</p> <p>22 So I had great role models growing up.</p> <p>23 I first stepped foot on this campus in 1989 as</p> <p>24 a rising high school senior. It was my first</p> <p>25 official job. I worked throughout the summer NPC at</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 the registrar's office, and that was my first foray 2 into FIU. Although my sisters had previously 3 attended and graduated from here as well. I spent 4 the entire summer working here. I enjoyed it 5 thoroughly. Apparently, they enjoyed having me as 6 their employee, so they offered me that position 7 upon graduation from high school. So subsequent to 8 that, I came back. FIU was the only school that I 9 enrolled in and I applied for because I knew FIU was 10 where I wanted to be. 11 My high school sweetheart, then college 12 sweetheart and I attended together, and he's now my 13 husband of 30 years. And what I can tell you is that 14 FIU has been an integral part of my life of that of 15 my immediate family, and that of my extended family. 16 So I have a deep connection and passion for this 17 university. I studied here political science and 18 international relations. I earned my bachelor's. I 19 then enrolled for my master's degree in public 20 administration. 21 My first official job out of college was 22 working in Tallahassee as a legislative aid. That is 23 where I began my love for state government, for 24 policymaking, and for public service. I spent nine 25 years working in both the Florida House and the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 interesting time. As you can imagine, political 2 campaigns they're onerous and they can be grueling, 3 but it really helped me understand the needs of the 4 community that I was going to be representing. So I 5 ran in 2010, I was successful. I served at the 6 Florida House proudly for eight years and I actually 7 was able to obtain positions in many important 8 committees, including higher education and workforce 9 development, including vice chair of appropriations. 10 And my last term my peers selected me to be speaker 11 pro tempore. It was in that role that I was 12 responsible for overseeing the management of the 13 chamber, ensuring the efficient and effective policy 14 making, decorum, following of rules. And so it was a 15 really interesting experience. I had intended to 16 retire from politics at that point, but in the 17 summer of 2018, I received a call from a 18 little-known congressman at the time named Ron 19 DeSantis, and he asked me if I would consider 20 joining him on the ticket to run alongside him as 21 his Lieutenant Governor candidate. In full 22 disclosure, I politely declined the first time and I 23 thought I had put that chapter to, to rest and had 24 moved on to something else. But shortly thereafter, 25 I received a number of calls from people in the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 Florida Senate as legislative aid to the state 2 representative and state senator. And upon that time 3 in Tallahassee, I was then approached by the folks 4 at Jackson Memorial Hospital to go and head up their 5 government affairs. I spent a good amount of time 6 working at Jackson Memorial Hospital really 7 deepening not only state policy making budget, 8 understanding of budgets, but also healthcare. And I 9 think that is something that is going to be pivotal 10 and instrumental for FIU, as you've seen, we 11 continue to grow in the healthcare space. 12 I spent several years working at Jackson, and 13 then I went to go work at another hospital system, 14 as was mentioned, Kendall Regional Medical Center 15 and Aventura Medical Center. A little different 16 focus because it was a for-profit, whereas Jackson 17 was public. But I think both perspectives provided 18 me with a comprehensive understanding of healthcare 19 at every step of the way. 20 It was at that time when I was working in the 21 healthcare setting that I developed an interest in 22 running for office. It had never really been 23 something I thought of, even as I was studying 24 political science, even as I was working in 25 Tallahassee, I decided to run in 2010. It was a very</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 community, from other elected officials, and then 2 again from Ron DeSantis asking me to reconsider. I 3 won't bore you with all the details, but fast 4 forward to November of 2018, it was a highly 5 competitive race, we won by the slimmest of margins, 6 and we were able to lead the State of Florida. And 7 what would then be unbeknownst to us at the time, 8 very challenging times with the onset of COVID with 9 many natural disasters, hurricanes, building 10 collapses. It was in that time that I really was 11 able to hone my leadership skills working with all 12 the state agencies, overseeing complex issues, 13 overseeing complex teams at the Department of 14 Health. Some of my responsibilities in the areas 15 that I had as part of my portfolio was the area of 16 health, cyber security, space. 17 As you know, Florida is the space capital of 18 the world and I was asked to chair Space Florida, 19 which is the state's economic arm as it relates to 20 advancement of the aerospace and aviation industry. 21 I spent six years doing that. As you all know, in 22 February of 2025, I was asked to serve as interim 23 president. It has been the honor of my lifetime to 24 serve my alma mater. I'm the first woman and first 25 alumni to do so. And what I can tell you is what I</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 10</p> <p>1 have seen in these three months is a commitment to 2 excellence. It's a passion for this university. We 3 are a preeminent top research, top 50 public 4 powerhouse of a university. We have so many things 5 that we're doing well in tandem with our faculty, 6 with our staff, with our community, with our alumni. 7 And I really firmly believe that FIU's best days are 8 ahead. So I'm committed to this role and what I can 9 speak to in terms of the presidential search 10 process, it has been I would say also ruling 11 process. 12 We had a number of candidates that applied, and 13 I'm sure that Mr. Funk can attest that it was a 14 highly competitive process. There were five 15 candidates that were interviewed alongside myself 16 and four other candidates. There were three 17 candidates that were put forth to be part of the 18 group of finalists that would come before forums 19 like this, that would go before the board of 20 trustees. I will say unequivocally, I was the only 21 candidate that did not demand to be the sole 22 finalist. I was happy and content to compete for 23 this job. I was confident that with my experience, 24 with my unique skill-set, with the dedication that I 25 have shown in the last three months, with my</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 12</p> <p>1 So my connection to FIU spans four decades in my 2 time. In the legislature I can tell you that I was 3 absolutely the number one champion in the Florida 4 House for Florida International University. I did 5 that not only because of my personal connection, but 6 because I believed in FIU. I saw what they've been 7 able to do. I've seen the amazing things they've 8 been able to accomplish with a team that is 9 dedicated to student success. 10 I often think about what our community would 11 look like if FIU did not exist. Think about the 12 lives that would've been impacted, careers that 13 would've been stymied, individuals that perhaps may 14 not have been able to pursue higher education, 15 industries that would not be here today because FIU 16 is the number one provider of talent for these 17 industries. And we're so proud to be the preeminent 18 university that we are. 19 We've reached great strides because of the 20 focus and attention to our students. What I said on 21 day one, and I truly believe it, that everything we 22 do must begin and end with our students. That is the 23 reason we exist. That is the reason I wake up every 24 morning and come to work. That is why so many here, 25 including those of you that are here today, and</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 11</p> <p>1 connection to this community that I would end up 2 being the candidate that the board would select and 3 that ultimately the board of governors would 4 approve. Unfortunately, the other two candidates 5 chose to withdraw from consideration because they 6 would only agree to go forward if they were deemed 7 the sole finalist. 8 I don't necessarily have to worry about 9 competing for the job. I was happy to do so, but I 10 want to make that clear because I think there's been 11 a lot of questions around the search process and 12 whether it was a search process that was geared to 13 ensure competitive opportunities for other 14 candidates. So I just wanted to make that very 15 clear. 16 But when I talk about FIU, I look at it from 17 the perspective of the past, the present, and the 18 future. I know I talked a little bit about my 19 connection in the past with FIU, proud alum twice 20 over. I'm a proud Panther parent to my older two 21 children have attended and graduated from here. One 22 is currently still attending. And the third one is 23 to be determined. I think if mom has something to do 24 with it, he will ultimately end up here and be the 25 third, the trifecta of my children as Panther alums.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 13</p> <p>1 those that will continue to show up at forums 2 throughout today, that is why we do what we do 3 because we understand that we have a responsibility 4 to the student, not only while they're here, but 5 when they cross that graduation stage and go out and 6 fulfill their careers. 7 So FIU has a pivotal role to play, not only for 8 our community, but for the entirety of the state. 9 The State of Florida is ranked number one higher 10 education system in the country, eight years 11 running. And I'm confident that that trajectory will 12 not change, but don't be mistaken, FIU is an 13 integral part of why we are the number one system in 14 the country. We have 55,000 students, over 330,000 15 alumni. We have excellent faculty, people that are 16 leaders in their own field, and so we have so much 17 to be proud of. And so if you talk about FIU from 18 the perspective of today, the present I have served 19 in this role for just a short three months. The 20 tenure, although short has been an extraordinary 21 experience. I have worked and analyzed and been 22 involved in important meetings. I have met with 23 countless individuals, alumni, people that are 24 engaged with our community, our donors, people that 25 are interested in being donors to our university. So</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p> <p>1 I have spent a good amount of time reaching out into 2 the community, ensuring that we are supporting our 3 students in different ways. And when I talk about 4 the student experience, and we'll talk about the 5 strategic plan, I'm sure in the Q&A portion. But 6 when you think about the student experience, and as 7 I said, it is the number one reason why we should 8 wake up in the morning and come to work here at FIU. 9 You talk about the importance. And I've listened to 10 students. I've met with many students and student 11 governments, student athletes, veteran students, 12 students from all different walks of life, students 13 that are first gen and then students that have been 14 here and their families have been here for 15 generations. But I want FIU to be the place for all 16 of our students to succeed and excel. And when you 17 talk to students, you hear what their concerns are, 18 primarily, how am I going to get a job? Well, FIU is 19 doing an excellent job in preparing you for that. 20 The other thing you hear a lot from students apart 21 from the complaints on parking is certainly how are 22 we going to ensure that our athletics program 23 continues to grow? And that's something that I've 24 spent a good amount of time supporting our athletics 25 programs, everything from softball, to baseball, to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p> <p>1 But athletics is at the cornerstone of not only the 2 student experience while they're here, but then 3 beyond that, the connection with alumni. We want our 4 alumni to come back. We want them to be in the 5 stands. We want them to be on the court celebrating 6 our students. And so I'm excited to really reengage 7 with athletics. And then one of the other topics 8 that we talk a lot about today is student housing. 9 And how do we ensure that FIU sheds its image? We're 10 a young university. When I was here, we were viewed 11 as a commuter school. That is no longer the case. We 12 have 4,000 students living on campus. Just this week 13 our board workshopped. They had a workshop around 14 the next iteration of our on-campus housing. We're 15 going to add 1200 beds to make sure that this campus 16 is vibrant. It's thriving. As a campus that has our 17 students here, because when they're here, they 18 engage. When they engage, they're connected, and 19 when they're connected, they will stay connected 20 throughout their lifetime with our university, 21 because we also know that 80% of our students tend 22 to stay in the South Florida region. That is prime 23 for us because we have them here in our community so 24 we can engage with them. 25 We don't have to go to every corner of this</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p> <p>1 basketball, to tennis. We have 17 competitive 2 programs. And we, as much as I want to ensure that 3 we're winning on the field and on the court, I think 4 we also have to develop our student athletes 5 academically because we know that while they're here 6 and while they're competing, and some may go on to 7 the next level and play professionally as we have 8 had student athletes go on to represent in their 9 sports at the professional level. But you also want 10 to ensure that you're developing the individual. And 11 I think one of the testaments to what we're doing on 12 that front. Just recently, our football coach, coach 13 Willie, who's done an amazing job, and I can't wait 14 for football season, he talked about how he had 15 challenged his athletes to come up with a 3.0 grade 16 average across the board. And he was happy to 17 announce that he accomplished that. So our football 18 team as a group had reached a 3.0 grade point 19 average. 20 Those are the types of things that we need to 21 embed in our students and our student athletes in 22 particular. We want our students to be engaged and 23 we want them to go to our football games. I have a 24 whole series of events planned, and I'm excited to 25 bring those to the community in the coming months.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p> <p>1 country although we do have Panthers in every corner 2 of this country, and we do engage with them. But I'm 3 really excited about what we're going to do to 4 develop this into a much bigger, broader campus. So 5 that's today, FIU in the present. And as we look at 6 some of the strategic pillars that we're going to 7 talk about, as we look about, we look at the student 8 experience, we look at the research enterprise that 9 we are, we are a powerhouse of a research 10 university. We are a Carnegie R1 designated 11 university. Only 3% of universities in this country 12 have that designation. So that's something to be 13 proud of. And research is something we look to grow, 14 and we want to make sure that our research is 15 impactful. And it's not just research for 16 intellectual curiosity or for research's sake, we 17 want our research to be relevant, to be solving 18 problems of our community, to be giving people hope, 19 especially when you talk about healthcare. 20 I mentioned briefly my healthcare background. I 21 think those are one of the traits that will really 22 lend itself well to the future of FIU. Because as 23 you all know, we have the partnership with Baptist, 24 we have the partnership that we just officially 25 signed and launched with Nicklaus Children's</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 Hospital. That's an area where FIU is going to 2 thrive. We are training tomorrow's doctors and 3 developing tomorrow's cures right here at your 4 university. So that's an area that I'm really 5 excited to delve into and to ensure that we're 6 growing on the healthcare front that we're 7 recognized and that we're renowned. 8 And one example that I'd like to share with you 9 all, in case you don't know, is the work we're doing 10 on pediatric cancer. One of our researchers, Dr. 11 Azzam, is doing amazing work on pediatric cancer. I 12 cannot think of something worse to deal with as a 13 parent than a diagnosis like that one. And when you 14 talk about the fact that she's saving lives and 15 giving families hope, a young boy, eight years old, 16 terrible diagnosis, very, very bad prognosis. He was 17 able to enroll in her clinical trial, and today he's 18 cancer free. And 80% of the children that go through 19 her trial have seen major improvements or in 20 remission. That's the type of impact that FIU makes 21 in our community. Those are the types of stories 22 that I believe FIU needs to tell, tell more 23 frequently and to tell at all levels. And so I'm 24 excited about bringing that vision and that passion. 25 And I also think FIU has to do a much better</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p> <p>1 Florida designates very specific metrics as to how 2 they measure and coincidentally how they fund 3 universities. And the correlation between excellence 4 and being able to perform with funding is something 5 that we're very mindful of. As a state university, 6 we derive many of our funds from the state 7 government. And so being able to say that we are 8 number one in performance metrics. And when I say 9 number one, there's 12 state universities in our 10 system. We have ranked number one four out of the 11 last five years. And that is competing with other 12 universities like FSU, UF, UCF, USF. So we are by 13 far outperforming every day. We see it in our 14 graduation rates. We see it in our retention rates. 15 We see it in the amount of patents that we are 16 producing, the research that I talked about. I could 17 go on and on about all of the great accolades and 18 statistics that FIU is leading in. But when you look 19 to the future, I'm very confident that the future is 20 FIU and that FIU students are the future. As we look 21 at our strategic plan, as we look at creating that 22 FIU experience, as we look at ensuring research 23 excellence, and as we look at aligning with industry 24 and developing strategic alliances that are going to 25 be for the betterment of our institution and our</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 job of not only telling our story because if we 2 don't tell it somebody else will. But also showing 3 how important we are in those types of areas where 4 traditionally FIU was not in that space. We're a, 5 like I mentioned, a young university. Our med school 6 and our law school are fairly young but when you 7 look at our law school number one bar passage rates, 8 eight years running. I think there's many people in 9 our community that don't know that. So I hope this 10 forum and those that are watching that perhaps don't 11 know all these wonderful things that FIU is doing 12 each and every day, I hope you leave today with a 13 renewed sense of enthusiasm and pride about FIU's 14 accomplishments. And as I talk about FIU in the 15 future, if I am given this opportunity by the Board 16 of Trustees to lead this institution into the 17 future, I'm so excited about what the future holds 18 for FIU. I've touched a little bit on our healthcare 19 enterprise. I've touched a little bit on our 20 research enterprise. I truly believe that we have so 21 much potential. And I often say this, and I hope it 22 doesn't sound cliché, I do mean it. FIU's reputation 23 needs to meet its reality. And our reality is we're 24 a top 50. We're a preeminent institution. We're 25 number one in performance funding. The State of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p> <p>1 students. So with that, I think I will go and sit 2 with Bill and maybe answer a few questions. 3 MR. FUNK: As was mentioned earlier, the 4 university community was asked to provide questions 5 in anticipation of these forums today. The team here 6 curated those questions and has put them into broad 7 themes, and we're going to try to get through as 8 many of those themes, if you will, as we possibly 9 can. So let me begin by looking at the first area in 10 terms of qualifications. And the question is, how 11 has your experience in public service shaped your 12 vision for the future of FIU? Can you share how your 13 background and experience have prepared you for this 14 role? 15 MS. NUNEZ: Certainly. Well, as has been 16 mentioned many times I've spent a good amount of 17 time working in and out of state government, 18 developing expertise being able to work 19 collaboratively with so many state leaders at the 20 highest levels also developing relationships at the 21 federal level and the local level. So I think one of 22 the areas in which I'm uniquely qualified is to 23 parlay those relationships, leverage those 24 opportunities. 25 Given my vast experience in public service,</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 given my experience in state policy making to really 2 bring those resources to bear for the university. I 3 know when the presidential search committee 4 commenced, there was a handful of the 5 characteristics and traits that the search committee 6 was looking for in the next leader. I think some of 7 those were around commitment to excellence about 8 government relations and advocacy for the 9 university. And so I think when you look at the 10 position description, and when you look at the 11 characteristics and traits that were identified as 12 being important for the university, I certainly 13 think I am very qualified in each one of those. FIU 14 as I mentioned is a state university, we are not a 15 private university. We deal with Tallahassee on a 16 daily basis. Right now, we are in the throes of a 17 legislative session that has been extended. We have 18 a number of priorities that the board has approved 19 that we have been working through to ensure adequate 20 funding. I think one of the challenges that FIU has 21 had over its very young history is that for many 22 reasons and for many years, we have not necessarily 23 gotten what I believe is adequate funding vis-à-vis 24 our performance. 25 I'd like to start those conversations, and I</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 heads, many people that are in positions that make 2 decisions on a regular basis that impact our 3 university. And so I want to bring those resources 4 to bear. I want to be able to show those 5 relationships and ensure that FIU is viewed as a 6 thought leader on any given issue that would impact 7 the university. 8 MR. FUNK: Thank you very much. This next 9 question hits on priorities. During your time as 10 interim president, what is something you have seen 11 that you think we do great at FIU and what do you 12 think we could do even better? 13 MS. NUNEZ: That's a great question. So I think 14 as you heard me in my opening statement, what do we 15 do great? I think we do great by our students. When 16 you look at, as I mentioned, the specific measures 17 that we are graded upon everything from how are our 18 graduation rates? How are students doing? Are they 19 re-enrolling freshman year to sophomore year? One of 20 the measures that we are graded upon, which I would 21 be very candid, it is a challenge. How do you ensure 22 that your students are being employed at a certain 23 threshold in terms of the median income that they're 24 being employed on? So what I would say is we do a 25 really good job of student success. We measure, we</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 have begun to have those conversations with state 2 policy makers about how do you shift gears and how 3 do you focus on value-based funding. And as I 4 mentioned, there is no university that performs 5 better than FIU on every metric. And I think that is 6 time for Tallahassee to recognize that we are number 7 one for a reason that we are a top performing 8 university, that our students excel. 9 Our graduation rates are second to none, 10 especially when you take into consideration that a 11 good chunk of our students, 58% of our undergraduate 12 students are on Pell grants and are on some level of 13 federal subsidy. So I think that the qualifications 14 and the experience that I bring and why I'm uniquely 15 qualified for this role really is centered around 16 the ability to parlay relationships into action, 17 into tangible results for the university. And I'm 18 confident that when the board selects me, I'm 19 assuming they'll select me. I never like to take 20 anything for granted that I'll be able to 21 demonstrate the value that I bring vis-a-vis 22 Tallahassee, but beyond just Tallahassee. I think 23 that those relationships at every level of 24 government and not just on the elected official's 25 side, I think there's many secretaries, many agency</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 look, we obsess and I know I'm looking at the 2 provost and she's nodding her head. We obsess on how 3 we're preparing our students, on how we're 4 supporting them. We have regular interventions if we 5 feel students are needing some additional support. 6 So I think that we've really figured out the secret 7 sauce in student success. And we're constantly 8 looking at fine tuning and refining those processes 9 to ensure that every single one of our students has 10 the opportunity to succeed and then go out into 11 their respective industries. 12 What we don't do well, and I'm not ashamed to 13 say, is we do not tout our successes as well. We do 14 not share our accolades. I can't tell you the amount 15 of times I walk into any industry, any organization, 16 any company, the grocery store even. And people talk 17 to me about FIU. "Oh, my daughter graduated from 18 FIU, my son's enrolled at FIU, my granddaughter 19 attended FIU." And yet they have very little and 20 superficial and superficially limited information 21 about what FIU does, about where we are as an 22 institution. So part of my job and I'm looking at 23 the chairman, and I know he said the most important 24 job of the university president is to fundraise. And 25 I took that charge very seriously. But I think also</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 26</p> <p>1 it is to be the chief spokesperson. It is to be the 2 chief ambassador of FIU. We have a great story to 3 tell. Why aren't we telling it? Why aren't we 4 telling it more often? I think that we need to be 5 viewed in the community, in the state as, like I 6 said, a thought leader, an institution that is 7 providing the solutions, the very complex solutions 8 of tomorrow for the challenges that we face as an 9 institution.</p> <p>10 MR. FUNK: Great. Thank you. The next question 11 touches on political ideology. And the question 12 reads, in light of the growing national conversation 13 around political ideology and higher education, how 14 do you create a campus that supports open dialogue 15 while upholding the rights and dignity of all 16 students? How do you plan to ensure that our 17 university remains a welcoming and safe environment 18 for students from diverse backgrounds, including 19 international students, undocumented immigrants, and 20 LGBTQ+ individuals?</p> <p>21 MS. NUNEZ: That's a long question, so I may 22 need you to repeat the second part. But certainly, 23 I'll address the issue of political and ideology and 24 how campuses have really become a hotbed political 25 activity. And I think that's true. I think what</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 28</p> <p>1 for the rest of our country. When you see Jewish 2 students in particular being harassed, being 3 persecuted, being precluded from going to class. 4 That is not something I have seen here. And it's not 5 only specific to anti-Semitism. I have not seen any 6 instance of FIU not being a welcoming campus for all 7 of our students. And really, I approach the role of 8 president as being president for all our Panther 9 students. I'm not in the business of parsing 10 students or putting them into different categories. 11 I want all of our students to succeed. And I do not 12 care what their background is. I do not care what 13 their ethnicity is. I want FIU to ensure every 14 single one of our students, all 55,000 have a great 15 experience, they're having a safe campus, a 16 welcoming campus. And with regards to freedom of 17 speech and academic freedom and some of the 18 viewpoint diversity, I think there's a lack of that. 19 And what I hope to do is bring more of that. FIU and 20 I know the Board of Governors has signed off on the 21 statement of free expression. I think that is at the 22 cornerstone of higher education, pursuing truth, 23 pursuing knowledge, critical thinking.</p> <p>24 So one of the initiatives that I am unveiling 25 as president is a presidential speaker series. That</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 27</p> <p>1 you've seen sadly throughout the country is campuses 2 have devolved into chaos, violence, a lot of 3 turmoil, and it's a sad state of affairs for higher 4 education so much so that what you see is a 5 continuing question around the value of higher 6 education.</p> <p>7 A recent Gallup poll showed that Americans were 8 evenly split in terms of those that view and see 9 higher education as extremely important versus those 10 that don't see it important. As someone, like I 11 mentioned in my opening statement, that whose 12 parents impressed upon the importance of higher 13 education always pushed me to strive to do more, to 14 be better. I think it's really a concern for us as 15 an institution and how do we address it.</p> <p>16 Now, thankfully, I think Florida has been 17 insulated from some of those instances. One of the 18 issues that has been an ongoing issue for several 19 years now is that of anti-Semitism on campus. And 20 how do universities react to that? Florida 21 International University, I'm proud to say, received 22 an A grade from the Anti-Defamation League. We were 23 one of only eight universities, eight universities 24 in this country that received an A grade.</p> <p>25 I think that's great for FIU, but also very sad</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 29</p> <p>1 I hope to bring divergent viewpoints, that I hope to 2 bring competing debates. And stay tuned, we will be 3 announcing the first one soon that it's going to be 4 a doozy, and it's going to be two individuals 5 renowned professors that couldn't be more 6 diametrically opposed in terms of their personal 7 beliefs and their views and their philosophies. But 8 I want our students to be exposed to that type of 9 debate where you can hear two sides. People that do 10 not agree on virtually anything can come together 11 and be civil, can have a debate, and maybe learn 12 from someone. And so I'm really excited to bring 13 more of that to campus.</p> <p>14 As the second part of the question, different 15 groups of students, I think I answered that. I want 16 FIU to be welcoming to all of our students. We want 17 our students to succeed. And I really don't think 18 it's helpful for the university community, for us to 19 be one body, for us to be one community. If we start 20 separating students into categories. And so that's 21 my personal belief, and I think that our community 22 is better for it.</p> <p>23 MR. FUNK: This next question will be of keen 24 interest for the staff and faculty, I suspect. But 25 in terms of remote work what are your plans with</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 30</p> <p>1 regard to flexible work options?</p> <p>2 MS. NUNEZ: So great question. I know that's</p> <p>3 always top of mind for employees. So FIU has a</p> <p>4 policy in place. That is something that we as an</p> <p>5 executive team are looking at. I think it's</p> <p>6 frequently reviewed, it's frequently looked at in</p> <p>7 terms of what makes sense for the university. As I</p> <p>8 said, everything we do should begin and end with the</p> <p>9 student. Everything we do for the student in terms</p> <p>10 of student affairs, student services, we have to be</p> <p>11 present.</p> <p>12 I don't think you can be remote and help</p> <p>13 students be successful, help students with their</p> <p>14 financial aid or help students with their advising.</p> <p>15 So I think that those are balances that we'll have</p> <p>16 to take into account. There may be certain areas in</p> <p>17 certain positions that it makes sense but I think</p> <p>18 it's incumbent upon me to review that and to</p> <p>19 determine what is in the best interest of the</p> <p>20 student. I know employees have a keen interest in</p> <p>21 this, at least some do. And so we will certainly</p> <p>22 make those decisions. Like I said, we're reviewing</p> <p>23 it as a team, we'll make those decisions, but we'll</p> <p>24 do it in a way that's transparent, that's</p> <p>25 accountable, and it's really tied to our goal and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 32</p> <p>1 the relationships with our FIU community, with our</p> <p>2 faculty, with our students. No one knows our campus</p> <p>3 better than Chief Casas. And I don't see him in the</p> <p>4 audience, but I just want to give him and his men</p> <p>5 and women in FIU PD, a huge shout out. They do a</p> <p>6 great job of keeping our campus safe. So the ability</p> <p>7 for the chief to be in control of that particular</p> <p>8 process, I want people to understand there is</p> <p>9 nothing today that even if we did not sign that,</p> <p>10 that would preclude ICE or any other governmental</p> <p>11 agency police department, whether it's the Sheriff's</p> <p>12 office or FDLE or FHP from coming on our campus.</p> <p>13 So signing that agreement doesn't change</p> <p>14 anything other than FIU will be in control of that.</p> <p>15 He will be the one spearheading if there is an</p> <p>16 arrest warrant, if there is a detention for removal.</p> <p>17 So I think there's been a lot of confusion as to why</p> <p>18 and what is our police department going to be doing.</p> <p>19 But if you hear the chief explain that, and I think</p> <p>20 there's actually a town hall taking place if not</p> <p>21 tonight, in the next couple of days. And so he'll</p> <p>22 continue to have that outreach and that</p> <p>23 communication because I think it's important to</p> <p>24 explain it properly because I don't think-- The</p> <p>25 media does a great job of sensationalizing things</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 31</p> <p>1 our mission aligned with the strategic plan. So if</p> <p>2 we're focused on the FIU experience, if we're</p> <p>3 focused on growing the research, if we're focused on</p> <p>4 developing those strategic partnerships and</p> <p>5 alliances, everything has to tie back to that</p> <p>6 strategic plan. So as we move forward, we'll make</p> <p>7 those decisions and it'll likely be on a case by</p> <p>8 case basis. So I think there's more to come on that,</p> <p>9 but we haven't gotten through that process yet.</p> <p>10 MR. FUNK: Okay. Immigration has become a</p> <p>11 significant topic, and our question reads, how does</p> <p>12 FIU police's participation in ICE 287 G program make</p> <p>13 FIU safer? And how does it reflect the values of our</p> <p>14 FIU? What is your message to faculty and staff on</p> <p>15 H-1B visas?</p> <p>16 MS. NUNEZ: All right. So two-part question as</p> <p>17 well. And that was a topic of course, the topic of</p> <p>18 keen interest. I actually met with the faculty</p> <p>19 senate. They had expressed their concerns at FIU</p> <p>20 along with all the other state universities. Our</p> <p>21 police department had agreed to sign on to that</p> <p>22 program. The 287 G program, really what it does is</p> <p>23 it puts FIU in control. I think our Chief, Chief</p> <p>24 Casas has done a great job.</p> <p>25 He's been here for a long time. He's developed</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 33</p> <p>1 and sometimes mischaracterizing things and then</p> <p>2 conflating two issues.</p> <p>3 So the second part of your question was around</p> <p>4 the H-1B is the students and I'll just address this</p> <p>5 head on, because it was brought to my attention by</p> <p>6 the faculty senate president, who was a member of</p> <p>7 our board of trustees, that some faculty members</p> <p>8 were upset that I mentioned that there was only 18</p> <p>9 students that were impacted at the time who had</p> <p>10 their visas terminated. And so I said that in the</p> <p>11 context of trying to provide a, a greater</p> <p>12 understanding of 55,000 students 18 is a very small</p> <p>13 fraction. Not that it diminishes my concern for our</p> <p>14 students at all. I care about each of our students.</p> <p>15 I understand that when you have your visas</p> <p>16 terminated it could create a lot of chaos and</p> <p>17 uncertainty for those students. So that wasn't my</p> <p>18 intention. So I just want to address that publicly.</p> <p>19 But what I will say is all 18 of those students have</p> <p>20 had their visas reinstated since that meeting. So to</p> <p>21 complete the two issues, I think that the media did</p> <p>22 a disservice. We had no control, no bearing, no</p> <p>23 decision-making over the decision from the federal</p> <p>24 government to either revoke or reinstate someone's</p> <p>25 visa. That is strictly under their purview and we</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 34</p> <p>1 simply just follow the law.</p> <p>2 MR. FUNK: Two of the great accomplishments of</p> <p>3 the university in recent years include not only</p> <p>4 becoming a top 50 ranked institution, but also being</p> <p>5 reclassified as a research one institution by the</p> <p>6 Carnegie Commission. In response to state and</p> <p>7 federal budget challenges such as the suspension of</p> <p>8 federal grants, reduction of F&A and other funding</p> <p>9 pressures, what are some short and also long-term</p> <p>10 decisions FIU should consider to ensure continued</p> <p>11 success? FIU is preeminent top 50 Carnegie R1. What</p> <p>12 is your vision for FIU when it comes to research?</p> <p>13 MS. NUNEZ: You're giving me a long question.</p> <p>14 Pounding my memory. So I think from the perspective</p> <p>15 of our vision for the university as I mentioned many</p> <p>16 times, we are a powerhouse research university. We</p> <p>17 currently do \$328 million of research expenditures</p> <p>18 in a number of different areas. I talked a little</p> <p>19 bit about our healthcare research.</p> <p>20 We do a tremendous amount of environmental work</p> <p>21 that is one of our three pillars. Environment and</p> <p>22 environmental resilience, healthcare, and then</p> <p>23 technology and innovation. And so we are absolutely</p> <p>24 leading on the research front in those three</p> <p>25 identified areas of our strategic plan. But when you</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 36</p> <p>1 that's basically for facilities and administration.</p> <p>2 That's sort of our indirect costs. Not to get too</p> <p>3 wonky, but when you look at that cap applying to all</p> <p>4 of our research portfolio and what it would impact</p> <p>5 us, that's an additional \$18 million of impact if we</p> <p>6 were to do that 15% cap. I say all that, and</p> <p>7 hopefully you don't walk away here with a doom and</p> <p>8 boom perspective on our research enterprise. I</p> <p>9 actually think that with the cuts and with some of</p> <p>10 the strategic decisions and the administrative</p> <p>11 priorities at the federal government, that FIU will</p> <p>12 be well positioned to take advantage of new</p> <p>13 opportunities for research.</p> <p>14 In brief conversations I've had with the NIH</p> <p>15 director, he believes that much of the work that has</p> <p>16 been consolidated in the Ivy Leagues and in certain</p> <p>17 institutions that their desire is to free up some of</p> <p>18 that concentration of research and delve into</p> <p>19 universities like ours. Our public university,</p> <p>20 public mission have shown the efficacy of our</p> <p>21 research, have demonstrated that it is research</p> <p>22 having an impact. And I actually believe that we'll</p> <p>23 be in a better position. And that ultimately, FIU</p> <p>24 our goal is to double our research in a few short</p> <p>25 years. So we're currently at \$328 million. I would</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 35</p> <p>1 look at the future, and I think you mentioned some</p> <p>2 of those challenges, most of our grants are federal</p> <p>3 government grants and they're in various areas.</p> <p>4 Everything from NSF, to NIH, to Department of</p> <p>5 Defense, Department of State. And so we have a very</p> <p>6 large portfolio. As of last week, we had had roughly</p> <p>7 54 grants terminated. And that impact to us</p> <p>8 financially is roughly \$36 million.</p> <p>9 Looking at the CFO, I know she's intimately</p> <p>10 keenly aware of all of the challenges we have on the</p> <p>11 research front. So just from a pure research</p> <p>12 perspective, that has been the impact \$36 million.</p> <p>13 So obviously about 10% of what our research</p> <p>14 expenditures are today.</p> <p>15 However, we are appealing some of those grants,</p> <p>16 and we do believe that some of those grants will be</p> <p>17 reinstated. Again, no control over that. We continue</p> <p>18 a very healthy cadence of submitting proposals for</p> <p>19 grant consideration. And so we're going to continue</p> <p>20 to do that, and we're going to continue to</p> <p>21 demonstrate why we believe that FIU's research</p> <p>22 proposals are worthy of being funded by the federal</p> <p>23 government because there is an overarching strategy</p> <p>24 to not only reduce the level of support that they</p> <p>25 give us, you mentioned the 15% cap on the F&A, and</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 37</p> <p>1 like to be at \$600 million on the next several</p> <p>2 years. So that's sort of our vision. Those are the</p> <p>3 challenges that we face. But I firmly believe FIU is</p> <p>4 uniquely positioned to take advantage of the next</p> <p>5 version of research and how the federal government</p> <p>6 is going to fund it.</p> <p>7 MR. FUNK: You've talked a bit about student</p> <p>8 success, and certainly that's an area where the</p> <p>9 university gets an A plus. We have a question</p> <p>10 relative to the student experience, maybe a little</p> <p>11 more personal. How have you interacted with students</p> <p>12 and what are your plans to enhance the FIU student</p> <p>13 experience?</p> <p>14 MS. NUNEZ: That's a great question, and I can't</p> <p>15 reiterate enough how we need to be focused on</p> <p>16 student success, the student experience. And while</p> <p>17 you gave us an A plus, I'm the harshest critic. And</p> <p>18 I know many people in the audience are probably</p> <p>19 rolling their eyes. I would never give us an A plus</p> <p>20 because I feel like we always have room to, to</p> <p>21 improve and grow. But I do believe we have to take</p> <p>22 time to celebrate our successes. And so to the team</p> <p>23 that's here, perhaps, and the team that's watching</p> <p>24 that is directly involved with student success,</p> <p>25 kudos. But what I want everyone to leave here, if</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 38</p> <p>1 you work here, if you're connected to the 2 university, is that everybody has a role to play in 3 student success. And that is true of our janitorial 4 staff, that is true of our administrative staff, 5 that is true of our faculty. 6 So I really want everyone to delve in, to roll 7 up your sleeves and to be connected to our focus on 8 student success. And meeting early on with our 9 student government association president and also a 10 member of our board of trustees, I wanted to hear 11 from her because she obviously works with all the 12 student groups, she works with many students across 13 various disciplines. And so, I wanted to hear from 14 her what she viewed as our challenges. And of 15 course, I think affordability is always top of mind 16 and tuition, and that's something Florida does 17 really well. But she shared with me. She has heard 18 from many students about the impact on student fees. 19 She's talked to me about how she wants to see more 20 on campus housing. She's talked to me about how our 21 athletics need to be more competitive and how we 22 need to create an environment where students feel 23 proud to come to the games. She's also talked to me 24 about an ongoing discussion with students on any 25 number of times.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 40</p> <p>1 that students are at the cutting edge of what 2 industry is going to demand. 3 We know there's a lot of disruption. There are 4 jobs today that will no longer be relevant tomorrow. 5 And so we want to make sure that our students know 6 that there is lifelong learning that will need to 7 occur. We know that our students understand that the 8 challenges of tomorrow are they're just scratching 9 the surface. And so when you talk about all of those 10 experiences, those internships, I think it is 11 incumbent upon us to be forward-facing and to be 12 engaging with industry. We can't wait for them to 13 come to us, we need to be more proactive in that 14 regard. 15 MR. FUNK: We have several more questions that 16 were on our script in terms of questions that have 17 been submitted prior to the session today, but to 18 live up to our promise to the audience that we would 19 allow time for questions from the floor, our time is 20 now up, but I would suggest to you, when you get a 21 chance, go online and you'll hear maybe later in 22 other sessions, questions about shared governance, 23 the satellite campuses, and employee engagement. But 24 for now, we want to respond to any questions that 25 anyone might have from the floor. And here's a hand</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 39</p> <p>1 And one of the topics that consistently comes 2 up from our students is how do we ensure that we're 3 providing our students internship opportunities, 4 experiential learning, opportunities that are going 5 to enhance their competitiveness when they graduate 6 and when they go into the workforce. And one of the 7 things that dawned on me when I listened to the 8 statistics, I was blown away and working with many 9 organizations that are tech-focused, that are 10 looking at how do we supply that pipeline, 11 especially for technology and innovation? Is that 12 when students complete a technical internship while, 13 they're students here, they're 65% more likely to 14 obtain a job upon graduation. 15 When they complete two technical internships, 16 that number skyrockets to 95%. So you are almost 17 guaranteed a job if you are doing two internships 18 throughout FIU. And so one of my priorities is 19 really how do we reach out to industry? How do we 20 align better with industry, not only on the 21 programmatic side and the developing curriculum 22 that's relevant, that's going to be cutting edge? We 23 haven't even talked about AI and the importance of 24 it as it relates to being able to thrive and being 25 able to train our students, but also our faculty so</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 41</p> <p>1 that's gone up immediately. 2 FACULTY MEMBER: I'm a faculty member, but I'm 3 also a member of the community. And importantly, I'm 4 an embedded member of this community. I'm a Cuban 5 immigrant. I'm not a first generation American. I'm 6 a zero generation, like many people in this room are 7 immigrants. And there was a statement that was made 8 here that caught my attention, and that is to 9 respect and uphold the law. But the problem is that 10 the laws of this country are moving rapidly as a 11 factor of opinion and perspective. When you can 12 challenge birthright opportunities in the 14th 13 amendment to young people, that's a concern. You and 14 I share the same legacy. When I came to this 15 country, I was one of the first group of students at 16 the First Baptist Church of Westwood Lake, which 17 became Westwood Christian School. Reverend 18 Gochenour, know taught me two things. First of all, 19 the song, Yes, Jesus loves me and secondly, 20 Acceptance. And if we accept any student in this 21 school under the proper rules and regulations that 22 we follow to accept that student, and even if those 23 students are now challenged because the rules and 24 regulations are changing, we have a duty, if not a 25 message from Reverend Gochenour himself to be</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 42</p> <p>1 accepting and to protect those students against the 2 limb of the law, because the law could be changing 3 right in front of us unfairly to those students. So 4 I didn't stand here to ask a question today, but now 5 the question comes on you, because if you will take 6 the leadership position of the school, can you tell 7 us precisely how strongly you will stand in support 8 of the students that are in the school at this time? 9 MS. NUNEZ: So thank you for that question, and 10 I appreciate you taking me back to my K-12 school. 11 As I know the chairman of our board also, he and I 12 share that in common as well. So I think your 13 question has multiple facets to it, and I think 14 you've mentioned, obviously upholding the law, how 15 quickly the law changes. As you know, we live in the 16 greatest country in the history of the world. There 17 are laws that change on any given day. That's true 18 at the federal government, the state government, and 19 the local government. There is due process. There is 20 a legal mechanism for people to challenge laws and 21 that's ongoing today. And I think as it relates to 22 any number of topics, we could explain, and I know 23 the general counsel could probably walk us through 24 what are the legal challenges that are existing 25 today on any number of changes, whether that goes</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 44</p> <p>1 of coming to work for students. Is there any, I 2 guess events or ideas you have to keep the 3 connection between staff, students, and faculty and 4 administration? 5 MS. NUNEZ: That's a great question, and thank 6 you because I think it's important that we continue 7 to bring it back to our students. And thank you for 8 transferring and for coming to our great 9 institution. I hope your experience has been a good 10 one thus far. And you're shaking your head yes. So 11 for those that are watching, he is happy with FIU, 12 Awesome. 13 So what I would say is I actually have been in 14 the process of instituting an ongoing mechanism for 15 student leaders, for student -- students that have 16 an interest in furthering our school and in 17 furthering the communications. And so I'll be 18 instituting a process whereby I have a casual every 19 month or every six weeks, breakfast or lunch with a 20 handful of students in an intimate setting to really 21 hear one-on-one. Because I think sometimes, and 22 kudos to you that you're willing to stand up in a 23 form like this and ask a question. 24 I think sometimes students don't feel 25 comfortable asking questions or making suggestions,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 43</p> <p>1 through the legislative body or goes through 2 executive order through the federal government. And 3 so, as I've mentioned before, I strongly support all 4 of our students but we are also going to follow the 5 law. And so while I understand you mentioned to 6 intimate that there is a capriciousness to the law 7 and the application as such, we are a state 8 university, we are bound to follow the law. 9 We are going to protect all students that are 10 here on campus from the perspective of providing 11 them with a safe and secure environment. We're going 12 to ensure that if they are enrolled and they're 13 registered and all of their information is up to 14 date, we're going to continue to provide them the 15 excellence that they deserve. 16 You sort of asked a broad question. I don't 17 know if there's a specific group of students that 18 you're referring to. I would just assume you're 19 referring to those that are perhaps undocumented. I 20 don't want to put words in your mouth. But we are 21 required and we will follow the law. 22 MR. FUNK: The next question. Here we are. 23 STUDENT MEMBER: Hi, my name is Danell Peak. I'm 24 actually a transfer student from a community college 25 in Philadelphia. You mentioned about the importance</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 45</p> <p>1 and they feel like perhaps their voice isn't going 2 to be heard. And what I would pledge, whether it's 3 with our students, with our faculty, I know we have 4 a session later with faculty, is that I'll always be 5 accessible, that I'll always be open and 6 transparent. And there may be times where we can 7 agree but I think it's important to hear everyone's 8 perspective. I think we have to have more of that. 9 We have to have diversity of thought. We have to 10 have challenging and intellectual debates that are 11 going to make our community better. 12 I think what's lacking so much in the political 13 world is that there is an inability to be civil and 14 to have that debate. People talk over each other, 15 they yell at each other, they say bombastic 16 statements. 17 What I hope FIU is going to be for all students 18 is a place for your opinions, no matter which side 19 of the aisle you're on, no matter what viewpoint you 20 have, is respected, is heard, is debated, is 21 challenged, and it actually makes you better as an 22 individual. Because trust me when you leave the 23 comfort of this campus and you go out into the real 24 world, you're going to be faced with much of the 25 same, a lot of different viewpoints, a lot of</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 46</p> <p>1 different ideas. And so our job as an institution is 2 to really prepare you and hone those skills. So I am 3 going to be instituting a mechanism to meet with 4 students on a regular basis. So I'll make sure we 5 get your name so that you can be in that first wave 6 of students. I'm looking at someone, I'm sure 7 someone here will find you after this, this forum. 8 So thank you for that. 9 MR. FUNK: We have time for one or two more 10 questions. Who will be next? There we go. 11 STUDENT MEMBER: Thank you. Thank you for this 12 opportunity to have this conversation. You just 13 mentioned that we have to have diversity of thought, 14 but yet diversity, equity and inclusion is a bad 15 thing right now. So if you say we have to have 16 diversity of thought, how do you respond to that? 17 That we can actually have diversity of thought? 18 MS. NUNEZ: Yeah, I think diversity of thought 19 is something that I strive for on this campus 20 unequivocally. I think when you talk about DEI, 21 again, I'm not going to put words in your mouth. I 22 think those are programs that were really centered 23 upon identifying certain groups challenging what I 24 believe are values that are intrinsic to higher 25 education, which is meritocracy, character,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 48</p> <p>1 so I believe that when you inspire students to 2 compete, when you put them all together and they're 3 showing their focus on merit, their focus on 4 excelling opportunity, I think is really important. 5 I think what you've seen a direct turnabout from is 6 equity from the standpoint of outcomes. We want 7 opportunity. We want our students again, to compete 8 at the highest levels. And I have every expectation 9 that they will. 10 MR. FUNK: Madam Interim President, we thank you 11 for your time and your observations and answers 12 today. Unfortunately, we are now out of time and 13 we're on a tight schedule for the subsequent open 14 forums. But we thank you so much for attending this 15 session. Please feel free to look at the president's 16 search webpage wherever the transcript of today's 17 meetings will be provided as well as a tape of each 18 session. So thank you so much, and again, thank you. 19 (Thereupon, Session I was concluded at 10:00 20 AM) 21 22 23 24 25</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 47</p> <p>1 competition. I think our students need to be exposed 2 to many diversity viewpoints. But when you talk 3 about diversity of thought and then you talk about 4 what DEI has become, right there wrongly, whatever 5 you think about it, we have had just a complete 6 turnabout of what was occurring. I wouldn't say 7 necessarily here as much but certainly throughout 8 the institutions around the country students, they 9 need to compete. They need to be challenged. They 10 need to ensure that they are at the top of their 11 game. And so I don't like viewing students in 12 buckets. I don't like engineering outcomes for 13 students. I want our students to excel. I want them 14 to compete. I want them to show why they are the 15 best. And quite frankly, I think our FIU students 16 are the best. So programs that are centered around 17 separating students, programs that are centered on 18 divisiveness and on separating people and really not 19 coming together as one FIU community, I don't 20 support that. Certainly, what we've seen as the 21 previous question was talking about, the whims of 22 the government, the whims of certain laws, I think 23 what you've seen is a complete turnaround. And I 24 think the state and the federal government and many 25 regulatory agencies have changed the direction. And</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 49</p> <p>1 CERTIFICATE 2 3 STATE OF FLORIDA) 4 SS: 5 COUNTY OF MIAMI DADE) 6 7 I, Chancellor Merritt, FPR certify that I was 8 authorized to and did stenographically report the 9 foregoing proceedings, and that the transcript is a 10 true and complete record of my stenographic notes. 11 I further certify that I am neither attorney 12 or party, nor am I related to or employed by any 13 attorney or party connected with the action, nor am 14 I financially interested in the action. 15 16 Dated this 21st day of May, 2025. 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chancellor Merritt</i></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: auto; margin-right: 0;"/> <p>Chancellor Merritt, FPR Notary Public - State of Florida My Commission No. HH454299 Expires: 10/20/2027</p>

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