

1 PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE
2 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
3

4 Tuesday, October 11th, 2022

5 11:30 p.m. - 12:36 p.m.

6 Graham Center Ballrooms

7 Florida International University

8 11200 S.W. 8th Street,

9 Miami, Florida, 33199
10

11 FIU PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMMUNITY SESSIONS:

12 FACULTY
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19 PRESENT:
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21 KENNETH A. JESSELL, Ph.D., Presidential Candidate
22

23 SOFIA TRELLES, Ph.D., Ombudsperson
24

25 R. WILLIAM FUNK, ESQ. (via Zoom)

1 DR. TRELLES: Good morning, everyone. My
2 name is Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my
3 pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the
4 members of our FIU community who are joining us
5 today for an opportunity to meet and hear from
6 presidential candidate finalist Dr. Kenneth A.
7 Jessell. R. William Funk and Associates, who
8 are based off of Dallas, Texas, has been
9 selected to assist us with the search of FIU's
10 Sixth President. The firm has conducted more
11 than 430 searches for colleges and university
12 presidents and chancellors. Mr. Funk and his
13 team will be joining us today through Zoom and
14 are here to answer any questions you may have
15 regarding the search process. Today and
16 tomorrow's sessions will be attended in person,
17 Zoom, as well as through FIU webcast, and
18 today's session will be approximately one hour
19 long. After our candidate's presentation we
20 will have an opportunity for Q and A. If you
21 are joining us in person or through Zoom,
22 please feel free to ask any questions that you
23 have through our platforms.

24 Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell is interim
25 president of FIU, a position he has held since

1 his appointment on January 21st, 2022. As
2 interim president Dr. Jessell serves as chief
3 executive officer of the university, and is
4 responsible for academic and educational
5 programs, research enterprises and economic
6 development, advancement in fundraising,
7 community engagement, intercollegiate
8 athletics, diversity, equity and inclusion
9 initiatives, human resources, and facilities
10 management. Prior to his appointment as
11 interim president Dr. Jessell served as senior
12 vice president for finance and administration,
13 as well as chief financial officer of FIU from
14 2009 to 2022. In his position he was
15 responsible for the management and
16 administration of financials facilities and
17 business services operations at the university.
18 Dr. Jessell is also a professor of finance in
19 the College of Business Administration at FIU.
20 It is my pleasure to introduce you to Dr.
21 Kenneth A. Jessell.

22 DR. JESSELL: Thank you, Sophia, for your
23 kind introduction. And thank you, colleagues,
24 for being here this morning in person and
25 virtually. I am honored and humbled to be

1 addressing you today as a candidate for the
2 Sixth President of FIU. As most of you know, I
3 was not intending to be a candidate for the
4 permanent position of president. However,
5 sometimes our plans change and something that
6 was never dreamed about presents itself as an
7 opportunity for a dream to come true. Over the
8 past nine months as interim president I have
9 learned to love FIU more than I could have
10 imagined and I have 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 here at FIU for 13
16 years, for some of you, this may be the first
17 time we have interacted in person or virtually.
18 Let me tell you just a few things about me.
19 First, I was born and reared in Fort
20 Lauderdale, and except for the time that I
21 attended Florida State University in
22 Tallahassee, I have always lived in South
23 Florida, specifically Broward County and
24 Miami-Dade County. I am a product of Broward
25 County public schools, K-12, a graduate of Fort

1 Lauderdale High School. I am a first
2 generation student, and I went to Florida State
3 University where I obtained three degrees, a
4 bachelor's in political science, an MBA, and a
5 Ph.D. in finance. I started on the faculty at
6 Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton in
7 1983, and I stayed there through 2009 when I
8 accepted a position of Senior Vice President
9 for Finance and Administration and CFO at
10 Florida International University, where I have
11 now been here 13 years as a Panther. I am
12 married to a wonderful person, Laurie
13 (phonetic), who has been with me, if we make it
14 to December, 46 years. I have a son, John
15 (phonetic), a daughter, Amanda (phonetic), a
16 son-in-law, Jeffrey (phonetic), and a beautiful
17 new grandson, J., who is 18 months old, and my
18 mother will be 93 in three weeks. So in some
19 ways it sounds like a boring life, but for me
20 personally, it has been an amazing life.

21 I would now like to spend a little time
22 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on
23 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its
24 next president. First is student success. As
25 a national urban public research university,

1 FIU will continue to invest in our students and
2 their academic and career successes. Our
3 faculty must be not only excellent scholars,
4 but also proficient in evidence based teaching
5 practices. We embrace faculty who bring path
6 breaking research into the classroom as part of
7 evidence based and inclusive teaching. Our
8 culture of teaching excellence facilitates
9 learning so our students are critical thinkers
10 who can take what they have learned in the
11 classroom or in the lab and apply their
12 knowledge to solving problems. We must
13 continue to innovate our curriculum so it is
14 aligned with career needs, and to adopt
15 different designs and methods for learning that
16 are more meaningful for today's 21st century
17 learners, including experiential learning,
18 competency based learning, and
19 micro-credentialing. Our system of shared
20 governance and collegial discussions and
21 cooperation are more important than ever in
22 keeping our curriculum relevant. FIU continues
23 to be a leader in innovation. Our global
24 learning for global citizenship QEP from ten
25 years ago is successful because we know the

1 value proposition of our students,
2 understanding both culture and cultures within
3 a global framework. And our 2021 QEP critical
4 skills for the 21st century focused on student
5 attainment of skills related to artificial
6 intelligence, data, and emotional intelligence
7 through micro-credentialing courses. However,
8 we are already seeing the expansion of A.I. and
9 E.I. throughout our curriculum, and I cannot
10 think of a single program that does not have
11 significant A.I. and E.I. applications and
12 learning opportunities, and these skills
13 translate to jobs. We will continue to be
14 accountable to our stakeholders and measure our
15 progress and performance in educating our
16 students, including retention and graduation
17 rates, employment, and strategic degrees, as
18 well as other key metrics related to research
19 and access. FIU's keen focus on performance
20 has been the primary reason why we have
21 excelled in both state and national rankings,
22 as well as why we have received significant
23 incremental state performance funding and
24 philanthropic funding such as the \$40 million
25 McKenzie Scott gift last year. I am committed

1 to our goal of achieving top 50 public
2 university in U.S. News and World Report
3 rankings in three years. We are the fastest
4 rising university in U.S. News public rankings
5 in the last 10 years, up 62 spots, and now
6 ranked number 72. I know it gets harder and
7 harder to increase as we rise in the rankings,
8 but I know we can get there with the right
9 focus and the right investments. Indeed, we
10 have already achieved many top 50 rankings the
11 past few years, including those focusing on
12 economic mobility, return on investment,
13 innovation, and research expenditure growth.
14 FIU will remain committed to maintaining our
15 focus on access by providing educational
16 opportunities to Pell eligible students, our
17 students with the greatest financial need, and
18 ensuring that they graduate as quickly as our
19 non-Pell students. We all know an FIU
20 education is not restricted to students with
21 high financial resources, and our number four
22 ranking in social mobility by U.S. News and
23 number 32 ranking by Washington Monthly reflect
24 our commitment to improving the lives of our
25 students, their families, and our community.

1 We are committed to improving these impressive
2 rankings even further in the years ahead. Next
3 slide.

4 Research excellence. FIU is an R1 public
5 research university and is in the top three
6 percent in research production of all
7 universities and colleges in the country, and I
8 remain committed to the research enterprise of
9 our university and the planned investment of
10 resources to expand research opportunities.

11 Research is critical to expanding knowledge,
12 developing innovative solutions to problems,
13 and getting a better understanding of the
14 complex world we live in. Our research
15 expenditures have surpassed \$245 million, and
16 we are in the top 10 of research expenditure
17 growth of R1 public universities over the past
18 10 years, and we are poised to hit the \$400
19 million mark by 2025. And we have already
20 exceeded the research expenditures required for
21 preeminent research university designation by
22 the Florida Board of Governors. Quality
23 research requires investments, and I believe
24 the greatest opportunities for expanded
25 external research funding at FIU are in areas

1 where we have already achieved a competitive
2 advantage through established infrastructure,
3 and nationally and internationally recognized
4 and acclaimed academic and research programs
5 such as those in environment and health. This
6 is especially true when we focus on
7 interdisciplinary research that involves most
8 if not all academic programs at FIU. For
9 example, environmental resilience covers
10 everything from sea level rise, ecosystems,
11 salt water intrusion and water quality, extreme
12 weather events, and building mitigation to name
13 just a few. Environmental research will
14 include the sciences, architectural design,
15 business, education, sociology, health,
16 forensic science, engineering, construction,
17 global affairs, technology, and computer
18 science, law and health, as well as many other
19 disciplines. I believe that this focus on
20 interdisciplinary research will enable us to
21 maximize the opportunities for grant awards and
22 research that will solve global problems. We
23 know too that industry partnerships are
24 critical to both basic and applied research.
25 We will need industry at the table to solve the

1 challenging problems we as a community, a
2 nation, and the world are facing. Next slide.

3 Sustainable resources. FIU must have
4 sufficient and sustainable human physical and
5 financial resources to fulfill our mission of
6 outstanding teaching, research excellence, and
7 community engagement. The recruitment and
8 retention of our best faculty and staff are my
9 highest priorities. I understand the
10 difficulties of the current market conditions,
11 both financially and human resource-wise, and
12 able to even find the talent we need. Our team
13 proposed and the FIU Board of Trustees approved
14 last month a \$60.7 million legislative budget
15 request for top 50 operational support. This
16 request was also presented to the Florida Board
17 of Governors last month. Included in this
18 request is almost \$26 million to retain our
19 outstanding faculty and staff who have
20 consistently demonstrated sustained exceptional
21 performance and commitment to quality teaching,
22 student success, and research. Also included
23 is \$15 million in scholarship support for
24 students, \$5 million for the hiring of
25 additional faculty in areas of strategic

1 importance, and in areas where we need to
2 decrease student to faculty ratios, and \$12.5
3 million for investments in technology to
4 improve operational efficiencies and cover
5 reoccurring costs. I will advocate to the
6 Board of Governors, our legislative leadership
7 for these additional funds to support FIU, and
8 I have already done so. Additionally, I will
9 advocate for additional funding to achieve a
10 level of funding for FIU that is fair and
11 equitable compared to the funding received by
12 our sister institutions. You have my
13 commitment that I will stay focused on FIU's
14 strategic priorities and will not take on new
15 initiatives that are not strategic, and that
16 often times dilute the scarce resources that we
17 already have. I will be asking the question,
18 what is the ROI on this project, every time.
19 This question is in my DNA. I will also work
20 tirelessly on expanding our sources of
21 revenues, particularly philanthropy, net
22 auxillary revenues, and external grant funding,
23 and find ways to provide high quality
24 administrative support services, and achieve
25 cost savings through shared services, including

1 human resources, information technology,
2 business and financial services, and research
3 administration. Additionally, I have already
4 asked the FIU Foundation to prioritize student
5 scholarship funding in their annual development
6 goals, and to focus on gifts that meet
7 strategic priorities as part of their
8 development activities.

9 Fourth, university affinity and
10 engagement. Declining college enrollments
11 nationwide have required increased efforts on
12 retaining and graduating every student we
13 admit. We understand better than ever before
14 that we must do a better job of ensuring our
15 students are successful in college, and that
16 the cost of losing a student is significantly
17 more than the cost of recruiting one. Students
18 who are engaged with their university through
19 student clubs and organizations, Model U.N.,
20 student ambassadors, Greek life, athletics,
21 marching band, Panther Camp, and the dozens of
22 other student groups that we have at FIU
23 typically achieve greater gains in learning,
24 are more satisfied with their college
25 experiences, experience stronger mental health

1 and well being, feel more prepared for life
2 after college, are more likely to promote their
3 institution, and give back financially to their
4 alma mater at higher rates once they graduate.
5 And this engagement translates to higher
6 retention and graduation rates of our students
7 which improve our metrics and our rankings.
8 You may have observed some of this affinity
9 over homecoming week, particularly on Saturday
10 where it was standing room only on our housing
11 promenades and plazas. These benefits are
12 multiplied when we create an engaged community
13 of faculty and staff along with students where
14 mentoring, collegial discussions, and
15 encouragement take place, and where ideas for
16 research and innovation emerge throughout our
17 great halls, in our offices, in our Wolfe and
18 Graham centers, in our food courts, on our
19 plazas and lawns, and on the bay. This
20 affinity also translates to stronger alumni
21 engagement. The experiences of our students
22 while they are here will define how active and
23 supportive our alumni are after they graduate.
24 And our alumni give back in many amazing ways.
25 They provide mentoring and internship

1 opportunities for our current students. They
2 help improve job placement rates once our
3 students graduate. And they help with
4 admissions by serving as ambassadors and
5 telling our remarkable FIU story. It is a
6 source of immense pride for Panthers employers
7 who hire Panthers, they know the quality of the
8 education our students receive, they know the
9 value proposition of an FIU degree. And our
10 engaged alumni also support FIU financially.
11 Our alumnus are among the top donors to FIU,
12 and we have almost 300,000 alumnus, and most of
13 them are right here in South Florida; imagine
14 the impact of their advocacy in helping FIU
15 achieve its goals and objectives. And finally,
16 we need to stay engaged with our community.
17 Our community and FIU are better off when our
18 students, faculty, and staff collaborate with
19 our larger community. We can enrich the lives
20 of our residents through health, and civic
21 partnerships, service, and research. And we
22 know the community will reciprocate by
23 supporting FIU. We know it is a two-way street
24 and a value proposition. Many of the largest
25 gifts to FIU are from members of our community

1 who were not FIU alumni. These are community
2 leaders and benefactors who believe in FIU and
3 its noble mission. Let's face it, we are a
4 Panther Family and a Panther community, and we
5 work better together. By working together we
6 can develop the affinity that our students, our
7 faculty, our staff, and our alumnus not only
8 need, but want.

9 So where does this take us? We can
10 certainly be very proud of what FIU has
11 accomplished over the past 50 years. We are
12 babies in the timeline of great universities.
13 Starting on an abandoned air field opening to
14 the largest enrollment of any educational
15 institution at that time, 5,667 upper-division
16 and master students, to now educating over
17 56,000 students achieving \$246 million in
18 research expenditures, being the number one
19 producer of degrees to Hispanics, being a top
20 10 producer of baccalaureate degrees to African
21 Americans, and achieving national rankings
22 typically reserved for much older universities.
23 FIU has always had lofty goals and high
24 expectations, and these have always been
25 exceeded. And this mentality is not changing.

1 This will guide us into the future. Our
2 successes speak for themselves and they are
3 speaking in a very loud voice. And yet the
4 best is yet to come. We will continue to focus
5 on student success and research excellence. We
6 will continue to produce great leaders,
7 teachers, researchers, scientists, healthcare
8 providers, lawyers, innovators, and
9 entrepreneurs. And I believe as a Panther
10 Family we have the opportunity to be the world
11 leader in solving the biggest problems facing
12 society today, the health of its people and the
13 environment we live in. Thank you, my
14 colleagues, for the opportunity to be with you
15 this morning, and now we will open up the
16 opportunity for questions and answers.

17 DR. TRELLES: Nice to see you all again.
18 So before we get started, I wanted to let you
19 all know that we are opening it up for
20 questions in the audience, but we also have a
21 lot of our members on Zoom, as well as
22 webcasts. So if you have any questions, please
23 feel free to use our Zoom platform to ask them
24 there and I will be reading them and allowing
25 our finalist to have an opportunity to answer

1 those. I also wanted to share that while we
2 have all of you in attendance in the audience,
3 we have approximately 83 of you who are joining
4 us through Zoom, and -- other numbers which I
5 will be getting full clarification of the
6 numbers through our webcast. So now I invite
7 any of you in the audience to please take a
8 moment to ask a question to our finalist.
9 Just -- all you have to do is approach the
10 microphone and we will take it from here.

11 MALE SPEAKER: Hello there. I guess it's
12 appropriate I ask the first question because I
13 was the chair of the college promotional
14 committee when we hired Dr. Jessell here, so I
15 guess part of the credit for what he's going to
16 do should come to me. I know of course some of
17 you might be thinking on the other hand, hey,
18 but I'm not an economist, I'm an accountant, so
19 I don't talk about other hands, okay, so --

20 DR. JESSELL: So I'm here because of you.
21 Thank you.

22 DR. TRELLES: That's what I heard.

23 MALE SPEAKER: Any case, my question is,
24 well, international is at the center of FIU.
25 We are fairly well known in the Americas, not

1 so well known say, in Asia and Europe, so what
2 are your plans -- I mean, do you have any plans
3 to address that? That is my question. And my
4 comment is this, you know, a few years ago, a
5 school accounting director gave us all these
6 shirts which say, you know, School of
7 Accounting FIU. Within the past month -- you
8 talk -- this is only because you said something
9 about ROI. This might be an excellent ROI
10 project because within the past month at least
11 four or five times I have been stopped in
12 Publix, in Walgreens by prospective students
13 and current students asking me, hey, what are
14 you going to do in this, you know, Broward
15 campus, what course are you going to offer, or,
16 you know, what should I do, or just -- you
17 know, this is a fairly good ad, it's low
18 budget, high ROI, FYI. Others might do it.

19 DR. JESSELL: Okay. So I'll answer the
20 second question first. I agree with you, it
21 should be a condition of employment that every
22 day we wear FIU gear. But you are so right,
23 that simple little thing really gets our name
24 out there in the community, and it is a
25 reminder to people that see it, what a great

1 institution FIU is.

2 On the first question, you're absolutely
3 right. Let's face it, FIU, Florida
4 International University, so international is a
5 big part of -- of our name. It's interesting
6 because last week I was doing a little bit of
7 research on the -- the FIU Baseball Team going
8 back to 1973 and they were -- they were looking
9 at their first year playing baseball, and we
10 had a reunion of the baseball players. And
11 even back then there was an article on what
12 does it mean at FIU to be international. So
13 this is not a new -- not a new concept.
14 Certainly we want to expand our exposure to
15 international students. I think having a very,
16 very rich and diverse student body is critical
17 for the success of all of our students. We
18 live in a global society. We live in a global
19 economy. I mentioned in my comments that ten
20 years ago we did the QEP Global Learning for
21 Global Citizenship that incorporated multiple
22 aspects of -- of global notions and learning
23 into the curriculum. We have a course that's
24 required at the undergrads -- at the lower
25 level and the upper level to improve that

1 knowledge base for -- for our students. We can
2 certainly do more. We should certainly be
3 doing a better job of recruiting international
4 students as well as even domestic out-of-state
5 students to improve the diversity of our
6 students, so I strongly support that. I'm
7 happy to work with the provost and our
8 admission staff to do more on international
9 recruitment. But it's more than just the
10 students -- it is a whole concept of
11 international and globalization in a
12 curriculum.

13 MALE SPEAKER: I'd like to get your
14 thoughts about academic freedom. And
15 particularly kind of within the context of
16 recent legislative action, the so-called Stop
17 Woke Act, the kind of attempts to silence
18 critical race theory. And I guess I wonder
19 also whether I have a fairly expansive view of
20 academic freedom and includes pursuit of one's
21 discipline freely, free inquiring one's
22 discipline, but also intramurally as
23 participants of collegial governance, faculty,
24 senate discussions about the direction of the
25 university. And then also I think we might

1 think of extramurally, right. Your slides
2 spoke to -- about community engagement. I know
3 faculty are often asked by local media, you
4 know, to come and comment on their expertise,
5 so that's a kind of extramural expression of
6 academic freedom, so your thoughts, I guess?

7 DR. JESSELL: So on the last part, we
8 actually have a faculty resource guide. I
9 think we -- we often times ask for faculty to
10 submit their areas of expertise -- so that we
11 understand if we get inquiries from -- who to
12 go to. But let me tell you, I am a firm and
13 strong supporter of academic freedom. I am a
14 faculty member myself. That is the premise for
15 the research that we are doing, the teaching
16 that we are doing. I know there's a lot of
17 noise out there. My response to faculty that
18 have brought this up is that we are going to
19 continue to do the great quality, objective
20 teaching and research that we have always done.
21 I have not been exposed to any faculty members
22 that have promoted teaching that is not based
23 on objectivity, or any faculty member that has
24 promoted research that is not based on solid
25 standing, okay, knowledge based. What we're

1 hearing out there relates to things that --
2 that really are not appropriate in terms of
3 non-evidence base, but I don't hear faculty
4 doing that. So my recommendation is we just
5 continue to do the great things that we're
6 doing and not worry about all the noise.

7 MALE SPEAKER: Hi, President Jessell, how
8 are you? I'm -- chair of earth and
9 environment, and I really thank you for your
10 attention to the environmental resilience, our
11 environmental interaction work at FIU. We're
12 actually leading in many, many regards to
13 environmental research and work in the
14 community in South Florida. And I'd like to
15 ask you how you may and how we may leverage FIU
16 to support increased activity in terms of a
17 resilient South Florida, and how we might help
18 to make FIU an example of a resilient
19 adaptation to South Florida?

20 DR. JESSELL: So, I mean, that was -- that
21 was one of the key points. When you talk about
22 environmental resilience, I mean, you're --
23 you're really looking at ground zero, in my
24 view, where we are in Miami-Dade. And we can
25 see what happened over on the west coast of

1 Florida just two weeks ago. And environmental
2 resilience is more than just storms, it's more
3 than -- than just construction, it's more than
4 just sea level rise, it's mental health, it's
5 sociology, all of these types of -- of aspects
6 of society that we have to address. It is the
7 number one problem, I believe, we are facing as
8 a world, and we must -- we must address it. So
9 everything that we're doing in our colleges and
10 in our departments needs to be focusing on what
11 we can do to make this world more resilient,
12 how we can improve environmental conditions,
13 how we can mitigate the impacts of sea level
14 rise, how we can make structures safer for
15 residents, and how we can develop the business
16 models that make that possible. We are going
17 to have to make some very, very difficult
18 decisions. Even right now, we're hearing about
19 conversations on the west coast of Florida, are
20 we going to rebuild or not? How many people
21 are going to come back or not? And there may
22 be entire communities that are going to be
23 facing this even without the impact of a
24 disaster or a storm just as a result of sea
25 level rise. We may have to make the financial

1 decision to relocate those individuals. It is
2 going to be more cost effective to demolish and
3 rebuild then to try to mitigate the advancing
4 sea level rise. Those are very, very difficult
5 decisions, but every college is going to have
6 to be involved with that. So on this example,
7 I know people in -- in public policy, people in
8 business are going to be looking at the net
9 present values of those scenarios. They're
10 going to be looking at what does it mean to
11 change where we are growing crops and the
12 different types of crops, where people are
13 going to work and how they are going to work.
14 So that interdisciplinary approach, I believe,
15 is a way that we can really establish ourselves
16 as a leader in developing the solutions that
17 are needed. I mean, we can't turn a blind eye
18 to these issues anymore, and we can be right
19 there front and center, because we -- we have
20 the opportunity you can look at the Atlantic,
21 you look at -- you look at the Gulf, you look
22 at the Everglades, you look at the estuaries,
23 you look at the wind. We have it all here. So
24 let's make that a center of excellence for FIU.

25 DR. TRELLES: So we've received a couple

1 of questions through Zoom, and they focus
2 around the theme of retention and recruitment
3 of faculty members and what your vision is for
4 that, so if you would kindly share with our
5 audience?

6 DR. JESSELL: I mean, I -- you know, I
7 addressed this in my comments, and I addressed
8 it because this is my number one priority. We
9 have to be able to retain the great faculty and
10 staff that we have. And I know that there is a
11 value to being an FIU faculty member and an FIU
12 staff member. We work at the greatest
13 university in the greatest city in the world,
14 as far as I'm concerned, and that has value,
15 but we get to the point where the value
16 proposition, where you factor in those
17 non-pecuniary benefits versus what's happening
18 in the marketplace gets so great, so we have to
19 address that. That was one of the first things
20 that we included as part of our LBR dollars to
21 bring our faculty and staff up to reasonable
22 levels. And you're all experiencing it. I
23 can't believe how, you know, my -- my car
24 insurance went up from one year to the next. I
25 can't even imagine what my hazard insurance is

1 going to be doing. And we are in the least
2 affordable city in the country in Miami-Dade.
3 It's not that we are the highest prices in
4 terms of rent or the highest in -- in housing
5 costs, but it takes up a disproportional amount
6 of our salaries, so we have to do something.
7 So we have the legislative budget request,
8 we're going to be advocating for that. We will
9 also be advocating for the legislature to fund
10 state university and system employees that same
11 5.28 percent that other state employees
12 received. My heart dropped when I read the
13 allocation documents and saw that the S.U.S.
14 institutions were not included in that, so that
15 is going to be a strong advocacy position, not
16 only for FIU, but the state university system.
17 In addition, we are trying to do some things
18 where internally we can redirect resources. So
19 we recently lost our -- our vice president for
20 engagement. We've taken the various activities
21 of engagements, the responsibilities of
22 engagement, and redistributed those within
23 academic affairs and strategic communications,
24 and we saved a lot of administrative salaries
25 that we redirected into the budget so we did

1 not have to have as large a budgeting reduction
2 as we ended up having in the institution. So I
3 want to do a lot more of that, are there ways
4 to consolidate and reorganize that will save us
5 dollars where we can put some of those savings
6 back into the salaries? So I -- I agree
7 with -- with the question. It's one that I'm
8 getting time and time again in all of our
9 departments. It's hard to recruit, it's hard
10 to hire, and it's hard to retain, so that -- if
11 we don't -- if we don't retain our best and
12 brightest, we are going to lose all the
13 improvements that we have made over the last
14 ten years, because it's not just having the
15 right programs in place, it's having the right
16 people in place. People make it happen.
17 People have the relationships with the
18 students, with the alumni, with our faculty,
19 our staff, and each other.

20 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for that. I do
21 have one more question that can be tied into
22 that, and it's many schools have seen funding
23 in RA positions to help professors to progress
24 in their research and giving Ph.D. students
25 some opportunities to gain direct research

1 experience. What are your plans to make FIU
2 have these opportunities?

3 DR. JESSELL: So we have to invest
4 resources. And every year when you look at our
5 carry forward expenditure plan, we include some
6 dollars for startups and that could be for --
7 for faculty support for research and for
8 graduate student support for research. In
9 addition, we have been listening to the needs
10 of our graduate students in terms of the dollar
11 value of their in -- of their -- of their
12 support, as well as the high cost of living in
13 Miami. So we've already made a plan to
14 increase with one time funds this year the
15 amount of the stipends to offer some relief to
16 our students. In addition, we are working more
17 closely with university housing to get our
18 graduate students to live on campus because
19 that is now the best value in town in terms of
20 housing cost. So we're able to get students in
21 for about \$1,000 a month, all in, which means
22 that includes all of the utilities, it includes
23 the Internet, and you're saving a lot of
24 dollars in commuting to -- to school every day,
25 so we're trying to do that. We know it's an

1 issue. We have made some investments and in
2 working with BP Hill, we're going to do even
3 more, and we have a plan in place for that.

4 DR. TRELLES: Perfect. Thank you so much
5 for sharing with us. I also wanted to ask you
6 a question from our Zoom participants. What
7 would be some of your priorities or goals
8 regarding FIU's role in improving children's
9 education and mental health in the K through 12
10 school system, and improving teacher
11 recruitment and retention in regards to that?

12 DR. JESSELL: So in the -- in the K-12,
13 you know, segment, this relates to making sure
14 that we are engaged with the community. Mental
15 health is a national problem and it has been
16 exacerbated over the last couple of years
17 because of COVID. And we know even within
18 universities, mental health is -- is at a very,
19 very high level. We need to do a lot more with
20 our faculty and our researchers and our staff
21 members in working with K through 12. They
22 need as much help as they can get to assist
23 with mental health issues. And it's even
24 beyond mental health. It is related to the
25 academic curriculum. Let's face it, you're not

1 going to succeed in college if you did not
2 succeed in high school. So we need to make
3 sure that it is almost a seamless academic
4 transition to universities. And if we can do a
5 better job with that, the transition is much
6 better and the incidence of mental health will
7 be less. Going to college is a big adjustment
8 for so many students, so if they're more
9 prepared and they understand what that
10 transition is, that will help with some of
11 those -- those issues. But I agree with you,
12 we must have expanded collaboration with our
13 K-12. We have already started to doing -- to
14 doing that, much, much more with the new
15 superintendent in Miami-Dade, and I look
16 forward to greater opportunities.

17 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. For those of you
18 who are joining us in the audience, the
19 microphones are available. If you have any
20 questions, I want to make sure that you all
21 have the opportunity as well.

22 FEMALE SPEAKER: Good morning or afternoon
23 maybe even, I'm not sure.

24 DR. TRELLES: Afternoon now.

25 FEMALE SPEAKER: Afternoon now.

1 DR. JESSELL: It's just afternoon.

2 FEMALE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

3 DR. TRELLES: But we'll take both.

4 FEMALE SPEAKER: So thank you first for
5 your commitment to innovative and inclusive
6 teaching for -- from me, thank you. And to
7 everybody that participated in writing the LBR,
8 I understand that it took a lot of effort and
9 I'm so grateful for that. But I am hearing
10 from faculty that they are now overwhelmed.
11 And what they are hearing is there's no money,
12 there's no money, there's no money to support
13 them in maybe adding more visiting instructors
14 or lines. What can we say to chairs for those
15 departments that have these high enrollment
16 classes, maybe the service departments, where
17 they're getting the message there is no money,
18 which we understand, but the faculty are so
19 overwhelmed that they're -- they're not able to
20 function and their mental health is suffering?

21 DR. JESSELL: So you heard me make, you
22 know, several comments of the LBR was not only
23 for dollars to support the salary requirements
24 of our faculty, but also additional faculty to
25 help relieve the -- the very, very high

1 workloads in many areas, and where we have
2 very, very high student to faculty, you know,
3 ratios, we must address that. I --

4 FEMALE SPEAKER: -- understanding is that
5 money won't be coming along anytime soon and
6 these are people --

7 DR. JESSELL: Well --

8 FEMALE SPEAKER: -- that are struggling
9 right now.

10 DR. JESSELL: -- we hope it's going to be
11 coming July 1st, okay. So this is a
12 legislative budget request that will be taken
13 up by the legislature this session. We have an
14 amazing governmental relations team. I have
15 already personally met with several key
16 leadership members and we've talked about this.
17 We are very, very low in funding per FTE
18 compared to our sister institutions. I didn't
19 want to get into all the nitty gritty in my
20 comments, but when I said, I want to bring
21 parity to FIU, I really mean that, I want to
22 bring equity to FIU, I really mean that. If I
23 compare us to two institutions, say if we could
24 just get -- if we could get that same -- same
25 level of funding, that would be an automatic

1 \$300 million. If I could get maybe the next
2 one down, that would be about \$150 million,
3 right. We need to advocate for FIU and we need
4 to show what we're able to do. And I believe
5 when you look at the performance FIU has made
6 since performance funding has been established,
7 and that is always a key element in the
8 legislature. We have consistently performed at
9 the highest level in the state university
10 system. Last year we were number one and we
11 had the most points of ever achieved of any
12 university in the state university system, so
13 we should be very, very proud of that. Our
14 social mobility, the fact that we can get our
15 Pell eligible students. And most of these
16 students are coming from Miami-Dade. And most
17 of our graduates, when they graduate, stay in
18 Miami-Dade. What -- there's no better return
19 on investment, right? The state's putting
20 dollars in and those people are staying in
21 Miami-Dade, they are improving the economy of
22 Miami-Dade and South Florida, and they are
23 giving back in many, many great ways by not
24 only taking great jobs, but producing great
25 jobs, being great entrepreneurs, so there's no

1 better value proposition. We just have to
2 continue pounding that message with the
3 leadership and let them know we are not going
4 to take no for, you know, for an answer. We
5 are trying everything we can on the short term
6 to find non-recurring dollars, we're looking at
7 the lapse savings that we have that we might be
8 able to invest in the spring for those. I
9 mean, the budget is very, very tight. I mean,
10 the budget's an open book. We did a lot of
11 rearranging even to do, you know, the one and a
12 half percent, you know, 1,500 for faculty. And
13 I get it, that is woefully, you know,
14 inadequate. It's not what we wanted to do. We
15 were happy to at least do something, but we
16 have to do more. So we're on the same page.
17 We're going to -- we're definitely going to be
18 advocating, you know, for that. And by the
19 way, this is a -- we're going to have to make
20 some bigger decisions because we absolutely
21 cannot lose our outstanding faculty and staff,
22 we can't.

23 DR. TRELLES: We had the opportunity to
24 collect some questions before we got to today,
25 and one of those questions had a feeling of a

1 particular theme, which is remote work, and
2 what does that look like for faculty, so if you
3 wouldn't mind just sharing your -- your
4 thoughts or some comments on that?

5 DR. JESSELL: So -- well, I've been a
6 faculty member for 39 years and I don't ever
7 remember even as a brand new assistant
8 professor, clocking in and clocking out every
9 day. I am a firm believer in affinity. I am a
10 firm believer in faculty dialogue and faculty
11 discussions. I am a firm believer in faculty
12 brainstorming, not only between and among
13 faculty members, but also with students. Now,
14 I'm a dinosaur. I can look around the room and
15 see my educational experience is longer than
16 several of you in the audience, okay, but I
17 know that I was successful as a faculty member
18 and successful as an administrator because of
19 my interaction with my colleagues. The senior
20 faculty were amazing mentors to me and working
21 with students helped me generate additional
22 research ideas. I mean, they have great ideas
23 when we listen to them. So do I want all of
24 our faculty to be living abroad? The answer is
25 no, okay. I want you living right here in our

1 South Florida community. Do I believe that you
2 are best serving FIU by being in your office
3 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.? I know many of you
4 personally in this room -- universally I know
5 if I were to say that to faculty, they would be
6 saying, actually, we want you to do that
7 because we work much more than 8:00 to 5:00, so
8 I get it. There are times when it's more
9 beneficial for you and for the university for
10 you to be elsewhere, not in your office. But I
11 think it's important for you to be in your
12 office to contribute to the affinity of the
13 university, to contribute to our students and
14 to contribute to your peers. Even going to the
15 cafeteria, or going off campus, or just sitting
16 outside having those dialogues are very, very
17 important. So for faculty, that is my
18 position. You have never been 9:00 to 5:00-ers
19 [SIC]. You have never been on campus every
20 minute of every day. It is a very, very good
21 model. But I do believe for our students, for
22 our community, it is important that we do not
23 create a totally online university. There are
24 many opportunities out there for students to go
25 to totally online universities. There are many

1 opportunities for faculty and staff that want
2 to work for online universities and being in a
3 remote environment. That is not FIU. And for
4 those of you that are here, that is not for
5 you, because you could have done this remotely,
6 okay. Now, for non-faculty, we have a very,
7 very robust remote policy, and it gives the
8 opportunity for flexibility. Do I want every
9 staff member to be living abroad? The answer
10 is no, because there are times we must come
11 together as a university community to support
12 our students. And when I talk to my colleagues
13 over at Florida Gulf Coast University, New
14 College of Florida, University of South
15 Florida, I will tell you that it was all hands
16 on deck, wherever possible, to bring the
17 university back. If you are in Iowa or if you
18 are in India, you are not going to be able to
19 help support this university. But we have
20 great policies. We were one of the first
21 universities to develop a comprehensive policy.
22 At the end of the day, it must be a policy that
23 looks out for the best interest of the
24 university as a whole, as well as support our
25 employees, and I'm committed to doing that. So

1 even though the employee may want to be remote
2 100 percent of the time, it's not going to be
3 possible in all cases, or even the majority of
4 the cases. But we do have opportunities of
5 flexibility for all of our employees. We want
6 to be flexible. We want to -- we want to have
7 opportunities for staff members, as well as
8 faculty members, to be successful.

9 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that
10 opportunity with us. I also wanted to ask you
11 about your opinions and vision in regards to
12 tenure and the elimination of tenure and the
13 increased dependency on non-tenure track
14 faculty members?

15 DR. JESSELL: So, you know, number one,
16 I'm a tenured faculty member, so I will tell
17 you, I fully support tenure. It is a very,
18 very important part of higher education. If
19 there was never tenure anywhere, it was all
20 eliminated, I don't think we would lose the
21 competitive advantage, but the fact is, it is a
22 value proposition for faculty. I support as
23 well opportunities for different pathways to
24 student and research success. I think it is
25 absolutely fantastic that FIU has high quality

1 non-tenure track instructional faculty. It is
2 absolutely amazing. Last year it was an
3 opportunity for me -- actually, it was earlier
4 this year, it was an opportunity for me to host
5 at the Reagan House a reception for our
6 non-tenure instructional faculty. They are
7 among the best and brightest of our faculty.
8 It is an amazing alternate pathway for student
9 success. It also frees up teaching
10 responsibilities so many of our faculty can do
11 path breaking research. So it is a -- as far
12 as I'm concerned, those opportunities, those
13 pathways are win-win opportunities. We
14 absolutely must have tenured faculty. Most of
15 our tenured -- faculty are on aggressive
16 research portfolios, and the ability to offer
17 those -- those opportunities for research are
18 available in part because we have great
19 instructional faculty, many, many, many with
20 terminal degrees in their field.

21 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. So we did have a
22 question in regards to the search process. I
23 would like to share with you that Bill is on
24 Zoom with us in case any component of that
25 question needs to be answered by him, but the

1 question is originally addressed to you, which
2 is, in your capacity as interim president, did
3 you play any role in the selection of the
4 search firm assisting with the search process
5 and/or in the selection of the members of the
6 search committee? And would you consider this
7 a conflict of interest if you did?

8 DR. JESSELL: So the answer is no, and no,
9 and probably emphatically no. And emphatically
10 no.

11 DR. TRELLES: Bill?

12 MR. FUNK: I would just confirm what Ken
13 has said. Our dealings were almost purely with
14 the search committee and the board. I had the
15 occasion to meet Ken, I think, for the very
16 first time at the first search committee
17 meeting. So, no, Ken I don't think had any --
18 any role in retaining us as the consultant.

19 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
20 And we have one more question. It doesn't --
21 it does relate to tenure, which is, what is
22 your opinion on reviewing tenured faculty for
23 tenured renewal?

24 DR. JESSELL: Number one, every employee
25 at the university should undergo an annual

1 review, number one. I think that is so
2 important for the employee, as well as the
3 supervisor. We want to make sure as employees
4 that we're doing the job to the best of our
5 ability and that it is meeting the needs of the
6 university. So just like faculty members
7 evaluate the work of students, you really need
8 to do that to make sure that everyone is on the
9 same page. Secondly, when this whole -- when
10 the new legislation post tenure review came up,
11 I went into my archives and sent information to
12 the Board of Governors and said, just remember
13 that this is not new. In the '90s we had
14 sustained performance review that was
15 established by the Florida Board of Regents,
16 and I actually sent members of BOG staff the --
17 Board of Regents regulation related to
18 sustained performance. If you look at our
19 collective bargaining agreement, it already
20 shows sustained performance evaluation of seven
21 years. If you look at collective bargaining
22 agreements for other universities, they use the
23 language post tenure review. So this is
24 nothing new. If we do a good job every year
25 when we are setting goals, and expectations,

1 and evaluating performance with every employee,
2 there should never be any surprise as to how
3 well we are performing, how well we are meeting
4 the goals and objectives that we discussed in
5 the prior year. So this is just another
6 element of something that is and should be
7 taking place every year. So I do not -- I do
8 not see any issues, okay. If you had been
9 getting as a tenured faculty member or any
10 employee and you say -- like tenure track. If
11 you have been getting quality annual
12 evaluations, you've had good dialogue. When it
13 comes to that fifth year tenure review, it is
14 going to be exactly the same outcome. If you
15 are a tenured track faculty member -- and this
16 is why particularly with tenure track, I have
17 always felt that by the time it goes to the
18 tenure decision, it should be pretty much
19 automatic. You should know after the first
20 year, the second year, the comprehensive third
21 year review, how well you are doing. There
22 should not be any surprises. And it is not
23 fair to the junior faculty member that he or
24 she is let on that they are doing well when we
25 know that they are not just because we don't

1 want to give them the hard facts. So by the
2 time we -- we go through the process and those
3 recommendations are coming up, it should be
4 pretty much automatic.

5 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. So our time is
6 coming to an end. And before I ask Dr. Jessell
7 for a couple of last comments, I wanted to
8 share that the transcripts for our session will
9 be made available on our website on the
10 presidential search website before Monday, and
11 we invite you to review it for -- for
12 yourselves. But before you make one last
13 comment, could I ask for a simple request?
14 Could you touch on diversity and what that
15 means as well as inclusion at FIU in your -- in
16 your last comments to us?

17 DR. JESSELL: Well, I'm looking around the
18 room right now and I see a lot of diversity,
19 okay. We have talked about it for a long time
20 at the university, and we have actually made
21 significant investments in the DEI programs.
22 We are better at as a university, we are better
23 as colleagues, and we are better as a community
24 the more diverse we are. But I know it takes a
25 lot more than just simply establishing the

1 office of DEI and talking about, so we've made
2 investments so we can actually monitor how well
3 we are doing, how well are we recruiting, how
4 well are we hiring, and how well are we
5 retaining our diverse faculty and staff? I am
6 also proud of the fact that as an R1 Hispanic
7 serving university, we are a member of 21
8 institutions in the Alliance of Hispanic
9 Serving R1 institutions that are lobbying
10 Congress for additional dollars to increase the
11 number of minorities in Ph.D. programs so we
12 can increase the number of minorities,
13 particularly Hispanic minorities, in our
14 institutions. We want to have faculty that are
15 as diverse as the communities that we serve.
16 So we are proud to be part of that initiative.
17 And I'm also proud of the fact that we are
18 working toward measuring and monitoring, you
19 know, the progress that we've made. I will not
20 be happy until every minority is fully
21 represented at our institutions to represent
22 our community.

23 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. And thank you
24 for joining us today, whether that was in our
25 audience, in person, or through Zoom, or

1 webcast. And we invite you to join us for our
2 general session which will be available this
3 afternoon.

4 DR. JESSELL: Okay, so, just for my final
5 comments, okay -- but really, I -- I was not at
6 all involved in -- in the search process at
7 all. I had no conversations on how that was
8 going. As I mentioned when I opened up, I had
9 always intended not to be a candidate, but, you
10 know, there was a plan, and I am happy to serve
11 if I am given the opportunity. I am a true
12 Panther. I bleed blue and gold. I am so much
13 a part of this community. And I promise you,
14 if I get the job, I will work tirelessly
15 supporting our students, our faculty, and our
16 staff. I am typically the last one leaving,
17 you know, the building at night because I value
18 the work that you do. As our faculty, you are
19 the lifeblood of our university, and I am
20 committed to doing whatever I can to help you
21 along.

22 DR. TRELLES: Thank you.

23 (Whereupon, the proceedings
24 concluded at 12:36 p.m.).

25 - - -

CERTIFICATE

1
2
3 THE STATE OF FLORIDA)
4 COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE)
5

6 I, Daisy L. Amador, a Court Reporter, do
7 hereby certify that I was authorized to and did
8 report the proceedings, had and taken at the Graham
9 Center Ballrooms, Florida International University,
10 11200 S.W. 8th Street, Miami, Florida, 33199, on
11 October 11th, 2022, for the Presidential Candidate
12 Community Sessions: Faculty; that the foregoing
13 pages, numbered 1 to 47, inclusive, constitute a
14 true and complete record of my notes.
15

16 I further certify that I am not an
17 attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
18 related to any of the parties, nor financially
19 interested in the action.
20

21 Dated this 12th day of October, 2022.
22

23 

24 Daisy L. Amador
Notary Public for the State of Florida
25 Commission No.: HH175493
Expires: 10/17/2025

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| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>boca 5:6 body 20:16 bog 42:16 book 35:10 boring 5:19 born 4:19 bp 30:2 brainstorming 36:12 brand 36:7 breaking 6:6 40:11 brightest 28:12 40:7 bring 6:5 26:21 33:20,22 38:16 brought 22:18 broward 4:23,24 19:14 budget 11:14 19:18 27:7,25 33:12 35:9 budget's 35:10 budgeting 28:1 building 10:12 46:17 business 3:17,19 10:15 13:2 24:15 25:8</p> | <p>46:9 47:11 candidate's 2:19 capacity 41:2 car 26:23 career 6:2,14 carry 29:5 case 18:23 40:24 cases 39:3,4 center 1:5 18:24 25:19,24 47:9 centers 14:18 century 6:16 7:4 certainly 16:10 20:14 21:2,2 certificate 47:1 certify 47:7,16 cfo 5:9 chair 18:13 23:8 chairs 32:14 challenges 4:11 challenging 11:1 chancellors 2:12 change 4:5 25:11 changing 16:25 chief 3:2,13 children's 30:8 citizenship 6:24 20:21 city 26:13 27:2 civic 15:20 clarification 18:5 classes 32:16 classroom 6:6,11 clocking 36:8,8 closely 29:17 clubs 13:19 coast 23:25 24:19 38:13</p> | <p>collaborate 15:18 collaboration 31:12 colleagues 3:23 17:14 36:19 38:12 44:23 collect 35:24 collective 42:19 42:21 college 3:19 13:10,15,24 14:2 18:13 25:5 31:1,7 38:14 colleges 2:11 9:7 24:9 collegial 6:20 14:14 21:23 come 4:7 17:4 18:16 22:4 24:21 38:10 comes 43:13 coming 33:5,11 34:16 44:3,6 comment 19:4 22:4 44:13 comments 20:19 26:7 32:22 33:20 36:4 44:7,16 46:5 commission 47:25 commitment 8:24 11:21 12:13 32:5 committed 7:25 8:14 9:1,8 38:25 46:20 committee 1:1 18:14 41:6,14,16</p> | <p>communications 27:23 communities 24:22 45:15 community 1:11 2:4 3:7 8:25 11:1 11:7 14:12 15:16 15:17,19,22,25 16:1,4 19:24 22:2 23:14 30:14 37:1 37:22 38:11 44:23 45:22 46:13 47:12 commuting 29:24 compare 33:23 compared 12:11 33:18 competency 6:18 competitive 10:1 39:21 complete 47:14 complex 9:14 component 40:24 comprehensive 38:21 43:20 computer 10:17 concept 20:13 21:10 concerned 26:14 40:12 concluded 46:24 condition 19:21 conditions 11:10 24:12 conducted 2:10 confirm 41:12 conflict 41:7</p> |
| c | | | |
| <p>cafeteria 37:15 called 21:16 camp 13:21 campus 19:15 29:18 37:15,19 candidate 1:11 1:21 2:6 4:1,3</p> | | | |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| congress 45:10 consider 41:6 consistently 11:20 34:8 consolidate 28:4 constitute 47:13 construction 10:16 24:3 consultant 41:18 context 21:15 continue 6:1,13 7:13 17:4,6 22:19 23:5 35:2 continues 6:22 contribute 37:12 37:13,14 conversations 24:19 46:7 cooperation 6:21 cost 12:25 13:16 13:17 25:2 29:12 29:20 costs 12:5 27:5 counsel 47:17 country 9:7 27:2 county 4:23,24 4:25 47:4 couple 25:25 30:16 44:7 course 18:16 19:15 20:23 courses 7:7 court 47:6 courts 14:18 cover 12:4 covers 10:9 covid 30:17 | create 14:12 37:23 credentialing 6:19 7:7 credit 18:15 critical 6:9 7:3 9:11 10:24 20:16 21:18 crops 25:11,12 culture 6:8 7:2 cultures 7:2 current 11:10 15:1 19:13 curriculum 6:13 6:22 7:9 20:23 21:12 30:25 | decrease 12:2 define 14:22 definitely 35:17 degree 15:9 degrees 5:3 7:17 16:19,20 40:20 dei 44:21 45:1 demolish 25:2 demonstrated 11:20 departments 24:10 28:9 32:15 32:16 dependency 39:13 design 10:14 designation 9:21 designs 6:15 develop 16:6 24:15 38:21 developing 9:12 25:16 development 3:6 13:5,8 dialogue 36:10 43:12 dialogues 37:16 different 6:15 25:12 39:23 difficult 24:17 25:4 difficulties 11:10 dilute 12:16 dinosaur 36:14 direct 28:25 direction 21:24 director 19:5 | disaster 24:24 discipline 21:21 21:22 disciplines 10:19 discussed 43:4 discussing 5:22 discussions 6:20 14:14 21:24 36:11 disproportional 27:5 diverse 20:16 44:24 45:5,15 diversity 3:8 21:5 44:14,18 division 16:15 dna 12:19 documents 27:13 doing 20:6 21:3 22:15,16 23:4,6 24:9 27:1 31:13 31:14 38:25 42:4 43:21,24 45:3 46:20 dollar 29:10 dollars 26:20 28:5 29:6,24 32:23 34:20 35:6 45:10 domestic 21:4 donors 15:11 dozens 13:21 dr 2:1,2,6,24 3:2 3:11,18,20,22 17:17 18:14,20 18:22 19:19 22:7 23:20 25:25 26:6 28:20 29:3 30:4 |
| | d | | |
| | dade 4:24 23:24 27:2 31:15 34:16 34:18,21,22 47:4 daisy 47:6,24 dallas 2:8 data 7:6 dated 47:21 daughter 5:15 day 19:22 29:24 36:9 37:20 38:22 47:21 dealings 41:13 december 5:14 decision 25:1 43:18 decisions 24:18 25:5 35:20 deck 38:16 declining 13:10 | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>30:12 31:17,24 32:1,3,21 33:7,10 35:23 36:5 39:9 39:15 40:21 41:8 41:11,19,24 44:5 44:6,17 45:23 46:4,22 dream 4:7 dreamed 4:6 dropped 27:12</p> | <p>embassadors 13:20 embrace 6:5 emerge 14:16 emotional 7:6 emphatically 41:9,9 employee 39:1 41:24 42:2 43:1 43:10 employees 27:10 27:11 38:25 39:5 42:3 employers 15:6 employment 7:17 19:21 enable 10:20 encouragement 14:15 ended 28:2 engaged 13:18 14:12 15:10,16 30:14 engagement 3:7 11:7 13:10 14:5 14:21 22:2 27:20 27:22 engagements 27:21 engineering 10:16 enrich 15:19 enrollment 16:14 32:15 enrollments 13:10 ensuring 8:18 13:14</p> | <p>enterprise 9:8 enterprises 3:5 entire 24:22 entrepreneurs 17:9 34:25 environment 10:5 17:13 23:9 38:3 environmental 10:9,13 23:10,11 23:13,22 24:1,12 equitable 12:11 equity 3:8 33:22 ers 37:18 especially 10:6 esq 1:25 establish 25:15 established 10:2 34:6 42:15 establishing 44:25 estuaries 25:22 europe 19:1 evaluate 42:7 evaluating 43:1 evaluation 42:20 evaluations 43:12 events 10:12 everglades 25:22 everybody 32:7 evidence 6:4,7 23:3 exacerbated 30:16 exactly 43:14 example 10:9 23:18 25:6</p> | <p>exceeded 9:20 16:25 excelled 7:21 excellence 6:8 9:4 11:6 17:5 25:24 excellent 6:3 19:9 exceptional 11:20 executive 3:3 expand 9:10 20:14 expanded 9:24 31:12 expanding 9:11 12:20 expansion 7:8 expansive 21:19 expectations 16:24 42:25 expenditure 8:13 9:16 29:5 expenditures 9:15,20 16:18 experience 13:25 29:1 36:15 experiences 13:25 14:21 experiencing 26:22 experiential 6:17 expertise 22:4,10 expires 47:25 exposed 22:21 exposure 20:14 expression 22:5 extend 2:3 external 9:25 12:22</p> |
| e | | | |
| <p>e.i. 7:9,11 earlier 40:3 earth 23:8 economic 3:5 8:12 economist 18:18 economy 20:19 34:21 ecosystems 10:10 educating 7:15 16:16 education 8:20 10:15 15:8 30:9 39:18 educational 3:4 8:15 16:14 36:15 effective 25:2 efficiencies 12:4 effort 32:8 efforts 13:11 element 34:7 43:6 eligible 8:16 34:15 eliminated 39:20 elimination 39:12</p> | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| extramural 22:5 extramurally 22:1 extreme 10:11 eye 25:17 | families 8:25 family 16:4 17:10 fantastic 39:25 far 26:14 40:11 fastest 8:3 | 11:3,13 12:7,10 13:4,22 15:5,9,10 15:11,14,17,23 15:25 16:1,2,10 16:23 18:24 19:7 19:22 20:1,3,7,12 23:11,15,18 25:24 26:11,11 27:16 29:1 33:21 33:22 34:3,5 37:2 38:3 39:25 44:15 | found 4:10 foundation 13:4 four 8:21 19:11 fourth 13:9 framework 7:3 free 2:22 17:23 21:21 freedom 21:14,20 22:6,13 freely 21:21 frees 40:9 front 25:19 fte 33:17 fulfill 11:5 full 18:5 fully 39:17 45:20 function 32:20 fund 27:9 funding 7:23,24 9:25 12:9,10,11 12:22 13:5 28:22 33:17,25 34:6 fundraising 3:6 funds 12:7 29:14 funk 1:25 2:7,12 41:12 further 9:2 47:16 future 17:1 fyi 19:18 |
| f | feel 2:22 14:1 17:23 feeling 35:25 felt 43:17 female 31:22,25 32:2,4 33:4,8 field 16:13 40:20 fifth 43:13 final 46:4 finalist 2:6 17:25 18:8 finally 15:15 finance 3:12,18 5:5,9 financial 3:13 8:17,21 11:5 13:2 24:25 financially 11:11 14:3 15:10 47:18 financials 3:16 find 11:12 12:23 35:6 firm 2:10 22:12 36:9,10,11 41:4 first 4:16,19 5:1 5:24 18:12 19:20 20:2,9 26:19 32:4 38:20 41:16,16 43:19 fiu 1:11 2:4,17,25 3:13,19 4:2,9,15 5:23 6:1,22 8:14 8:19 9:4,25 10:8 | fiu's 2:9 7:19 12:13 30:8 five 19:11 flexibility 38:8 39:5 flexible 39:6 florida 1:1,6,8 4:21,23 5:2,6,10 9:22 11:16 15:13 20:3 23:14,17,19 24:1,19 34:22 37:1 38:13,14,15 42:15 47:3,9,10 47:24 focus 7:19 8:9,15 10:6,19 13:6 17:4 26:1 focused 7:4 12:13 focusing 5:22 8:11 24:10 food 14:18 foregoing 47:12 forensic 10:16 fort 4:19,25 forward 29:5 31:16 | g |
| face 16:3 20:3 30:25 facilitates 6:8 facilities 3:9,16 facing 11:2 17:11 24:7,23 fact 34:14 39:21 45:6,17 factor 26:16 facts 44:1 faculty 1:12 5:5 6:3,5 11:8,19,25 12:2 14:13 15:18 16:7 21:23 22:3,8 22:9,14,17,21,23 23:3 26:3,9,11,21 28:18 29:7 30:20 32:10,18,24,24 33:2 35:12,21 36:2,6,10,10,11 36:13,17,20,24 37:5,17 38:1,6 39:8,14,16,22 40:1,6,7,10,14,15 40:19 41:22 42:6 43:9,15,23 45:5 45:14 46:15,18 47:12 fair 12:10 43:23 fairly 18:25 19:17 21:19 | gain 28:25 gains 13:23 gear 19:22 general 46:2 generate 36:21 generation 5:2 | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>getting 9:13 18:5 28:8 32:17 43:9 43:11 gift 7:25 gifts 13:6 15:25 give 14:3,24 44:1 given 5:23 46:11 gives 38:7 giving 28:24 34:23 global 6:23,24 7:3 10:17,22 20:18,18,20,21 20:22 globalization 21:11 go 22:12 37:24 44:2 goal 8:1 goals 13:6 15:15 16:23 30:7 42:25 43:4 goes 43:17 going 18:15 19:14,15 20:7 22:18 24:16,20 24:21,22 25:2,5,8 25:10,13,13 27:1 27:8,15 28:12 30:2 31:1,7 33:10 35:3,17,17,19 37:14,15 38:18 39:2 43:14 46:8 gold 46:12 good 2:1 19:17 31:22 32:2 37:20 42:24 43:12</p> | <p>governance 6:20 21:23 governmental 33:14 governors 9:22 11:17 12:6 42:12 graduate 4:25 8:18 14:4,23 15:3 29:8,10,18 34:17 graduates 34:17 graduating 13:12 graduation 7:16 14:6 graham 1:5 14:18 47:8 grandson 5:17 grant 10:21 12:22 grateful 32:9 great 14:17 16:12 17:6 19:25 22:19 23:5 26:9,18 34:23,24,24,25 36:22 38:20 40:18 greater 13:23 31:16 greatest 8:17 9:24 26:12,13 greek 13:20 gritty 33:19 ground 23:23 groups 13:22 growing 25:11 growth 8:13 9:17 guess 18:11,15 21:18 22:6 guide 17:1 22:8</p> | <p>gulf 25:21 38:13 h half 35:12 halls 14:17 hand 18:17 hands 18:19 38:15 happen 28:16 happened 23:25 happening 26:17 happy 21:7 35:15 45:20 46:10 hard 28:9,9,10 44:1 harder 8:6,7 hazard 26:25 health 10:5,15,18 13:25 15:20 17:12 24:4 30:9 30:15,18,23,24 31:6 32:20 healthcare 17:7 hear 2:5 23:3 heard 18:22 32:21 hearing 23:1 24:18 32:9,11 heart 27:12 held 2:25 hello 18:11 help 15:2,3 23:17 28:23 30:22 31:10 32:25 38:19 46:20 helped 36:21 helping 15:14</p> | <p>hey 18:17 19:13 hh175493 47:25 hi 23:7 high 5:1 8:21 12:23 16:23 19:18 29:12 30:19 31:2 32:15 32:25 33:2 39:25 higher 14:4,5 39:18 highest 11:9 27:3 27:4 34:9 hill 30:2 hire 15:7 28:10 hired 18:14 hiring 11:24 45:4 hispanic 45:6,8 45:13 hispanics 16:19 hit 9:18 homecoming 14:9 honored 3:25 hope 33:10 host 40:4 hour 2:18 house 40:5 housing 14:10 27:4 29:17,20 human 3:9 11:4 11:11 13:1 humbled 3:25 i ideas 14:15 36:22 36:22 imagine 15:13 26:25</p> |
|--|---|--|---|

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>imagined 4:10 immense 15:6 impact 15:14 24:23 impacts 24:13 importance 12:1 important 6:21 37:11,17,22 39:18 42:2 impressive 9:1 improve 12:4 14:7 15:2 20:25 21:5 24:12 improvements 28:13 improving 8:24 9:1 30:8,10 34:21 inadequate 35:14 incidence 31:6 include 10:14 29:5 included 11:17 11:22 26:20 27:14 includes 21:20 29:22,22 including 6:17 7:16 8:11 12:25 inclusion 3:8 44:15 inclusive 6:7 32:5 47:13 incorporated 20:21 increase 8:7 29:14 45:10,12 increased 13:11 23:16 39:13</p> | <p>incremental 7:23 india 38:18 individuals 25:1 industry 10:23,25 information 13:1 42:11 infrastructure 10:2 initiative 45:16 initiatives 3:9 12:15 innovate 6:13 innovation 6:23 8:13 14:16 innovative 9:12 32:5 innovators 17:8 inquiries 22:11 inquiring 21:21 institution 14:3 16:15 20:1 28:2 institutions 12:12 27:14 33:18,23 45:8,9,14,21 instructional 40:1,6,19 instructors 32:13 insurance 26:24 26:25 intelligence 7:6,6 intended 46:9 intending 4:3 interacted 4:17 interaction 23:11 36:19 intercollegiate 3:7</p> | <p>interdisciplinary 10:7,20 25:14 interest 38:23 41:7 interested 47:19 interesting 20:5 interim 2:24 3:2 3:11 4:8 41:2 internally 27:18 international 1:1 1:6 5:10 18:24 20:4,4,12,15 21:3 21:8,11 47:9 internationally 10:3 internet 29:23 internship 14:25 intramurally 21:22 introduce 3:20 introduction 3:23 intrusion 10:11 invest 6:1 29:3 35:8 investment 8:12 9:9 34:19 investments 8:9 9:23 12:3 30:1 44:21 45:2 invite 18:6 44:11 46:1 involved 25:6 46:6 involves 10:7 iowa 38:17 issue 30:1 issues 25:18 30:23 31:11 43:8</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">j</p> <p>j 5:17 january 3:1 jeffrey 5:16 jessell 1:21 2:7,24 3:2,11,18,21,22 18:14,20 19:19 22:7 23:7,20 26:6 29:3 30:12 32:1 32:21 33:7,10 36:5 39:15 41:8 41:24 44:6,17 46:4 job 13:14 15:2 21:3 31:5 42:4,24 46:14 jobs 7:13 34:24 34:25 john 5:14 join 46:1 joining 2:4,13,21 18:3 31:18 45:24 july 33:11 junior 43:23</p> <p style="text-align: center;">k</p> <p>k 4:25 30:9,12,21 31:13 keen 7:19 keeping 6:22 ken 41:12,15,17 kenneth 1:21 2:6 2:24 3:21 key 7:18 23:21 33:15 34:7 kind 3:23 21:15 21:17 22:5</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| kindly 26:4 know 4:2 6:25 8:6,8,19 10:23 15:7,8,22,23 17:19 18:16 19:4 19:6,14,16,17 22:2,4,16 25:7 26:6,10,23 29:25 30:13,17 32:22 33:2 35:3,4,11,12 35:13,18 36:17 37:3,4 39:15 43:19,25 44:24 45:19 46:10,17 knowledge 6:12 9:11 21:1 22:25 known 18:25 19:1 | leaders 16:2 17:6 leadership 12:6 33:16 35:3 leading 23:12 learned 4:9 6:10 learners 6:17 learning 6:9,15 6:17,18,24 7:12 13:23 20:20,22 leaving 46:16 legislation 42:10 legislative 11:14 12:6 21:16 27:7 33:12 legislature 27:9 33:13 34:8 level 10:10 12:10 20:25,25 24:4,13 24:25 25:4 30:19 33:25 34:9 levels 26:22 leverage 23:15 life 5:19,20 13:20 14:1 lifeblood 46:19 lines 32:14 listen 36:23 listening 29:9 little 5:21 19:23 20:6 live 9:14 17:13 20:18,18 29:18 lived 4:22 lives 8:24 15:19 living 29:12 36:24,25 38:9 lobbying 45:9 | local 22:3 lofty 16:23 long 2:19 44:19 longer 36:15 look 25:20,21,21 25:21,22,23 29:4 31:15 34:5 36:2 36:14 42:18,21 looking 20:8 23:23 25:8,10 35:6 44:17 looks 38:23 lose 28:12 35:21 39:20 losing 13:16 lost 27:19 lot 17:21 22:16 27:24 28:3 29:23 30:19 32:8 35:10 44:18,25 loud 17:3 love 4:9 low 19:17 33:17 lower 20:24 | married 5:12 master 16:16 mater 14:4 maximize 10:21 mba 5:4 mckenzie 7:25 mean 19:2 20:12 23:20,22 25:10 25:17 26:6 33:21 33:22 35:9,9 36:22 meaningful 6:16 means 29:21 44:15 measure 7:14 measuring 45:18 media 22:3 meet 2:5 13:6 41:15 meeting 41:17 42:5 43:3 member 22:14,23 26:11,12 36:6,17 38:9 39:16 43:9 43:15,23 45:7 members 2:4 15:25 17:21 22:21 26:3 30:21 33:16 36:13 39:7 39:8,14 41:5 42:6 42:16 mental 13:25 24:4 30:9,14,18 30:23,24 31:6 32:20 mentality 16:25 mentioned 20:19 46:8 |
| I | | | |
| I 47:6,24 lab 6:11 language 42:23 lapse 35:7 large 28:1 larger 15:19 largest 15:24 16:14 lauderdale 4:20 5:1 laurie 5:12 law 5:16 10:18 lawns 14:19 lawyers 17:8 lbr 26:20 32:7,22 leader 6:23 17:11 25:16 | | | |
| | m | | |
| | maintaining 8:14 majority 39:3 making 30:13 male 18:11,23 21:13 23:7 management 3:10,15 marching 13:21 mark 9:19 market 11:10 marketplace 26:18 | | |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>mentoring 14:14 14:25 mentors 36:20 message 32:17 35:2 met 33:15 methods 6:15 metrics 7:18 14:7 miami 1:8 4:24 23:24 27:2 29:13 31:15 34:16,18 34:21,22 47:4,10 micro 6:19 7:7 microphone 18:10 microphones 31:19 million 7:24 9:15 9:19 11:14,18,23 11:24 12:3 16:17 34:1,2 mind 36:3 minorities 45:11 45:12,13 minority 45:20 minute 37:20 mission 11:5 16:3 mitigate 24:13 25:3 mitigation 10:12 mobility 8:12,22 34:14 model 13:19 37:21 models 24:16 moment 18:8 monday 44:10</p> | <p>money 32:11,12 32:12,17 33:5 monitor 45:2 monitoring 45:18 month 11:14,17 19:7,10 29:21 monthly 8:23 months 4:8 5:17 morning 2:1 3:24 17:15 31:22 mother 5:18 multiple 20:21 multiplied 14:12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">n</p> <hr/> <p>name 2:2 10:12 19:23 20:5 nation 11:2 national 5:25 7:21 16:21 30:15 nationally 10:3 nationwide 13:11 need 8:17 10:25 11:12 12:1 15:16 16:8 30:19,22 31:2 34:3,3 42:7 needed 25:17 needs 6:14 24:10 29:9 40:25 42:5 net 12:21 25:8 never 4:6 37:18 37:19 39:19 43:2 new 5:17 12:14 20:13,13 31:14 36:7 38:13 42:10 42:13,24 news 8:2,4,22</p> | <p>nice 17:17 night 46:17 nine 4:8 nitty 33:19 noble 16:3 noise 22:17 23:6 non 8:19 23:3 26:17 35:6 38:6 39:13 40:1,6 notary 47:24 notes 47:14 notions 20:22 number 8:6,21,23 16:18 24:7 26:8 34:10 39:15 41:24 42:1 45:11 45:12 numbered 47:13 numbers 18:4,6</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">o</p> <hr/> <p>objective 22:19 objectives 15:15 43:4 objectivity 22:23 observed 14:8 obtained 5:3 occasion 41:15 october 1:3 47:11 47:21 offer 19:15 29:15 40:16 office 37:2,10,12 45:1 officer 3:3,13 offices 14:17 okay 18:19 19:19 22:25 33:11</p> | <p>36:16,25 38:6 43:8 44:19 46:4,5 old 5:17 older 16:22 ombudsperson 1:23 once 14:4 15:2 one's 21:20,21 online 37:23,25 38:2 open 17:15 35:10 opened 46:8 opening 16:13 17:19 operational 11:15 12:4 operations 3:17 opinion 41:22 opinions 39:11 opportunities 4:11 7:12 8:16 9:10,24 10:21 15:1 28:25 29:2 31:16 37:24 38:1 39:4,7,23 40:12 40:13,17 opportunity 2:5 2:20 4:7 5:23 17:10,14,16,25 25:20 31:21 35:23 38:8 39:10 40:3,4 46:11 organizations 13:19 originally 41:1 outcome 43:14 outside 37:16</p> |
|--|---|---|--|

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>outstanding 11:6 11:19 35:21</p> <p>overwhelmed 32:10,19</p> | <p>people 17:12 19:25 24:20 25:7 25:7,12 28:16,16 28:17 33:6 34:20</p> | <p>platforms 2:23</p> <p>play 41:3</p> <p>players 20:10</p> <p>playing 20:9</p> <p>plazas 14:11,19</p> <p>please 2:22 17:22 18:7</p> <p>pleasure 2:3 3:20</p> <p>point 26:15</p> <p>points 23:21 34:11</p> <p>poised 9:18</p> <p>policies 38:20</p> <p>policy 25:7 38:7 38:21,22</p> <p>political 5:4</p> <p>portfolios 40:16</p> <p>position 2:25 3:14 4:4,11 5:8 27:15 37:18</p> <p>positions 4:12 28:23</p> <p>possible 4:14 24:16 38:16 39:3</p> <p>post 42:10,23</p> <p>pounding 35:2</p> <p>practices 6:5</p> <p>preeminent 9:21</p> <p>premise 22:14</p> <p>prepared 14:1 31:9</p> <p>present 1:19 25:9</p> <p>presentation 2:19</p> <p>presented 11:16</p> <p>presents 4:6</p> <p>president 2:10,25 3:2,11,12 4:2,4,8 5:8,24 23:7 27:19</p> | <p>41:2</p> <p>presidential 1:1 1:11,21 2:6 44:10 47:11</p> <p>presidents 2:12</p> <p>pretty 43:18 44:4</p> <p>prices 27:3</p> <p>pride 15:6</p> <p>primary 7:20</p> <p>prior 3:10 4:12 43:5</p> <p>priorities 5:22 11:9 12:14 13:7 30:7</p> <p>prioritize 13:4</p> <p>priority 26:8</p> <p>probably 41:9</p> <p>problem 24:7 30:15</p> <p>problems 6:12 9:12 10:22 11:1 17:11</p> <p>proceedings 46:23 47:8</p> <p>process 2:15 40:22 41:4 44:2 46:6</p> <p>produce 17:6</p> <p>producer 16:19 16:20</p> <p>producing 34:24</p> <p>product 4:24</p> <p>production 9:6</p> <p>professionally 4:13</p> <p>professor 3:18 36:8</p> |
| <p>p</p> | <p>percent 9:6 27:11 35:12 39:2</p> <p>perfect 30:4</p> <p>performance 7:15,19,23 11:21 34:5,6 42:14,18 42:20 43:1</p> <p>performed 34:8</p> <p>performing 43:3</p> <p>permanent 4:4</p> <p>person 2:16,21 3:24 4:17 5:12 45:25</p> <p>personally 5:20 33:15 37:4</p> <p>ph.d. 1:21,23 5:5 28:24 45:11</p> <p>philanthropic 7:24</p> <p>philanthropy 12:21</p> <p>phonetic 5:13,15 5:15,16</p> <p>physical 11:4</p> <p>place 14:15 28:15 28:16 30:3 43:7</p> <p>placement 15:2</p> <p>plan 29:5,13 30:3 46:10</p> <p>planned 9:9</p> <p>plans 4:5 19:2,2 29:1</p> <p>platform 17:23</p> | | |
| <p>p.m. 1:4,4 37:3 46:24</p> <p>page 35:16 42:9</p> <p>pages 47:13</p> <p>panther 5:11 13:21 16:4,4 17:9 46:12</p> <p>panthers 15:6,7</p> <p>parity 33:21</p> <p>part 6:6 13:7 18:15 20:5 22:7 26:20 39:18 40:18 45:16 46:13</p> <p>participants 21:23 30:6</p> <p>participated 32:7</p> <p>particular 36:1</p> <p>particularly 12:21 14:9 21:15 43:16 45:13</p> <p>parties 47:17,18</p> <p>partnerships 10:23 15:21</p> <p>path 6:5 40:11</p> <p>pathway 40:8</p> <p>pathways 39:23 40:13</p> <p>pecuniary 26:17</p> <p>peers 37:14</p> <p>pell 8:16,19 34:15</p> | | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| professors 28:23 | put 28:5 | 33:21,22 42:7 | regents 42:15,17 |
| proficient 6:4 | putting 34:19 | 46:5 | regulation 42:17 |
| program 7:10 | q | reared 4:19 | relate 41:21 |
| programs 3:5 | qep 6:24 7:3 | rearranging | related 7:5,18 |
| 10:4,8 28:15 | 20:20 | 35:11 | 30:24 42:17 |
| 44:21 45:11 | quality 9:22 | reason 7:20 | 47:18 |
| progress 7:15 | 10:11 11:21 | reasonable 26:21 | relates 23:1 30:13 |
| 28:23 45:19 | 12:23 15:7 22:19 | rebuild 24:20 | relations 33:14 |
| project 12:18 | 39:25 43:11 | 25:3 | relationships |
| 19:10 | question 12:17,19 | receive 15:8 | 28:17 |
| promenades | 18:8,12,23 19:3 | received 7:22 | relevant 6:22 |
| 14:11 | 19:20 20:2 28:7 | 12:11 25:25 | relief 29:15 |
| promise 46:13 | 28:21 30:6 40:22 | 27:12 | relieve 32:25 |
| promote 14:2 | 40:25 41:1,20 | reception 40:5 | relocate 25:1 |
| promoted 22:22 | questions 2:14,22 | reciprocate 15:22 | remain 8:14 9:8 |
| 22:24 | 17:16,20,22 26:1 | recognized 10:3 | remarkable 15:5 |
| promotional | 31:20 35:24,25 | recommendation | remember 36:7 |
| 18:13 | quickly 8:18 | 23:4 | 42:12 |
| proposed 11:13 | r | recommendatio... | reminder 19:25 |
| proposition 7:1 | r 1:25 2:7 | 44:3 | remote 36:1 38:3 |
| 15:9,24 26:16 | r1 9:4,17 45:6,9 | record 47:14 | 38:7 39:1 |
| 35:1 39:22 | ra 28:23 | recruit 28:9 | remotely 38:5 |
| prospective | race 21:18 | recruiting 13:17 | renewal 41:23 |
| 19:12 | ranked 8:6 | 21:3 45:3 | rent 27:4 |
| proud 16:10 | ranking 8:22,23 | recruitment 11:7 | reoccurring 12:5 |
| 34:13 45:6,16,17 | rankings 7:21 8:3 | 21:9 26:2 30:11 | reorganize 28:4 |
| provide 12:23 | 8:4,7,10 9:2 14:7 | recurring 35:6 | report 8:2 47:8 |
| 14:25 | 16:21 | redirect 27:18 | reporter 47:6 |
| providers 17:8 | rates 7:17 14:4,6 | redirected 27:25 | represent 45:21 |
| providing 8:15 | 15:2 | redistributed | represented |
| provost 21:7 | ratios 12:2 33:3 | 27:22 | 45:21 |
| public 4:25 5:25 | raton 5:6 | reduction 28:1 | request 11:15,16 |
| 8:1,4 9:4,17 25:7 | read 27:12 | reflect 8:23 | 11:18 27:7 33:12 |
| 47:24 | reading 17:24 | regarding 2:15 | 44:13 |
| publix 19:12 | reagan 40:5 | 30:8 | required 9:20 |
| purely 41:13 | really 19:23 23:2 | regards 23:12 | 13:11 20:24 |
| pursuit 21:20 | 23:9,23 25:15 | 30:11 39:11 | requirements |
| | | 40:22 | 32:23 |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| requires 9:23 research 3:5 5:25 6:6 7:18 8:13 9:4 9:5,6,8,10,11,14 9:16,20,21,23,25 10:4,7,13,20,22 10:24 11:6,22 13:2 14:16 15:21 16:18 17:5 20:7 22:15,20,24 23:13 28:24,25 29:7,8 36:22 39:24 40:11,16 40:17 researchers 17:7 30:20 reserved 16:22 residents 15:20 24:15 resilience 10:9 23:10,22 24:2 resilient 23:17,18 24:11 resource 11:11 22:8 resources 3:9 8:21 9:10 11:3,5 12:16 13:1 27:18 29:4 response 22:17 responsibilities 27:21 40:10 responsible 3:4 3:15 restricted 8:20 result 24:24 retain 11:18 26:9 28:10,11 | retaining 13:12 41:18 45:5 retention 7:16 11:8 14:6 26:2 30:11 return 8:12 34:18 reunion 20:10 revenues 12:21 12:22 review 42:1,10,14 42:23 43:13,21 44:11 reviewing 41:22 rewarded 4:13 rewarding 4:12 rich 20:16 right 8:8,9 15:13 19:22 20:3 22:1 24:18 25:18 28:15,15 33:9 34:3,19 36:25 44:18 rise 8:7 10:10 24:4,14,25 25:4 rising 8:4 robust 38:7 roi 12:18 19:9,9 19:18 role 30:8 41:3,18 room 14:10 36:14 37:4 44:18 | salary 32:23 salt 10:11 satisfied 13:24 saturday 14:9 save 28:4 saved 27:24 saving 29:23 savings 12:25 28:5 35:7 saw 27:13 saying 37:6 scarce 12:16 scenarios 25:9 scholars 6:3 scholarship 11:23 13:5 school 5:1 19:5,6 29:24 30:10 31:2 schools 4:25 28:22 science 5:4 10:16 10:18 sciences 10:14 scientists 17:7 scott 7:25 sea 10:10 24:4,13 24:24 25:4 seamless 31:3 search 1:1 2:9,15 40:22 41:4,4,6,14 41:16 44:10 46:6 searches 2:11 second 19:20 43:20 secondly 42:9 see 17:17 19:25 23:25 36:15 43:8 44:18 | seeing 7:8 seen 28:22 segment 30:13 selected 2:9 selection 41:3,5 senate 21:24 senior 3:11 5:8 36:19 sent 42:11,16 serve 5:23 45:15 46:10 served 3:11 serves 3:2 service 15:21 32:16 services 3:17 12:24,25 13:2 serving 15:4 37:2 45:7,9 session 2:18 33:13 44:8 46:2 sessions 1:11 2:16 47:12 setting 42:25 seven 42:20 share 18:1 26:4 40:23 44:8 shared 6:19 12:25 sharing 30:5 36:3 39:9 41:19 shirts 19:6 short 35:5 show 34:4 shows 42:20 sic 37:19 signature 47:23 |
| | s | | |
| | s.u.s. 27:13 s.w. 1:7 47:10 safer 24:14 salaries 27:6,24 28:6 | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| significant 7:11 7:22 44:21 significantly 13:16 silence 21:17 simple 19:23 44:13 simply 44:25 single 7:10 sister 12:12 33:18 sitting 37:15 sixth 2:10 4:2 skills 7:4,5,12 slide 9:3 11:2 slides 22:1 social 8:22 34:14 society 17:12 20:18 24:6 sociology 10:15 24:5 sofia 1:23 2:2 solid 22:24 solutions 9:12 25:16 solve 10:22,25 solving 6:12 17:11 son 5:14,16 soon 33:5 sophia 3:22 sounds 5:19 source 15:6 sources 12:20 south 4:22 15:13 23:14,17,19 34:22 37:1 38:14 speak 17:2 | speaker 18:11,23 21:13 23:7 31:22 31:25 32:2,4 33:4 33:8 speaking 17:3 specifically 4:23 spend 5:21 spoke 22:2 spots 8:5 spring 35:8 staff 11:8,19 14:13 15:18 16:7 21:8 26:10,12,21 28:19 30:20 35:21 38:1,9 39:7 42:16 45:5 46:16 stakeholders 7:14 standing 14:10 22:25 started 5:5 17:18 31:13 starting 16:13 startups 29:6 state 4:21 5:2 7:21,23 21:4 27:10,11,16 34:9 34:12 47:3,24 state's 34:19 stay 12:13 15:16 34:17 stayed 5:7 staying 34:20 stipends 29:15 stop 21:16 stopped 19:11 storm 24:24 storms 24:2 | story 15:5 strategic 7:17 11:25 12:14,15 13:7 27:23 street 1:7 15:23 47:10 strong 22:13 27:15 stronger 13:25 14:20 strongly 21:6 structures 24:14 struggling 33:8 student 5:2,24 7:4 11:22 12:2 13:4,12,16,19,20 13:22 17:5 20:16 29:8 33:2 39:24 40:8 students 6:1,9 7:1 7:16 8:16,17,19 8:20,25 11:24 13:15,17 14:6,13 14:21 15:1,3,8,18 16:6,16,17 19:12 19:13 20:15,17 21:1,4,5,6,10 28:18,24 29:10 29:16,18,20 31:8 34:15,16 36:13 36:21 37:13,21 37:24 38:12 42:7 46:15 submit 22:10 succeed 31:1,2 success 5:24 11:22 17:5 20:17 39:24 40:9 | successes 6:2 17:2 successful 6:25 13:15 36:17,18 39:8 suffering 32:20 sufficient 11:4 superintendent 31:15 supervisor 42:3 support 11:15,23 12:7,24 15:10 21:6 23:16 29:7,8 29:12 32:12,23 38:11,19,24 39:17,22 supporter 22:13 supporting 15:23 46:15 supportive 14:23 sure 30:13 31:3 31:20,23 42:3,8 surpassed 9:15 surprise 43:2 surprises 43:22 sustainable 11:3 11:4 sustained 11:20 42:14,18,20 system 6:19 27:10,16 30:10 34:10,12 |
| | | | t |
| | | | table 10:25 take 6:10 12:14 14:15 16:9 18:7 18:10 32:3 35:4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>taken 27:20 33:12 47:8 takes 27:5 44:24 talent 11:12 talk 18:19 19:8 23:21 38:12 talked 33:16 44:19 talking 45:1 tallahassee 4:22 teacher 30:10 teachers 17:7 teaching 6:4,7,8 11:6,21 22:15,20 22:22 32:6 40:9 team 2:13 11:12 20:7 33:14 technology 10:17 12:3 13:1 tell 4:18 22:12 38:15 39:16 telling 15:5 ten 6:24 20:19 28:14 tenure 39:12,12 39:13,17,19 40:1 40:6 41:21 42:10 42:23 43:10,13 43:16,18 tenured 39:16 40:14,15 41:22 41:23 43:9,15 term 35:5 terminal 40:20 terms 23:2,16 27:4 29:10,19 texas 2:8</p> | <p>thank 3:22,23 17:13 18:21 23:9 28:20 30:4 31:17 32:4,6 39:9 40:21 41:19 44:5 45:23 45:23 46:22 theme 26:2 36:1 theory 21:18 thing 19:23 things 4:18 23:1 23:5 26:19 27:17 think 7:10 20:15 21:25 22:1,9 37:11 39:20,24 41:15,17 42:1 thinkers 6:9 thinking 18:17 third 43:20 thought 4:14 thoughts 21:14 22:6 36:4 three 5:3,18 8:3 9:5 tied 28:21 tight 35:9 time 4:17,20 5:21 12:18 16:15 28:8 28:8 29:14 39:2 41:16 43:17 44:2 44:5,19 timeline 16:12 times 12:16 19:11 22:9 37:8 38:10 tirelessly 12:20 46:14 today 2:5,13,15 4:1 17:12 35:24 45:24</p> | <p>today's 2:18 6:16 tomorrow's 2:16 top 8:1,10 9:5,16 11:15 15:11 16:19 totally 37:23,25 touch 44:14 town 29:19 track 39:13 40:1 43:10,15,16 transcripts 44:8 transition 31:4,5 31:10 translate 7:13 translates 14:5 14:20 trellis 1:23 2:1,2 17:17 18:22 25:25 28:20 30:4 31:17,24 32:3 35:23 39:9 40:21 41:11,19 44:5 45:23 46:22 true 4:7 10:6 46:11 47:14 trustees 11:13 try 25:3 trying 27:17 29:25 35:5 tuesday 1:3 turn 25:17 two 15:23 24:1 33:23 types 24:5 25:12 typically 13:23 16:22 46:16</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">u</p> <p>u.n. 13:19 u.s. 8:2,4,22 undergo 41:25 undergrads 20:24 understand 11:9 13:13 22:11 31:9 32:8,18 understanding 7:2 9:13 33:4 universally 37:4 universities 9:7 9:17 16:12,22 30:18 31:4 37:25 38:2,21 42:22 university 1:1,6 2:11 3:3,17 4:21 5:3,6,10,25 8:2,4 9:5,9,21 13:9,18 20:4 21:25 26:13 27:10,16 29:17 34:9,12,12 37:9 37:13,23 38:11 38:13,14,17,19 38:24 41:25 42:6 44:20,22 45:7 46:19 47:9 upper 16:15 20:25 urban 5:25 use 17:23 42:22 utilities 29:22</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v</p> <p>value 7:1 15:9,24 26:11,14,15 29:11,19 35:1</p> |
|---|---|--|---|

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>39:22 46:17 values 25:9 various 27:20 versus 26:17 vice 3:12 5:8 27:19 view 21:19 23:24 virtually 3:25 4:17 vision 26:3 39:11 visiting 32:13 voice 17:3</p> | <p>webcasts 17:22 website 44:9,10 week 14:9 20:6 weeks 5:18 24:1 welcome 2:3 went 5:2 26:24 42:11 west 23:25 24:19 william 1:25 2:7 win 40:13,13 wind 25:23 wise 11:11</p> | <p>years 4:16 5:11 5:14 6:25 8:3,5 8:11 9:2,18 16:11 19:4 20:20 28:14 30:16 36:6 42:21</p> |
| <p>w</p> | <p>woefully 35:13 woke 21:17 wolfe 14:17 wonder 21:18 wonderful 5:12 work 12:19 16:5 21:7 23:11,13 25:13,13 26:12 36:1 37:7 38:2 42:7 46:14,18 working 16:5 29:16 30:2,21 36:20 45:18 workloads 33:1 world 8:2 9:14 11:2 17:10 24:8 24:11 26:13 worry 23:6 writing 32:7</p> | <p>z</p> |
| <p>walgreens 19:12 want 16:8 20:14 28:3 31:20 33:19 33:20,21 36:23 36:25 37:6 38:1,8 39:1,5,6,6 42:3 44:1 45:14 wanted 17:18 18:1 30:5 35:14 39:10 44:7 warm 2:3 washington 8:23 water 10:11,11 way 15:23 25:15 35:19 ways 5:19 12:23 14:24 28:3 34:23 we've 25:25 27:20 29:13 33:16 45:1,19 wear 19:22 weather 10:12 webcast 2:17 18:6 46:1</p> | <p>y</p> | <p>zero 23:23 zoom 1:25 2:13 2:17,21 17:21,23 18:4 26:1 30:6 40:24 45:25</p> |