

1 PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE
2 FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
3

4 Tuesday, October 11th, 2022

5 3:00 p.m. - 4:24 p.m.

6 Graham Center Ballrooms

7 Florida International University

8 11200 S.W. 8th Street,

9 Miami, Florida, 33199
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11 FIU PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMMUNITY SESSIONS:

12 GENERAL SESSION #1
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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 afternoon, everyone.
2 My name is Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my
3 pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the
4 members FIU community who are joining us today
5 for an opportunity to meet and hear from
6 presidential candidate finalist Dr. Kenneth A.
7 Jessell. R. William Funk and Associates based
8 in Dallas, Texas, has been selected to assist
9 us with the search of FIU's Sixth President.
10 The firm has conducted more than 430 searches
11 for colleges and university presidents and
12 chancellors. Mr. Funk and his team will be
13 joining us today through Zoom. Today and
14 tomorrow's sessions will be attended both in
15 person, through Zoom, and through FIU's
16 webcast. Today's session will be approximately
17 an hour and a half, and after our candidate's
18 presentation, we will have an opportunity for Q
19 and A. For those of you who are joining us
20 through Zoom, please feel free to ask your
21 questions through there and we will have an
22 opportunity to read them out loud, as well as
23 entertain any questions from our audience.

24 Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell is interim
25 president for Florida International University,

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

22 DR. JESSELL: Thank you very much, Sophia,
23 for your kind introduction. And thank you,
24 colleagues, for being here this afternoon. I
25 am honored and humbled to be addressing you

1 today as a candidate for the Sixth President of
2 FIU. As most of you know, I was not intending
3 to be a candidate for the permanent position of
4 president. However, sometimes our plans change
5 and something that was never even dreamed about
6 presents itself as a dream to come true. Over
7 the past nine months as interim president I
8 have learned to love FIU more than I could have
9 imagined and I have found both the
10 opportunities and challenges of the position
11 more rewarding than any of my prior positions.
12 I have been rewarded professionally more than I
13 thought possible.

14 While I have been at FIU for 13 years, for
15 some of you, this may be the first time we have
16 interacted in person or virtually. Let me tell
17 you a few things about me. First, I was born
18 and reared in Fort Lauderdale, and except for
19 my time as a student at Florida State
20 University, I have spent my entire life living
21 in South Florida, specifically Broward County
22 and Palm Beach County. I am a proud graduate
23 of Broward County K-12 public schools where I
24 graduated from the famous Flying L's of Fort
25 Lauderdale High School. I am a first

1 generation student. I attended Florida State
2 University where I earned three degrees, a
3 bachelor's in political science, an MBA, and a
4 PhD in finance. I started my first
5 professional job at Florida Atlantic University
6 as an assistant professor of finance in 1983,
7 and I spent 26 wonderful years there. In 2009
8 the wonderful years became even better when I
9 joined FIU as a Panther. I have a loving wife,
10 Laurie (phonetic). In December we will have
11 been married for 46 years. I have a son, John
12 (phonetic), I have a daughter, Amanda
13 (phonetic), and a son-in-law, Jeffrey
14 (phonetic), and a wonderful new grandson, J.,
15 who is 18 months old, and my mom who will be 93
16 in four weeks.

17 I would now like to spend a little time
18 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on
19 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its
20 next president. First, student success. As a
21 national urban public research university, FIU
22 will continue to invest in our students and
23 their academic and career successes. Our
24 faculty must be not only excellent scholars,
25 but also proficient in evidence based teaching

1 practices. We embrace faculty who bring path
2 breaking research into the classroom as part of
3 evidence based and inclusive teaching. Our
4 culture of teaching excellence facilitates
5 learning so our students are critical thinkers
6 who can take what they have learned in the
7 classroom or in the lab and apply their
8 knowledge to solving problems. We must
9 continue to innovate our curriculum so it is
10 aligned with career needs, and to adopt
11 different designs and methods for learning that
12 are more meaningful for today's 21st century
13 learners, including experiential learning,
14 competency based learning, and
15 micro-credentialing. Our system of shared
16 governance and collegial discussions and
17 cooperation are more important than ever in
18 keeping our curriculum relevant. FIU continues
19 to be a leader in innovation. Our Global
20 Learning for Global Citizenship QEP from that
21 we adopted in 2010 is successful because we
22 know the value proposition of our students,
23 understanding both culture and cultures within
24 a global framework. 2021 QEP Critical Skills
25 for the 21st Century focused on student

1 attainment of skills related to artificial
2 intelligence, data, and emotional intelligence
3 through micro-credentialing courses. However,
4 we are already seeing the expansion of A.I. and
5 E.I. throughout our curriculum. I cannot think
6 of a single program that does not have
7 significant A.I. and E.I. applications and
8 learning opportunities, and these skills
9 translate to jobs. And we will continue to be
10 accountable to our stakeholders and measure our
11 progress and performance in educating our
12 students, including retention and graduation
13 rates, employment, strategic degrees, as well
14 as many other key metrics related to research
15 and access. FIU's keen focus on performance
16 has been the primary reason why we have
17 excelled in both state and national rankings,
18 as well as why we have received significant
19 incremental state performance funding and
20 philanthropic funding such as the \$40 million
21 McKenzie Scott gift that we received last year.
22 I am committed to our university goal of
23 achieving top 50 public university in U.S. News
24 and World Report rankings in three years. We
25 are the fastest rising university in U.S. News

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

24 Second, research excellence. FIU is an R1
25 public research university and is in the top

1 three percent in research production of all
2 universities and colleges in the country, and I
3 remain committed to the research enterprise of
4 our university and the planned investment of
5 resources to expand research opportunities.
6 Research is critical to expanding knowledge,
7 developing innovative solutions to problems,
8 and getting a better understanding of the
9 complex world we live in. Our research
10 expenditures have surpassed \$245 million, and
11 we are in the top 10 of research expenditure
12 growth of R1 public universities over the past
13 10 years, and we are poised to hit the \$400
14 million mark by 2025. We intend to stay on
15 track with that goal. And we already exceed
16 the research expenditures required for
17 preeminent research university designation by
18 the Florida Board of Governors. Quality
19 research requires investments, and I believe
20 the greatest opportunities for expanded
21 external research funding at FIU are in the
22 areas where we have already achieved a
23 competitive advantage through established
24 infrastructure, and nationally and
25 internationally recognized and acclaimed

1 academic and research programs such as those in
2 environment and health. This is especially
3 true when we focus on interdisciplinary
4 research that involves most if not all academic
5 programs at FIU. For example, environmental
6 resilience covers everything from sea level
7 rise, ecosystems, salt water intrusion and
8 water quality, extreme weather events, and
9 building mitigation to name just a few.

10 Environmental research will include the
11 sciences, architectural design, business,
12 education, sociology, health, forensic science,
13 engineering, construction, global affairs,
14 technology, and computer science, law and
15 health, as well as many other disciplines. I
16 believe that this focus on interdisciplinary
17 research will enable us to maximize the
18 opportunities for grant awards and research
19 expenditures so that we can solve global
20 problems. We know too that industry
21 partnerships are critical to both basic and
22 applied research. We will need industry at the
23 table to solve the challenging problems we as a
24 community, nation, and world are facing.

25 Third, sustainable resources. FIU must

1 have sufficient and sustainable human physical
2 and financial resources to fulfill our mission
3 of outstanding teaching, research excellence,
4 and community engagement. The recruitment and
5 retention of our best faculty and staff are my
6 highest priorities. I understand the
7 difficulties of the current market conditions,
8 both financially and human -- wise. It is hard
9 to attract great people, it is hard to retain
10 great people. Our team proposed and the FIU
11 Board of Trustees approved last month a \$60.7
12 million legislative budget request for top 50
13 operational support. This request was also
14 presented to the Florida Board of Governors
15 last month. Included in this request is almost
16 \$26 million to retain our outstanding faculty
17 and staff who have consistently demonstrated
18 sustained exceptional performance and
19 commitment to quality teaching, student
20 success, and research. Also included is \$15
21 million in scholarship support for students, \$5
22 million for the hiring of additional faculty in
23 areas of strategic importance, and in areas we
24 now that we need to decrease the student to
25 faculty ratios, and \$12.5 million for

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

1 Additionally, I have already asked the FIU
2 Foundation to prioritize student scholarship
3 funding in their annual development goals, and
4 to focus on gifts that meet strategic
5 priorities of FIU as part of their development
6 activities.

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

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

1 help with admissions by serving as ambassadors
2 and telling the remarkable story of FIU. It is
3 a source of immense pride for Panthers in the
4 workforce who hire other Panthers. They know
5 the quality of the education our students
6 receive. They know the value proposition of an
7 FIU degree. Engaged alumni also support FIU
8 financially. Our alumnus are among the top
9 donors to FIU. We have almost 300,000 alumnus,
10 and most of them are right here in South
11 Florida, right in our own backyard; imagine the
12 impact locally and nationally of their
13 advocacy. And finally, we must stay engaged
14 with our community. Our community and FIU are
15 better off when our students, faculty, and
16 staff collaborate with our larger community.
17 We can enrich the lives of our residents
18 through health and civic partnerships, service,
19 and research. And we know the community will
20 reciprocate by supporting FIU. Many of the
21 largest gifts to FIU are from members of our
22 community who were not FIU alumni. These are
23 benefactors who believe in FIU, who believe in
24 our mission, and believe in our students.
25 Let's face it, we are a Panther Family and a

1 Panther community, and we work better together.
2 We will have greater affinity for FIU as an
3 engaged community of students, faculty, and
4 staff, just like our alma mater says, every
5 scholar side by side.

6 So where does this take us? We can be so
7 very proud of what FIU has accomplished over
8 the past 50 years, starting on an abandoned air
9 field opening to the largest enrollment of any
10 educational institution at that time, 5,667
11 upper-division and master students. And look
12 at us now, now we are educating over 56,000
13 students achieving over \$246 million in
14 research expenditures, being the number one
15 producer of degrees to Hispanics, being a top
16 producer of baccalaureate degrees to African
17 Americans, a top ten producer, and achieving
18 national rankings typically reserved for much
19 older institutions. FIU has always had lofty
20 goals and high expectations, and these have
21 always been exceeded, and we will continue with
22 this tradition. Our successes speak for
23 themselves and they are speaking in a loud
24 voice. And yet the best is yet to come. We
25 will continue to focus on student success and

1 research excellence. We will continue to
2 produce great leaders, teachers, researchers,
3 scientists, healthcare providers, lawyers,
4 innovators, and entrepreneurs. And I believe
5 together as a Panther Family we have the
6 opportunity to be the world leader in solving
7 the biggest problems facing society today, the
8 health of its people, and the environment that
9 we live in. Thank you so much for the
10 opportunity to be with you today, and now I
11 think we go into a Q and A session.

12 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. So as we give
13 Dr. Jessell a couple of minutes to go ahead and
14 place his mic, I wanted to share with you all
15 that besides the members of our audience who
16 are here today with us, we have approximately
17 187 members of the FIU community joining us
18 through Zoom. If you would like to ask a
19 question in person, please approach a
20 microphone. And if you would like to ask a
21 question and you are joining us through Zoom,
22 please feel free to use the platform available
23 to you. We also are being joined today by Mr.
24 Bill Funk from our research firm who will be
25 able to answer any questions that pertain to

1 the actual search process. With that, please
2 feel free to approach a microphone.

3 I have a question.

4 DR. JESSELL: Yes.

5 DR. TRELLES: Right, it would be
6 appropriate since I have the iPad. So what
7 attracted you to pursue an academic career
8 teaching finance than a likely more lucrative
9 path in finance?

10 DR. JESSELL: I think it was the common
11 denominator of finance. You know, I started
12 off today by saying, you know, this was never
13 in the plan. I don't know of too many people
14 that start college as a freshman thinking, I'm
15 going to be a finance professor. In fact, I
16 was probably with 30 percent of the freshmen at
17 FSU thinking I was going to be a lawyer, I
18 joined with the other 55 percent who were going
19 to be pre-med and medical, and then 5 percent
20 something else, and that was pretty much my --
21 my intended track. So I happened to have a
22 couple of different opportunities. Number one,
23 I -- I had some great mentors in college, and
24 one in particular was a faculty member in the
25 College of Business where I took a real estate

1 course, and the thinking was, oh, this is going
2 to be a pretty easy course, basic real estate.
3 Well, it wasn't so easy, but it was absolutely
4 amazing in terms of what I was able to learn
5 from that course and how great that faculty
6 member was. Shortly after, just before
7 graduation, I had a job offer from EDS in
8 Texas, and I gave it a lot of thought, and I
9 was thinking, if I'm going to go that route, I
10 should probably do a business degree, an MBA.
11 So rather than thinking about the LSAT I did
12 the GMAT, and then I started in the MBA
13 program. I got to do more work with the same
14 faculty member as well as many others that
15 serve as phenomenal mentors. I cannot
16 overstate the importance of faculty mentoring
17 with our students. It really can change lives.
18 I know it changed mine. So I got to work with
19 these great faculty members, do some research,
20 do some teaching, and then I knew that's the
21 career that I wanted. I might have selected a
22 Ph.D. in real estate if FSU actually had a
23 Ph.D. in real estate, they didn't, they had a
24 Ph.D. in finance, so I was able to take at
25 least the -- the real estate courses as

1 electives. And then when I started FAU in
2 1983, it was one department, finance and real
3 estate, so I got to teach not only the finance
4 classes, but also the real estate classes. So
5 it was just a path that evolved, but it was
6 certainly, I would say, directed by -- by great
7 faculty.

8 DR. TRELLES: Wonderful. Thank you so
9 much for sharing that. We did have a question
10 about what are your steps or what is your
11 vision to protect our FIU faculty from academic
12 freedom concerns?

13 DR. JESSELL: So what am I going to do to
14 protect academic freedom for our faculty?
15 Well, I'm a strong believer in academic
16 freedom. We know how important it is to the
17 discovery of knowledge and the ability to move
18 our country forward, the world forward. I
19 don't see attacks on academic freedom. Yes,
20 there is a lot of noise out there, but in my
21 view the reality is this, every day at FIU we
22 are going to continue focusing on fantastic
23 teaching and fantastic research, and I and the
24 rest of the administration will fully support
25 that. Some of the noise that we're hearing is

1 related to opinions that are not based on facts
2 that are not based on sound research. We are
3 going to ignore that noise and simply move
4 forward with what we have done for years, and
5 years, and years and what have contributed to
6 the great successes that we've had in terms of
7 student success and research excellence at this
8 university.

9 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
10 So in preparation for today's event, we sent
11 out some RSVP opportunities to collect some
12 questions, and in gathering those we've noticed
13 some themes that we wanted an opportunity to
14 hear from our finalist about, and one of them
15 was in regards to remote work. So if you would
16 kindly share your opinions or your perspective
17 on it so that our audience in person as well as
18 online are able to understand a little bit more
19 about your vision.

20 DR. JESSELL: Sure. So we know that
21 remote work is a very, very hot topic today,
22 not just within our university, every
23 university in every business in the country. I
24 feel that FIU did a very, very good job in
25 developing one of the first remote policies

1 within universities, and even when you look
2 around what was happening in business, we had
3 very, very comprehensive policy. At the end of
4 the day, the opportunities for remote work are
5 a function of what is best for FIU, what is
6 best for FIU students, what is best for FIU
7 faculty, what is best for FIU staff. We want
8 to provide flexibility, but that flexibility
9 cannot be at the expense of us achieving our
10 mission. And even before COVID, even before
11 our flexible policy, we always provided
12 flexibility to our employees. If you are able
13 to work from home, you need to be there for a
14 day, we would give you that flexibility, so
15 that is very, very important to us. But again,
16 we have a good process, you can have those
17 discussions with your supervisor, and the
18 supervisor will work with you in establishing
19 what is best for the university and what is
20 best for you. With respect to faculty, I
21 mentioned this earlier, I've been a faculty
22 member since 1983, and if I take into account
23 the time that I was a Ph.D. student, even
24 longer, I never followed an 8:00 to 5:00
25 schedule. And in fact, I believe for most of

1 our faculty, if I said, you only have to work
2 8:00 to 5:00 or 9:00 to 6:00, they would say, I
3 will take it. I know they work much harder and
4 longer than 40 hours, you know, per week, so we
5 have never had a time clock for faculty. In
6 some cases, it is more efficient for faculty to
7 be doing research off the campus or doing
8 course preparation off campus, but at the end
9 of the day, just going back to my own personal
10 experience, we need that affinity, we need that
11 collegiality. As a new Ph.D. if I did not have
12 the faculty mentors at FIU, I never would have
13 been successful as an assistant professor,
14 associate professor, and full professor. I
15 want our faculty to engage with our students.
16 I want our faculty to engage with each other.
17 And I want our faculty to engage as a community
18 with our staff and outside community members.
19 So do I want our faculty living out of the
20 area? Do I want our faculty living in Georgia?
21 Do I want them living in other countries? The
22 answer is no. And I say that because we're not
23 hiring faculty just to do one specific thing
24 that can be done remotely. We are hiring
25 faculty for the greater good of the

1 institution. And in the last couple of weeks
2 I've had a lot of discussions with my
3 colleagues over at New College of Florida,
4 Florida Gulf Coast, and University of South
5 Florida, and how that community came together
6 faculty, staff and students to get those
7 institutions to open as quickly as they could,
8 to pursue the academic pursuits as quickly as
9 they could. That was amazing. And we've had
10 those challenges here too. Everybody on deck
11 to make things work quickly and work better.
12 And so that's what we really need as a
13 university community. But flexibility has
14 always been there for faculty, it has never
15 been a time card, but we cannot discount the
16 fact that we get a portfolio effect, to put it
17 in finance terms, when we don't look at just
18 the value proposition for the individuals, but
19 we look at the value proposition for the
20 universities.

21 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
22 And since you did bring up our faculty, we did
23 have a question regarding what is your position
24 on the state legislature Board of Governors
25 pending post-tenure review policy?

1 DR. JESSELL: So the -- the pending
2 post-tenure review policy. Well, the reality
3 is we already have a post-tenure review policy.
4 When this language first came out, I know that
5 there was a lot of discussion about post-tenure
6 review, and the reality is under the old Board
7 of Regents we had a post-tenure review policy
8 and that was called sustained performance. Our
9 own collective bargaining agreement refers to
10 sustained performance. And if you look at the
11 collective bargaining agreements throughout the
12 university system, you will see reference to
13 either sustained performance or a post-tenure
14 review. Honestly, I believe the most important
15 review that can take place is the annual review
16 between the employee and the supervisor,
17 faculty, and staff. If we want to have great
18 dialogue, if we want to make sure that we are
19 achieving mutually agreeable goals, then that
20 needs to take place every year and it needs to
21 take place in a very, very meaningful way. We
22 cannot be afraid to say what we really feel
23 about the work that the individual is doing the
24 teaching that the individual is doing, the
25 research that the individual is doing. It has

1 to be a quality discussion. And if we do that
2 faithfully each year, there will absolutely be
3 no impact, no surprises when it comes to
4 post-tenure review. And indeed, as someone
5 that went through the tenure process, and at
6 some point began to evaluate applications for
7 tenure, and as provost for two years made the
8 final recommendations to the board on tenure, I
9 will tell you, if we do it correctly, then
10 there is no surprise. I was not at all worried
11 about achieving tenure at FAU because I knew
12 that in year one I was making progress, year
13 two, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and so
14 when it came time for the actual decision, I
15 was quite confident, based upon the leadership
16 and evaluations that I was getting, that it was
17 going to happen. So there should be no
18 surprises.

19 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
20 Another theme that we were able to recognize in
21 the questions being submitted was that of our
22 athletes, so athletic fees and our activity and
23 service fee in particular, and what your
24 opinions are in regards to those fees and how
25 they are being used and applied at the

1 university?

2 DR. JESSELL: Well, I can change what I
3 said earlier, and that is athletics is one of
4 the areas that improves the affinity of the
5 university, for students, for faculty and
6 staff. And if you were there on Saturday or if
7 you were there for the first game against
8 Bryant, you know exactly what I mean. So it is
9 a very, very important part of the collegial
10 process. Even in my own case, when I was at
11 FSU my freshman year the -- the football
12 outcome was zero and 11, second year is one in
13 ten, but we still went to the game. We still
14 went because of the affinity. We went to
15 support the athletes who are students that are
16 giving everything they can to perform on the
17 field. We went to support the marching band
18 that was there, and so we had exactly the same
19 thing here. Florida is a little unique in that
20 we separate out by statute the tuition from the
21 other fees. At other institutions it's one fee
22 and they decide how it's being allocated. So
23 we are really more transparent in terms of the
24 amount of the fees and how they are calculated.
25 I believe our fees are right where they need to

1 be right now. These are fees that have
2 received student support. Any time we make a
3 change to the fees we have student evaluations,
4 student committees, we have faculty and staff
5 committees, we have a review that goes to the
6 Board of Trustees. So personally, I believe it
7 is a positive net present value experience. I
8 looked the other night on the news, 11:00
9 o'clock, and I sent a few of the clippings to
10 some friends and you saw FIU right there.
11 Well, how much would that really cost and how
12 much does that improve the overall appreciation
13 and affinity for FIU?

14 DR. TRELLES: If any member of our
15 audience would like to ask a question, please
16 feel free to approach the microphone. I also
17 wanted to talk to you a little bit about the
18 public time and time again has questioned the
19 value of a higher education degree. How do you
20 plan to make the case and publicly demonstrate
21 that an undergraduate and graduate degree not
22 only have an economic value, but an
23 intellectual value that serves the individual
24 as well as the public good?

25 DR. JESSELL: Okay, so we'll start with

1 the first part, and that is how do I know that
2 it is a great value? Well, time and time again
3 we have seen studies that college graduates
4 earn substantially more over the lifetime than
5 just high school graduates. In addition, there
6 has been a value proposition for every year of
7 college you make more than you would make if
8 you were just a high school graduate -- a high
9 school graduate. But I don't have to give you
10 what I thought about in the past. I remember
11 the economic report of the president that would
12 come out every year, they would actually go
13 through those numbers. Recently Degree Choices
14 just evaluated colleges and universities
15 throughout the country, and we ranked number 23
16 in the country, 23 of all publics, privates,
17 ivy leagues, et cetera, and they use two
18 components to develop their ranking. Number
19 one was payback. So they looked at the net
20 cost of the degree to the student and then
21 divided it by the average salary of an FIU
22 graduate compared to just a high school
23 graduate. So if the net cost was \$20,000 and
24 you made an incremental \$5,000 per year, the
25 payback would have been four years, 20,000

1 divided by five. That's only one measurement.
2 Then they standardized that score by looking at
3 the salaries of FIU graduates ten years out.
4 Not one year out, two years out, but ten years
5 and that's important because, you know, you
6 can't fool the marketplace. You can do the Ken
7 Jessell University where he's teaching courses
8 in science, and mathematics, and history and
9 produce a degree, but the real test is how well
10 does that degree hold up in the marketplace?
11 We know that degree wouldn't go very far.
12 People would realize very, very quickly. But
13 ten years out, you can't fool the market. And
14 so ten years out, they looked at the average
15 salaries of our graduates compared to the
16 average salaries of all other college graduates
17 in Florida, and when you do those adjustments,
18 we come up with 23 in the country. Now, in
19 Florida, all of our in-state tuition is the
20 same for all the institutions, so the net cost
21 is about the same. So you would have argued,
22 well, if that was the only metric, then
23 probably all of the institutions in Florida
24 would be there, but when you adjust ten years
25 out, it was only two UF and FIU, and now we

1 could be proud of that. Now, the second is in
2 terms of the intellectual value. I believe
3 that we provide tremendous value, knowledge
4 exchanges, knowledge generation that really
5 contribute to society. There's also knowledge
6 in some of the trade programs. Not everyone
7 wants to go to college, and not everyone needs
8 to go to college, there are many, many
9 opportunities, but I think when you look
10 overall, you are more enlightened, more
11 enriched academically by pursuing a college
12 degree.

13 DR. TRELLES: I happen to agree. We have
14 a question from a member of our audience.

15 MALE SPEAKER: Hi there. Thank you,
16 Interim President Jessel. My name is Alex
17 Sutton. Nice to see you again. And I wanted
18 to ask you about a question that's been on the
19 mind of, I think, a lot of students, which is
20 the issue of advising. And I know that even
21 our student newspaper wrote an article about
22 this a few months ago. And just in
23 conversations with some of my peers, a lot of
24 them have told me that they wish that our
25 system of advising at this university were

1 different and a little bit better. Some of the
2 issues that I've heard include wanting the
3 advisers to be more accessible or even wanting
4 to go back to the possibility of meeting with
5 their advisers in person and just having more
6 advisers present so that it was easier to get a
7 meeting with them and having it easier to
8 receive that advice from them. So do you have
9 any plans on making any changes to the way
10 advising works at this university, and what
11 would that look like --

12 DR. JESSELL: Well --

13 MALE SPEAKER: -- improve the student
14 experience?

15 DR. JESSELL: -- well, up until two
16 minutes ago the answer was no. So now the
17 answer is yes. So this is the first time that
18 I am hearing that. You are like one of our
19 most engaged students. I see you everywhere.
20 So if you're conveying this, okay, I know
21 it's -- it's coming from a very, very sincere
22 point, so we will look into it. If we need to
23 adjust that, we will. The provost is here. I
24 mean, this is not her -- I mean, you know, she
25 can come up some other time and talk about it,

1 and I'm sure she will, but we will look at it.
2 So afterwards, let's you and I talk with the
3 provost and figure out what the issues are, if
4 we need to have more face-to-face or changes
5 that make sense, let's do it. I mean, at the
6 end of the day, our goal is to give outstanding
7 advising to our students, because if we don't,
8 we're going to lose students and we're going to
9 lose dollars. Thank you so much.

10 DR. TRELLES: What is your stance on
11 employee retention, and what will your
12 initiatives to retain those who have
13 demonstrated their knowledge and capabilities
14 after numerous years?

15 DR. JESSELL: I couldn't understand just
16 the last part.

17 DR. TRELLES: Sure. So what is your
18 stance on employee retention, and what will
19 your initiatives to retain those who have
20 demonstrated their knowledge and capabilities
21 after numerous years?

22 DR. JESSELL: So I -- I mentioned in my
23 comments, employee retention is my highest
24 priority, okay. I am fully committed to that.
25 We have made great strides as an institution.

1 And some of the information that I gave you
2 today, as well as what you have been reading
3 over the last few weeks, is a testament to how
4 well we have been doing, how focused we are. I
5 don't want all of that unraveling because we
6 are losing our great employees. We know we
7 have to do a better job, and so we have that
8 request in to provide additional dollars. In
9 addition, we will be working with the
10 legislative delegation to try to get the same
11 raise package for our faculty and staff that
12 all other state employees in Florida received
13 this year. My heart sank when I was reading
14 the appropriation bill and realized that state
15 university system employees did not get that
16 5.28 percent salary increase. And I know all
17 of the challenges that we're facing
18 economically. In addition, we can do some
19 things internally to reallocate resources, and
20 we've already started to do a few of those
21 things. So if we can say -- like the Division
22 of Engagement which was a separate standing
23 enterprise, we had a vice president for
24 engagement, that has been restructured. So we
25 have reallocated the positions to other areas

1 so we can still do the great things that we
2 were doing in the community and then we took
3 those savings to reduce the amount of the
4 budget cut we had to take this year. So if we
5 can do more and more of those type of things,
6 we can also place those savings into employee
7 retention initiatives. And I mentioned that I
8 do want to do -- I do want to focus on shared
9 services. I've already sent some materials to
10 our team members in H.R., in budget and
11 finance, research administration to find out
12 what can we do a little bit differently, almost
13 like have a large enterprise that just does
14 these types of business services. And at the
15 end of the day, you don't really care as an
16 employee, as a faculty member, or a staff
17 member, or even a student if those things are
18 done on a centralized basis or a decentralized
19 basis. The important thing is, are you getting
20 the best possible service? And finally, I just
21 want to mention that really when we talk about
22 even a great advising system, if we don't have
23 the right people, the great advising system is
24 not going to work because it is the people that
25 make the difference, that face-to-face, that

1 one-on-one dialogue that really sets us apart.
2 So if you want to have excellence, you must
3 have the right people.

4 DR. TRELLES: So building on the idea of
5 excellence and the right people, one of our
6 members from our community asked the question:
7 So many of the positions at the university
8 required graduate degree and pay less than
9 \$50,000, and filling these positions is
10 difficult, and retaining an employee is even
11 harder. When you say you consider allowing
12 more positions to be filled with -- by a person
13 with a bachelor's degree or raise the minimum
14 pay for a person with a graduate's degree?

15 DR. JESSELL: The answer is -- is yes.
16 Number one, I don't want to forget that we are
17 trying to make improvements in pay. If we
18 can't attract a new staff member, we're going
19 to have to add to it because you're not going I
20 come to FIU below market, you're not going to
21 go any place below market, so we know at market
22 coming in, it's got to be higher. And so
23 that's the reason why you're not able to make
24 the hire, because they're applying, they
25 realize the salary is too low. And if we can't

1 find out a way of improving that, then we can
2 look at other options. And we have those
3 options even today. If we have someone that
4 has the appropriate level of experience, even
5 though they don't have the degree, we can make
6 an exception in the hiring process. In fact,
7 we should be focusing a lot more, quite
8 honestly, even on the academic side, with
9 students on experiential credits and
10 experiential experiences to help both
11 academically in courses, in programs, as well
12 as in jobs. So yes, we do have that
13 flexibility.

14 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that
15 flexibility with us. So we had another
16 question from an audience member that wanted to
17 know a little bit about your vision or your
18 plans for satellite campuses, including BBC and
19 I-75 that may sometimes be underused but have
20 state of the art facilities and students want
21 to go there to study, so what is your vision?

22 DR. JESSELL: So I agree, right now they
23 are underutilized. If you talk to the provost
24 after this, if you talk to Pablo Ortiz
25 (phonetic) after this session, you will know

1 that the BBC campus is a very, very high
2 priority for me. I have already made several
3 visits out there. I was there last week. The
4 excitement on that campus is absolutely
5 amazing. And several years ago I -- I helped
6 with the Biscayne Bay housing project right
7 there on that campus called Bayview, and it is
8 as nice as any Miami Beach condominium. So
9 that investment was made to accommodate the
10 students at that campus and increase the
11 capacity -- excuse me, increase the students on
12 that campus because we have the capacity. I
13 think this fall we're actually looking better
14 than we have over the last several falls, and I
15 want to continue that trajectory. The same is
16 true for I-75. Provost Bay Howard and I met
17 with the president of -- of Broward College,
18 that is a joint use facility. It is a pathway
19 program connect for success between Broward
20 College and FIU. We have to work together in
21 tandem. And they are coming back with some of
22 their strategic goals and objectives on how we
23 can make that campus materialize and meet the
24 goals and objectives that were originally
25 established when we went to that campus ten

1 years ago. We are making rental payments for
2 that -- for that campus, and I don't want to be
3 paying rent if we're not providing a quality
4 educational experience for a large number of
5 students there. So we are working on that.

6 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
7 I would also like to remind our audience who is
8 here with us today that if you have any
9 questions, please feel free to approach the
10 microphone. We're here to hear from you as
11 well. So we did have a couple of questions and
12 they're a little bit finance related because
13 you opened that door to all of our --

14 DR. JESSELL: Okay, let's do it.

15 DR. TRELLES: So what are your views on
16 the student loan crisis and what do you think
17 FIU should do to help alumni and current
18 students who are not eligible for scholarships?

19 DR. JESSELL: Okay. So, you know, it is a
20 complex topic, you know, student loans,
21 forgiveness of debt, student debt, et cetera.
22 I mentioned I was a first gen. student. I
23 actually worked in college. I worked at the
24 Strozier Library while I was an undergraduate,
25 and I was in the government documents division

1 which is probably the best division to work at.
2 You didn't want to work in circulation because
3 it was always non-stop. Government documents,
4 who's coming in for government documents, so
5 you could work. So I did that to avoid taking
6 on debt, but I had friends, and fraternity
7 brothers, and classmates that didn't take that
8 approach. Their approach was, I want to have a
9 great time while I'm in college, I don't want
10 to work, and therefore they wanted to take on,
11 you know, additional debt. I think we have to
12 give it a tremendous amount of thought so that
13 we are getting those dollars where they need to
14 be. Are we better off doing blanket
15 forgivenesses or are we better off making
16 targeted investments in scholarships for
17 specific groups of students that don't have
18 large amounts of debt, but could really excel
19 and graduate faster if they had additional
20 financial aid dollars available to them? So it
21 is very, very, you know, complicated. My
22 personal view is, for me personally, okay, I'm
23 speaking only for me, not the university, not
24 the Board of Trustees, for me personally, I
25 don't like the fact that there's, you know -- I

1 don't -- I don't support just blanket. A lot
2 of the debt is at the graduate -- for graduate
3 students that have very, very high earning
4 power. And again, I'd like to use those
5 dollars where the need is the greatest. And
6 yes, I know that our students need more
7 financial aid. I had mentioned that 50 percent
8 of our students are Pell eligible students, and
9 a very large percentage of those meet the
10 maximum Pell -- I would like to see more Pell
11 dollars, you know, coming in, because for us,
12 those Pell students come from Miami primarily,
13 and they stay in Miami, so they are making a
14 huge contribution back to this economy. There
15 is no better payback, in my view. And then I
16 also mentioned that I have conversations with
17 our -- our foundation. I want to make
18 scholarships for students one of the top
19 priorities in their philanthropy --
20 philanthropy efforts, okay. That's really what
21 we need. We can do so much, you know, for our
22 students if we give them a little bit of
23 scholarship support. And we saw this, you
24 know, during COVID when we had, you know, a lot
25 of financial aid dollars, and that enabled

1 students that would have had to work 20 hours a
2 week to take a full load and graduate more
3 quickly. And what does that mean in terms of
4 opportunity cost? You're out there in the job
5 market a semester early or two semesters early.
6 How much more earnings are you getting during
7 that time period?

8 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
9 So we did receive a different type of question.
10 So how do you stay fit, work/life balance, to
11 keep up with the daily demands of a 24/7
12 lifestyle leading a rising research university?

13 DR. JESSELL: Well, I'll have to answer
14 that if -- if I am selected, I'll have to
15 answer that in a year, okay, because nine
16 months -- although everything you describe is
17 accurate, nine months is not enough to talk
18 about the sustainability of that effort. First
19 and foremost, I have a very understanding you
20 know, spouse, and if I can make it through
21 December, it will be 46 years, so I've got to
22 still get through that, but we're looking at
23 ways to have a better balance. I'm a firm
24 believer in work/life balance. Early on, I
25 would get texts on a Saturday or an email on a

1 Sunday saying, are you okay, are you live, why
2 haven't you reached out to me? Well, if you
3 talk to anybody that has worked for me over
4 many, many years, and I've got Amy Martinez
5 right here, she will tell you that unless --
6 and John is there, John Cap (phonetic), unless
7 it is absolutely critical, I don't bother
8 anyone on a weekend, okay. I may send an email
9 and it say, hey, I'm just sending this to you,
10 we can talk about it next week, because I am a
11 firm believer in work/life balance. You cannot
12 sustain 24/7 operations, you just can't do your
13 best, you can't be as cheerful when all the
14 time you are working. So I am trying to do
15 that and hopefully I'll be able to get, you
16 know, that balance. You know, I have a strong
17 work ethic. I'm typically the last one out of
18 the building, except maybe for Amy, but, you
19 know, at the end of the day, we do what we have
20 to do, and we do it in a way that makes us as
21 productive as we can be.

22 DR. TRELLES: I wish you much success with
23 that balance.

24 DR. JESSELL: Thank you.

25 DR. TRELLES: We have a question from an

1 audience member.

2 FEMALE SPEAKER: Hello, Mr. Interim
3 President Jessell. My name is Kiomi Cabral
4 (phonetic) and I am a senior here at FIU. And
5 as a person who has excelled greatly because of
6 the FIU/D.C. programs that are offered here at
7 our university, it was one of the major drawing
8 points to FIU, I just wanted to know, what are
9 you planning to do with the FIU/D.C. program?

10 DR. JESSELL: Well, I love the FIU/D.C.
11 program. I was up there during the
12 construction period of our new space, and I was
13 up there for the ribbon cutting. We actually
14 hosted a symposium with the Chronicle of Higher
15 Education where we had great leaders in the
16 academic community, especially several from the
17 Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research
18 Institutions, and we want to continue using
19 that space for that type of advocacy, that type
20 of educational experience, and that type of
21 opportunity for our students. It is amazing
22 that our students have the opportunity to do an
23 intern -- internship program in the fall or the
24 spring that is much more meaningful than any
25 other internship program those students would

1 receive from any other university because
2 they're all doing it during the summer, and
3 everybody is up there during the summer. We do
4 it at a time in the fall, in the spring, where
5 there's not a lot of competition for
6 internships and our students get placed very,
7 very well. And we also have the fly-ins. So
8 it's an amazing program. It's amazing
9 opportunity. We're blessed that our Board of
10 Trustees has fully supported that program. If
11 any of you had the opportunity to go up there,
12 if you're in D.C., we're right across the
13 street from Georgetown Law, and right down the
14 street from the Capitol. So we want to use
15 that as great advocacy to help us with
16 initiatives that will benefit FIU and this
17 community.

18 FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you.

19 DR. TRELLES: Thank you so much for your
20 question. So, do we have any plans to build a
21 location to conduct events on campus?

22 DR. JESSELL: Like this?

23 DR. TRELLES: Yeah, I guess.

24 DR. JESSELL: Well, you know, we -- we
25 have the hotel conference center, an alumni

1 center that was approved by the BOT, and the
2 Board of Governors. It has stalled, quite
3 frankly, because of COVID. It is a challenge
4 right now because of the escalating cost of
5 construction materials and labor, as well as
6 the increases in the financing rates. So
7 hopefully that will -- that will still
8 materialize and materialize soon. And I think
9 that it's a great benefit to the university.
10 However, we also have funding to expand the
11 Graham Center, and we've been accumulating
12 those funds, the CITF funds, Capitol
13 Improvement Trust Fund funds that our students
14 pay every -- every year as part of their base
15 tuition to do an expansion of this program.
16 Honestly, when I go around the different
17 universities, we have very, very good
18 facilities. I love our Graham Center more than
19 any other student center in the state
20 university system. The excitement that takes
21 place in here way overcomes the physical
22 facility. It's a nice physical facility, I
23 know it's not large enough, but I happen to
24 like walking through there shoulder to shoulder
25 and talking to students and talking to other,

1 you know, staff members and faculty. But yes,
2 we do have -- we do have several plans on the
3 drawing board.

4 DR. TRELLES: Thank you so much for
5 sharing that with us. How will the university
6 focus on improving DEI initiatives, and
7 diversity, and inclusion overall improve under
8 your leadership?

9 DR. JESSELL: So I'm a strong believer in
10 DEI initiatives. When we first presented these
11 to the Board of Trustees, we actually provided
12 funding for the initiatives because you can't
13 talk about having a commitment to DEI if you
14 don't have staff that can monitor the progress.
15 It's one thing to say, Yeah, we're going to do
16 it, but it's another thing to really do it. So
17 we want to make sure that when we're
18 advertising for positions, and that when we're
19 recruiting for positions, and we're hiring for
20 positions, we are actually achieving the
21 intended goals. So we put dollars in to help
22 our departments and units do a better job, as
23 well as to monitor the progress that is being
24 made. We have to measure how well we are
25 doing. And it doesn't mean that we're not

1 acting in good faith. It just means that, hey,
2 we have to analyze to see what is going on, are
3 we -- are we marketing in the right areas, are
4 we recruiting in the right areas, do we have
5 the right employment process, do we have the
6 right recruitment process to find out where the
7 deficiency is? But unless you keep track of
8 the data and monitor the data and analyze the
9 data, you really can't make a lot of progress
10 other than, hey, we're committed to doing it
11 and let's just see what happens. No, we are
12 committed to doing it and doing it well.

13 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. Is there a
14 pathway that includes guidance for ambitious
15 employees looking to apply their technical
16 skills to future endeavors of the university
17 while trying to grow professionally while
18 they're here?

19 DR. JESSELL: But we do have the
20 presidential leadership program at the
21 university. We just finished the last cohort
22 last week, and I meet with them every time that
23 they meet. That's one of the opportunities.
24 We have employee development programs. Yes, we
25 always have opportunities for professional

1 development. Obviously, we have many
2 educational opportunities that come at no cost
3 so our employees can improve their skills. We
4 have credentialing programs and batch programs
5 so they can improve their skills. And
6 personally, as I mentioned to the Board of
7 Trustees shortly after I was selected as the
8 interim president, I am a strong believer of
9 promoting from within. I want to get our staff
10 ready for the next level. And to do that, we
11 have to have the right resources, and I do
12 believe we have the right resources, but if
13 we're missing something, let's talk about it.
14 If there are things that we can do better, if
15 there are examples where we have dropped the
16 ball or we have been deficient in moving
17 forward, you know, let's talk about it, because
18 it is a very, very important part of the
19 process. And believe me, you save a lot of
20 money when you don't have to recruit, only to
21 end up with a failed search. So there are cost
22 savings to it, as well as the affinity and the
23 commitment to the university.

24 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing. We
25 have a member of our audience who would like to

1 ask a question.

2 MALE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.
3 Christopher (phonetic) here, computer science
4 major student. You do know that Miami's doing
5 great in the tech industry, it's growing
6 exponentially. What's your plan to ensure that
7 FIU is a key player in Miami Tech boom and that
8 we continue to be that driving force here in
9 Miami?

10 DR. JESSELL: So one part of the plan is
11 to make sure that you complete your Ph.D. that
12 we talked about today, because I want you in
13 the classroom and engaging with our students
14 and producing even more in technology. So I
15 hope I didn't let the cat out of the bag,
16 Chris, when I -- when I brought that up.
17 Secondly, we must be engaged with our
18 community, and that includes all of those tech
19 businesses. And I believe that we are doing a
20 lot in that area. We are participating in
21 conferences. We are participating in symposia.
22 We know we have a knowledge based economy here
23 in Miami-Dade County, and it is growing in
24 leaps and bounds. So, yes, we must have that
25 dialogue. And we must prepare our students. I

1 mentioned artificial intelligence and emotional
2 intelligence. You know, artificial
3 intelligence is probably one of the greatest
4 areas where we're going to have the greatest
5 unmet supply. So whatever we can do to
6 incorporate A.I. into every course, every
7 curriculum will help us in that arena. But
8 you're absolutely right, this is -- this is
9 tech oriented, and I know we have the ability
10 to do it. We're trying to increase the number
11 of computer science graduates through our
12 night-school. We're happy with the donation
13 that we received. We're building a new
14 engineering building that will include a lot of
15 this -- of this technology. I believe we can
16 be a major supplier of the human capital.

17 DR. TRELLES: And speaking about our human
18 capital, how would you make sure that
19 leadership is loyal to the institution rather
20 than to the individual leader?

21 DR. JESSELL: I think that this
22 institution has so many people that look out
23 for FIU. I've been here 13 years, I'm like a
24 baby when it comes to FIU. When we have
25 faculty, original faculty and original staff

1 members that were here on opening day, that's
2 pretty impressive. I don't think that being
3 loyal to an individual will last very long
4 because individuals, you know, come and go. So
5 unless you have that mentality of, let's do
6 what is important for FIU, what is important
7 for our students, our faculty and staff, that
8 will translate to what is important for me. If
9 we have people that don't view it that way,
10 they're probably at the wrong place, right. So
11 I think there's a self-selection process. But
12 if we had people that are conflicted for
13 whatever reason, they should reach out. They
14 should reach out to employee assistance and
15 say, look, I feel I'm doing things that are --
16 that are not in the best interest of the
17 university, and let's get that on the table. I
18 do not believe that is a significant part of
19 our population, but we -- we've all heard the
20 adage, you know, one rotten apple destroys the
21 entire bunch, right. So let's -- let's talk
22 about that and let's focus on the big picture.
23 Let's focus on FIU.

24 DR. TRELLES: So something that you've
25 previously mentioned is your passion, your care

1 for the individuals that make this university
2 what we are and all the individuals that work
3 here. So what policies or initiatives would
4 you wish to see implemented or perhaps
5 reinforced so that the safety of our faculty,
6 staff, students, and community members can be
7 prioritized when reporting sexual harassment or
8 violence?

9 DR. JESSELL: Okay. I have said this
10 many, many times over the years because I
11 really believe it. The safety of our -- of our
12 students, faculty and staff is job number one.
13 If we cannot provide a safe environment where
14 faculty can teach and students can learn and be
15 supported, we are going to make no progress as
16 an institution. And we've made a lot of
17 investments in public safety over the years.
18 We've made a lot of investment in environmental
19 health and safety over the years. We will not
20 tolerate any type of sexual harassment, sexual
21 discrimination, racial discrimination, or any
22 type of discrimination, period. When I first
23 started as interim president, we initiated new
24 programs, okay, report.fiu.edu. Get it out
25 there because we take this very, very

1 seriously. I take it seriously personally, my
2 administration takes it personally, the Board
3 of Trustees takes it personally, and law takes
4 it personally. We cannot do these types of
5 things. So I think we have the right
6 infrastructure in place. I think it is -- is
7 working from the number of complaints, but if
8 there are gaps, I want to know about it. If
9 we're not getting the message out that we value
10 the individual and we value their safety, then
11 let's -- we can do some more on our marketing.
12 We give a report every quarter to our Board of
13 Trustees so we can show what's been happening
14 out there. We take it seriously.

15 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for that. If any
16 member of our community who happens to be in
17 attendance would like to ask a question,
18 please, I invite you to approach a microphone
19 so that we may be able to hear from you.

20 Has there been or will you consider a
21 larger child care center at the university or
22 even a full scale daycare to support our
23 students, and our staff, and our faculty member
24 who may have children and that would like to be
25 involved at the university?

1 DR. JESSELL: Well, I will always, you
2 know, support the discussions. So I can't say
3 right now, yes, we need it or, no, we don't
4 need it. I believe we have a very, very good
5 center from what I have observed personally and
6 what I have heard. It operates very, very
7 well. It meets many, many needs of our
8 students, our faculty, and staff. But if we
9 need to revisit that, absolutely. If there are
10 opportunities, let's take them on.

11 DR. TRELLES: And what is your vision for
12 the international endeavors of FIU considering
13 that it is our middle name?

14 DR. JESSELL: It is our middle name. And
15 it's interesting. Last week I was looking at
16 an article in the 1973 student newspaper and
17 there was an editorial, you know, what does it
18 mean, FIU, I, international, our middle name,
19 and even back then, there were -- was a lot of
20 uncertainty on what international really means.
21 I think everyone agrees it doesn't mean simply
22 bringing in more international students. Yes,
23 that is an important component of
24 international, and it's an important part of
25 our mission, but that's not the only thing.

1 And in fact, at an earlier session I was asked
2 the question, do I support expanding
3 international students at FIU, and the answer
4 is -- is yes. It also means internationalizing
5 our curriculum because we live in a global
6 society. We have a global economy. When I was
7 in college in an international business course
8 really the only real international part was
9 maybe putting the pound sign rather than the
10 dollar sign on some of the numbers, okay, but
11 today it is much more than that. We need to
12 understand culture. We need to understand
13 society. We need to have a perspective of
14 global learning. And that's why we have in our
15 curriculum now, as I mentioned earlier, the --
16 the two courses, one lower division, one upper
17 division for our students so they get
18 throughout their curriculum that global
19 perspective. So to me that is what it means to
20 be an F International University.

21 DR. TRELLES: Thank you. So what do you
22 see your role as president in setting the
23 climate for diversity and inclusion at FIU to
24 increase the diversity of our faculty, women,
25 black, and Hispanic to better represent our

1 student body?

2 DR. JESSELL: So I think that's a very,
3 very good question. My goal, our goal is to
4 have a faculty that is representative of our
5 student population, and we know we are not
6 there. Nationally we are not there. So we are
7 one of 21 universities in the country that are
8 R1 Hispanic serving institutions, and we have
9 served an alliance. In fact, I mentioned the
10 program that we had at our D.C. office about
11 six weeks ago, and one of the things that we
12 did as part of that -- that meeting was for all
13 of the HSI institutions to meet with key
14 members of the Biden administration to push for
15 initiatives that will help us achieve that
16 goal, specifically increasing the number of
17 Hispanic members of the professoriate. So the
18 goal is to significantly increase the number of
19 Ph.D. students, Hispanic Ph.D. students within
20 universities, and then increase the number of
21 faculty, Hispanic faculty within the
22 universities. That's what it's going to take.
23 We need to make those investments so we can get
24 our graduates to go into Ph.D. programs and
25 then stay on as faculty members. So it's going

1 to take a little bit of time. We have had a
2 lot of support by the congressional delegation
3 in supporting this, and I think we will be
4 successful. But yeah, we have to be very, very
5 deliberate.

6 DR. TRELLES: What is your favorite FIU
7 tradition?

8 DR. JESSELL: Hmm. Well, I will tell you,
9 as of a week ago Sunday I think my favorite
10 tradition now is Panthers have talent. I was
11 pretty impressed with that group, okay. I
12 mean, it's really nice to see the talent beyond
13 the academics. Our -- our students do a great
14 job. They are so -- so full of excitement and
15 energy. I love our convocation ceremonies. I
16 love our graduations. I mean, we just have so
17 many different things here that are -- that are
18 so meaningful.

19 DR. TRELLES: I believe we have a question
20 from a member of our audience.

21 MALE SPEAKER: Hi there, Mr. Interim
22 President --

23 DR. JESSELL: Gonzalez.

24 MALE SPEAKER: -- it's me again. Yes. I
25 wanted to ask you a question. I was

1 considering saving this for tomorrow at the
2 Student Government and Student Leader section,
3 but I figured, why not just ask it right now.
4 So it's a little bit long, but I think it's
5 very important. The student government holds
6 the position as it was iterated in our last
7 budget in some of the language that we passed
8 with the budget that the activity and service
9 fee is in, what was described in that language,
10 is in a dire position with the minimum wage
11 continuing to increase because of the
12 referendum that passed a few years ago, and
13 obviously the activity and service fee pays for
14 a lot of the employees in our Graham Center and
15 in our wellness and rec center, as well as we
16 have issues with inflation, and we are facing
17 slight decreases in enrollment, and I know
18 that's not just an issue that affects A and S,
19 but also tech fee, athletics fee, all of the
20 fees that are tied to the number of credit
21 hours. So without me endorsing any specific
22 action, I just wanted to ask you what your view
23 is on proposals of increasing tuition,
24 increasing student fees to combat some of those
25 financial issues faced by that? And also what

1 your opinion would be on taking actions such as
2 one that was taken a few years ago when the
3 activity and service fee was actually decreased
4 by \$0.10 and the transportation fee was
5 increased by \$0.10 to make the bus to BBC free
6 for students, so issues were, we're not raising
7 any fee or tuition, but we're changing the
8 numbers between fees to change the balance
9 between? What are your views on all of these
10 issues?

11 DR. JESSELL: So when we -- when we made
12 that particular adjustment and it made sense,
13 the fee was coming out of the student's pocket
14 for A and S, and then they had to pay
15 personally for the -- the bus ride to and from
16 the BBC campus. So we felt that we could
17 develop a plan so that there would be greater
18 savings by having a fixed amount coming in
19 rather than having a variable amount depending
20 upon the number of students that are traveling.
21 And I do believe it saved money. So at the end
22 of the day, the students had a savings out of
23 their total pocket, even though the amount of
24 money that they might have spent on the
25 athletic -- the A and S fee and the

1 transportation access fee was identical. They
2 saved other dollars, so you didn't have to pay
3 out-of-pocket for the bus ride. I am always
4 open to having that discussion. There's really
5 nothing we can do on undergraduate in-state
6 tuition or the -- or the technology fee because
7 those are determined by the legislature. We
8 are always happy to advocate on behalf of
9 students. And I certainly agree that we have
10 to be more deliberate now more than ever to
11 make sure that we have the resources to fulfill
12 our obligations to our students and to our
13 other constituents. I mean, you just can't go
14 on forever and a day without increasing the
15 level of revenues when we know that our costs
16 are going up. So, yes, we can absolutely have
17 that conversation. If it turns out that
18 students really can document and justify an
19 increase in the fee and how they will be
20 disadvantaged and have to pay more out of
21 pocket without the increase in fee, I think
22 that we can be successful in -- in the
23 opportunity to get that approved, but we really
24 have to have a sound business case to do that.
25 And so just like we did with the swap, that at

1 the end of the day the increase will end up
2 saving students money.

3 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

4 DR. TRELLES: Perfect. So with that being
5 said, our time is coming to an end. And before
6 I ask our candidate to give his final remarks,
7 I did want to share that the transcripts for
8 this current session will be made available
9 later on this week. And you will be able to
10 access it as well as the video recordings for
11 the session on our website. And that is for
12 the presidential search website under the
13 archives. Now, Dr. Jessell, if you wouldn't
14 mind sharing some final remarks?

15 DR. JESSELL: Well, number one, I want to
16 thank you all for being here in-person or
17 virtually. I want to thank you for the
18 questions that were made here or virtually. I
19 am very honored to have this opportunity to
20 serve as your sixth president. As I started
21 off, it was not in my original plan, but I also
22 told you my entering higher education was not
23 in my original plan. And you have my pledge,
24 my commitment that I will do everything and
25 anything I can, day in and day out, to support

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you, our students, our faculty, our staff, and
our community, so thank you.

DR. TRELLES: Our next general session
will be tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. in the
ballrooms. Please feel free to join us either
in-person, or through webcast, or through Zoom.
Thank you for joining us today.

(Whereupon, the proceedings
concluded at 4:24 p.m.).

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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: General Session #1; that the
13 foregoing pages, numbered 1 to 64, inclusive,
14 constitute a 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 13th 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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