

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMMUNITY SESSIONS:
GENERAL SESSION #2
STUDENTS
COMMUNITY

Wednesday, October 12, 2022
Graham Center Ballrooms
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PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE COMMUNITY SESSIONS:

GENERAL SESSION #2 3

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1 (General Session #2)

2 (Session commenced at 10:00 a.m.)

3 DR. TRELLES: Good morning, everyone. Good
4 morning, everyone. My name is
5 Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my pleasure to
6 extend a warm welcome to the members of the FIU
7 community who are joining us today for an
8 opportunity to meet and hear from presidential
9 finalist, Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell.

10 R. William Funk & Associates, who are based out
11 of Dallas, Texas, have been selected to assist
12 us with our search for FIU's sixth president.

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

25 Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell is interim president

1 for FIU, a position he has held since his
2 appointment on January 21st, 2022. As interim
3 president, Dr. Jessell serves as chief executive
4 officer of the university and is responsible for
5 academic and educational programs, research
6 enterprises and economic development,
7 advancement and fundraising, community
8 engagement, intercollegiate athletics,
9 diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives as
10 well as human resources and facilities
11 management.

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

23 DR. JESSELL: Thank you, Sofia, for your
24 kind introduction.

25 And thank you, colleagues, for being here

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

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

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

1 Miami-Dade County. I am a product of
2 Broward County's K-12 public school system and a
3 proud graduate of Fort Lauderdale High School,
4 the flying elves.

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

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

1 I would now like to spend a little time
2 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on
3 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its
4 next president.

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

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

1 governments and collegial discussions and
2 cooperation are more important than ever in
3 keeping our curriculum relevant.

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

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

22 We will continue to be accountable to our
23 stakeholders and measure our progress and
24 performance in educating our students, including
25 retention and graduation rates, employment and

1 strategic degrees as well as other key metrics
2 related to research and access.

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

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

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

24 FIU will remain committed to maintaining
25 our focus on access by providing educational

1 opportunities to Pell-eligible students, our
2 students with the greatest financial need, and
3 ensuring that they graduate as quickly as our
4 non-Pell students.

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

14 Second, Research Excellence.

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

25 Our research expenditures have surpassed

1 \$245 million, and we are in the Top 10 of
2 research expenditure growth of R1 public
3 universities over the past ten years, and we are
4 poised to hit the \$400 million mark by 2025, and
5 we have already exceeded the research
6 expenditures required for preeminent research
7 university designation by the Florida Board of
8 Governors.

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

21 For example, environmental resilience
22 covers everything from sea-level rise,
23 ecosystems, saltwater intrusion and water
24 quality, extreme weather events and building
25 mitigation to name just a few. Environmental

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

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

16 Third, Sustainable Resources.

17 FIU must have sufficient and sustainable
18 human physical and financial resources to
19 fulfill our mission of outstanding teaching,
20 research excellence and community engagement.
21 The recruitment and retention of our best
22 faculty and staff are my highest priorities. I
23 understand the difficulties of the current
24 market conditions, both financially and human
25 capital. Our team proposed and the FIU Board of

1 Trustees approved last month a \$60.7 million
2 legislative budget request for Top 50
3 operational support.

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

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

22 Additionally, I will advocate for
23 additional funding to achieve a level that is
24 fair and equitable for FIU compared to the
25 funding received by our sister institutions.

1 You have my commitment that I will stay focused
2 on FIU's strategic priorities and not take on
3 new initiatives that are not strategic and that
4 oftentimes will dilute the scarce resources we
5 already have. I will be asking the question:
6 What is the ROI on this project every time.
7 This question is in my DNA.

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

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

23 Fourth, University Affinity and Engagement.

24 Declining college enrollments nationwide
25 have required increased efforts on retaining and

1 graduating every student we admit. We
2 understand better than ever before that we must
3 do a better job of ensuring our students are
4 successful in college and that the cost of
5 losing a student is significantly more than the
6 cost of recruiting one.

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

22 You may have observed this affinity over
23 homecoming week, particularly on Saturday where
24 it was standing room only on our housing
25 promenades and plazas. These benefits are

1 multiplied when we create an engaged FIU
2 community of faculty and staff along with our
3 students where mentoring, collegiate discussions
4 and encouragement take place and where ideas for
5 research and innovation emerge through our great
6 halls, in our offices, in our Wolfe and Graham
7 Centers, in our food courts, in our plazas and
8 lawns and on the bay.

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

20 It is a source of immense pride for
21 employer Panthers who hire Panthers. They know
22 the quality of the education our students
23 receive. They know the value proposition of an
24 FIU degree. Engaged alumni also support FIU
25 financially. Our alums are among the top donors

1 to FIU. We have almost 300,000 alumni and most
2 of them are here in South Florida, right in our
3 own backyard. Imagine the impact of their
4 advocacy in supporting FIU.

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

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

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

23 So where does this take us? We can be
24 proud, very proud of what FIU has accomplished
25 over the last 50 years, starting on an abandoned

1 airfield opening to the largest enrollment of
2 any educational institution at that time,
3 5,667 upper division and master students.

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

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

1 and the environment we live in.

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

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

15 A member of our audience is approaching the
16 microphone.

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

1 does that translate into potentially, you know,
2 the next several months if you're appointed to
3 the permanent presidency?

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

1 DR. TRELLES: Dr. Jessell, we do have a
2 couple of questions online that I would like to
3 take the opportunity to ask you.

4 "What are your specific goals to retain and
5 recruit African-American students?"

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

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

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

1 achieve that diversity.

2 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for your answer.

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

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

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

1 no individual should be excluded.

2 So, in January, as you know, I was out on
3 the FIU parade float for Pride Day, and it was
4 amazing to see all of the amazing individuals
5 out there celebrating the diversity of this
6 community, and we need to do a lot more of that.

7 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

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

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

1 DR. JESSELL: So, I will tell you that in
2 39 years in higher education in Florida, I don't
3 think there's ever been a time where there
4 hasn't been some type of, you know, political
5 flavor, if you will, going on. We are going to
6 do everything that we have always done at FIU,
7 and that is focus on objective outstanding
8 teaching and objective research. We are not
9 going to deviate from that. I think just by
10 staying the course, we all believe in academic
11 freedom, I am a firm believer in academic
12 freedom. I want to preserve the rights of
13 faculty to teach objectively, to teach according
14 to facts. We absolutely must have faculty that
15 talk about the important aspects of society,
16 good and bad, at all levels, because we want our
17 students to know the facts, know the
18 information, know the objectivity and then make
19 decisions on their own. As a faculty member
20 myself, I would never promote any one position
21 because that will lead to the downfall not only
22 of higher education, but, in my view, society as
23 a whole. We want critical thinkers. We want
24 people that will look at the evidence and make
25 decisions. So, as long as researchers were

1 being objective, as long as faculty members in
2 teaching we are being objective, talking about
3 the facts, talking about what really happened, I
4 think we are going to be absolutely fine. And
5 even if that would be an unpopular approach for
6 some, I will fully defend that position.

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

10 "How do you plan to support our online
11 students and retain our online faculty?"

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

16 SPEAKER: So, retain online faculty and
17 retain online students, okay?

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

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

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

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

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

22 DR. JESSELL: I know this is a very, very
23 big issue. For many years, with respect to
24 students, mental health has been a big challenge
25 and, unfortunately, the issues are becoming more

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

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

14 So, I get it. I mean, I understand and --
15 a lot of struggles.

16 DR. TRELLES: Thank you.

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

23 DR. JESSELL: Well, I mentioned that this
24 is my highest priority. We have to have the
25 best faculty and the best staff, and you can

1 only get that by having fair pay, fair
2 compensation for the services that they provide.

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

21 We are working on being more efficient.
22 We've already done some rearranging of some
23 areas. Our division of engagement that was a
24 separate division under a vice president has
25 been restructured so that we have moved those

1 positions and responsibilities into two areas
2 under academic affairs and strategic
3 communications and governmental relations
4 because the advocacy is still very important.

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

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

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

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

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

25 DR. JESSELL: So, you're absolutely right.

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

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

1 can't be successful if they're not successful,
2 so we absolutely have to get that right. We are
3 required to make the rental payments on that
4 site if we have one student or 15,000 students
5 on that site. I obviously want to pay rent
6 supporting thousands and thousands of students.
7 I believe we have the opportunity to capture a
8 lot more incremental students, not just moving
9 them from MMC to I-75, but pick up incremental
10 students in that community for that campus.

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

1 excitement. But we need to do more. So, we
2 will be continually evaluating that. This is
3 under the provost. It comes with the
4 responsibilities of the chairs to make sure that
5 we have the right programming on that campus.
6 So, students that want a degree there or they
7 have degree programs there, they can get -- they
8 can meet all of their degree requirements right
9 there on the campus.

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

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

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

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

24 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.
25 I just want to remind our members in our

1 audiences that please feel free to ask any
2 questions whether you're in person or using our
3 Zoom platform.

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

10 DR. JESSELL: So you know, I think it goes
11 to my introductory, you know, comments. It was
12 not my intent to apply for the permanent
13 position of university president, but sometimes
14 paths change a little bit. Some things is
15 making that path change and we follow that new
16 path. So, my undergraduate degree was in
17 political science. When I started as a freshman
18 at Florida State University, I was with that
19 35 percent that raised their hand, you know,
20 "We're going to be lawyers." And the 60 percent
21 that raised their hand that said, "I'm going to
22 be a doctor, premed, premed, here," and then the
23 5 percent that was everything else. And that
24 was really my goal.

25 So, two things happened. Number one, I

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

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

1 the research, I loved the teaching that I was
2 doing as an MBA and then the rest is history. I
3 will tell you that you always have the
4 opportunity to change course if you put the time
5 and effort into it. Again, starting out, I
6 never thought I would be, you know, here today.

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

22 I mean, let's face it, when you look at
23 50 percent Pell-eligible students, you know you
24 have to have strong drive, you have to have
25 strong commitment, and I see it day in and day

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

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

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

1 to change this?"

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

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

24 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

25 "The public time and again questions the

1 value of higher education degrees. How do you
2 plan to make the case and publicly demonstrate
3 that the undergraduate and graduate degrees not
4 only have an economic value but an intellectual
5 one as well?"

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

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

21 Number one, the payback, which looks at the
22 net cost of the student to obtain a degree and
23 how many years it takes them to pay back that
24 cost based upon the delta or the difference
25 between how much they would make as a high

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

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

17 In Florida, because the tuition is
18 essentially the same for all the state
19 universities; and, therefore, the net cost is
20 probably close to being the same for all of the
21 universities, we would have expected to see --
22 if we all did the same ten years out, we would
23 have expected to see all of those in the Top 25.
24 We ended up at 23 and there was only one other
25 university in Florida that was in that Top 25,

1 so that's pretty impressive. So, that talks
2 about the specific value of an FIU degree.

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

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

17 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

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

22 DR. JESSELL: So, number one, I believe we
23 need to make more investments in scholarship
24 support for our students. We have been strong
25 advocates over many years of increasing the

1 amount of the Pell Grants. That's very, very
2 important, particularly when we're looking at
3 the cost increases that we have had this past
4 year and what we expect to see over the next few
5 years.

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

22 With respect to the discussion on
23 elimination of debt, you know, I have my own
24 personal perspective on this. When I was a
25 student, I didn't have great means, so I worked

1 in the Strozier library at FSU. I worked
2 20 hours a week, and that helped me pay for my
3 college education so I really didn't have to go
4 into debt, but I had a lot of friends that took
5 a little bit different approach. They wanted to
6 have a little bit more fun in college and so
7 they did the debt route rather than -- rather
8 than working. So, I mean, some of it's, you
9 know, a personal choice. And then you look at
10 the distribution of outstanding debt. Where is
11 that debt currently being held? Well, you're
12 finding that a very large amount of that debt is
13 being held by individuals that have advanced
14 degrees, graduate degrees with greater earning
15 potential. So, in essence, it could be
16 considered a subsidy for those students that
17 would have more ability to pay.

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

1 students stay in Miami-Dade, if we can get them
2 out a semester or two earlier, then they
3 would -- they would have to graduate because
4 they have to work part-time to get through or
5 work full-time to get through. What does that
6 mean in terms of the economic contribution to
7 this community? What does it mean to them
8 personally by having an additional two semesters
9 of earnings under their belt rather than two
10 semesters of expenses under their belt?

11 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

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

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

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

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

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

24 We always -- we always love to have ideas,
25 okay? We need feedback. We believe we're doing

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

1 get it out there.

2 I don't know how we let you go, Breny, and
3 how you didn't continue to monitor that.

4 DR. TRELLES: Okay. One more question.

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

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

23 So, I think we've been doing a very, very
24 good job. I know for me personally, it is
25 something that is very, very important. When I

1 first came here to FIU in 2009, I was surprised
2 that we didn't have a fraud policy, and that was
3 one of the things that we worked on through the
4 office of compliance. And we did a big rollout
5 even back then. It's all been improved. You
6 have to continue to improve, and you have to
7 improve the reporting mechanisms. But, if you
8 have any doubt about our sincerity in making
9 sure that we have opportunities for people to
10 report, just go online and look, we have
11 hotlines and -- particularly report.fiu.edu.
12 Please, please, do it. It just harms the
13 university more than you can imagine.

14 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for that.

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

22 DR. JESSELL: Yes. Well, you know, I
23 talked about it with, you know, with faculty.
24 Faculty have never been, you know, 9 to 5,
25 clock in, clock out. Most faculty would tell me

1 if I said, "You're 9 to 5," they would say,
2 "Thank you because I work a lot more than 9 to 5
3 right now."

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

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

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

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

21 I get it that it may not always be perfect,
22 but we have to have that absolutely first and
23 foremost. Within that context, we do have
24 opportunities for remote work. Again, do I want
25 people living outside of the area? No. And we

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

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

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

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

21 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

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

24 "FIU tends to have lower salaries when
25 compared to for-profit companies, especially in

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

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

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

12 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing.

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

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

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

21 DR. TRELLES: Thank you for sharing that.

22 So, our time is coming to an end, and I
23 wanted to share that the transcripts as well as
24 the video for our session will be made available
25 on the presidential search website within the

1 end of the week. So, if you would like to
2 review the transcripts or view the video, you
3 are welcome to do so.

4 Now, do you have any last remarks before we
5 end our session?

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

15 DR. TRELLES: Thank you.

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

19 (APPLAUSE)

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

1 (Students Session)

2 (Session commenced at 1:02 p.m.)

3 DR. TRESSELL: Good afternoon, everyone.

4 My name is Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my
5 pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the members
6 of the FIU community who are joining us today
7 for an opportunity to hear and meet from our
8 presidential candidate finalist,
9 Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell.

10 R. William Funk & Associates, which are
11 based out of Dallas, Texas, has been selected to
12 assist us with a search of FIU's sixth
13 president. The firm has conducted more than 430
14 searches for colleges and university presidents
15 and chancellors. Mr. Funk and his team will be
16 joining us today through Zoom and are here to
17 answer any questions you may have regarding our
18 search process. Today and yesterday's sessions
19 are made available to anyone to attend both in
20 person through Zoom and through WebCast. We
21 want to make sure that it is as successful as
22 possible to any member of our community who may
23 want to have an opportunity to ask a question to
24 our finalist.

25 Dr. Kenneth A. Jessell is interim president

1 of Florida International University, a position
2 he has held since his appointment on
3 January 21st, of 2022. As interim president,
4 Dr. Jessell serves as a chief executive officer
5 of the university and is responsible for
6 academic and educational programs, research
7 enterprises and economic development,
8 advancement in fundraising, community
9 engagement, intercollegiate athletics,
10 diversity, equity and inclusion initiative,
11 human resources and facilities management.

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

23 (APPLAUSE)

24 DR. JESSELL: Thank you, so much, Sofia,
25 for your kind production, and thank you to those

1 of you in the audience for being here this
2 afternoon. It gives me great pride to meet with
3 you, students and former students, SGA leaders
4 and former SGA leaders. So, this is an amazing
5 session for me. I'm certainly honored and
6 humbled to be addressing you today as a
7 candidate for the sixth president of FIU. As
8 most of you know, I was not intending to be a
9 candidate for the permanent position of
10 president; however, sometimes our plans change
11 and something that was never dreamed of presents
12 itself as a dream come true. And in many ways,
13 that's the story of FIU.

14 Over the past nine months as interim
15 president, I have learned to love FIU more than
16 I could have imagined, and I found both the
17 opportunities and the challenges of the position
18 more rewarding than any of my prior positions.

19 I have been rewarded professionally more
20 than I thought possible. While I have been at
21 FIU for 13 years, for some of you, this may be
22 the first time we have interacted in person or
23 virtually. Let me tell you a few things about
24 me. I was born and reared in Fort Lauderdale,
25 Florida and except for the time that I spent as

1 a student at FSU, I have lived my entire time in
2 Broward County or, since 2009, Miami-Dade
3 County. I'm a product of Broward County, K
4 through 12 public school system and a proud
5 graduate of Fort Lauderdale High School, the
6 flying elves.

7 I'm a first-generation student. I attended
8 Florida State University where I received three
9 degrees, a bachelor of political science, an MBA
10 in finance and a Ph.D. in finance. I started my
11 professional career at Florida Atlantic
12 University in 1983, and I spent 26 wonderful
13 years there. And then in 2009, I came to FIU
14 where I have spent just a little over an amazing
15 13 years as a proud Panther.

16 I am married, my wife's name is Lori, and
17 in December, we will be celebrating our
18 46th wedding anniversary. I have a son, John; a
19 daughter, Amanda; a son-in-law, Jeff; and a
20 beautiful grandson of 18 months, James. And my
21 mother is still with us, she'll be 93 in just a
22 couple of weeks.

23 I would now like to spend a little time
24 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on
25 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its

1 sixth president.

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

17 We must continue to innovate our curriculum
18 so it is aligned with career needs and to adopt
19 different designs and methods for learning that
20 are more meaningful for 21st century learners,
21 including experiential learning,
22 competency-based learning, and
23 micro-credentialing.

24 Our system of shared governance and
25 collegial discussions and cooperation are more

1 important than ever before in keeping our
2 curriculum relevant. FIU continues to be a
3 leader in innovation. Our global learning for
4 global citizenship, QEP, the one that we adopted
5 in 2010 is successful because we know the value
6 proposition of our students understanding both
7 culture and cultures within a global framework.
8 Our 2021 QEP critical skills for the 21st
9 century focuses on student attainment of skills
10 related to artificial intelligence data and
11 emotional intelligence through
12 micro-credentialing courses. However, we are
13 already seeing the expansion of A.I. and E.I.
14 throughout our curriculum. I cannot think of a
15 single program that does not have significant
16 A.I. and E.I. applications and learning
17 opportunities, and these skills translate to
18 jobs, great jobs in our knowledge-based economy.

19 We will continue to be accountable to our
20 stakeholders and measure our progress and
21 performance in educating our students, including
22 retention and graduation rates, employment, and
23 strategic degrees as well as other key metrics
24 related to research and access. FIU's key focus
25 on performance has been the primary reason why

1 we have excelled in both state and national
2 rankings as well as why we have received
3 significant incremental state performance
4 funding and philanthropic funding such as the
5 \$40 million Mackenzie Scott gift received last
6 year. I am committed to our goal of achieving
7 Top 50 public university and U.S. News & World
8 Report rankings in three years.

9 We are the fastest rising university in
10 U.S. New's public rankings in the last
11 ten years, up 62 spots and now ranked Number 72.
12 I know it gets harder and harder to increase as
13 we rise in the ranking, but I know we can get
14 there with the right focus and the right
15 investments. Indeed, we have already achieved
16 many Top 50 rankings the past few years,
17 including those focusing on economic mobility,
18 return on investment, innovation and research
19 expenditure growth.

20 FIU will remain committed to maintaining
21 our focus on access by providing educational
22 opportunities to Pell-eligible students, our
23 students with the greatest financial need and
24 ensuring that they graduate as quickly as our
25 non-Pell students.

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

10 Next is research excellence.

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

21 Our research expenditures have surpassed
22 \$245 million, and we are in the Top 10 of
23 research expenditure growth of R1 public
24 universities over the past ten years, and we are
25 poised to hit the \$400 million mark by 2025, and

1 we already exceed the research expectations
2 required for preeminent research university
3 designation by the Florida Board of Governors.

4 Quality research requires investments, and
5 I believe the greatest opportunities for
6 expanded research funding at FIU are in areas
7 where we have already achieved a competitive
8 advantage through established infrastructure and
9 nationally and internationally recognized and
10 acclaimed academic and research programs such as
11 those in environment and health. This is
12 especially true when we focus on
13 interdisciplinary research that involves most,
14 if not all, academic programs at FIU. For
15 example, environmental resilience covers
16 everything from sea level rise, extreme weather
17 events, saltwater intrusion and water quality,
18 ecosystems, building mitigation and others. We
19 are just scratching the surface on these
20 opportunities.

21 Environmental research will include the
22 sciences, architectural design, business,
23 education, sociology, health, forensic science,
24 engineering, construction, global affairs,
25 technology, and computer science, law, and

1 health, as well as many other disciplines. I
2 believe that this focus on interdisciplinary
3 research will enable us to maximize the
4 opportunities for grant awards and research that
5 will solve global problems.

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

11 Third, sustainable resources.

12 We must have sufficient and sustainable
13 human, physical and financial resources to
14 fulfill our mission of outstanding teaching,
15 research excellence and community engagement.
16 The recruitment and retention of our best
17 faculty and staff are my highest priorities. I
18 understand the difficulties of current market
19 conditions.

20 Our team proposed and the FIU Board of
21 Trustees approved last month a \$60.7 million
22 legislative budget request for Top 50
23 operational support. This request was also
24 submitted to the Florida Board of Governors.
25 Included in this request is almost \$26 million

1 to retain our outstanding faculty and staff who
2 have demonstrated sustained exceptional
3 performance and commitment to quality teaching,
4 student success and research. Also included is
5 \$15 million for scholarship support for
6 students, \$5 million for hiring of additional
7 faculty in areas of strategic importance and in
8 areas where we know we need to decrease
9 student-faculty ratios, and \$12.5 million for
10 investments in technology to improve operational
11 efficiencies and cover recurring costs. I will
12 advocate to the Board of Governors and
13 legislative leadership for these additional
14 funds to support FIU, and I have already done
15 so.

16 Additionally, I will advocate for
17 additional funding to achieve a level of funding
18 that is fair and equitable for FIU compared to
19 the funding received by our sister institutions.
20 You have my commitment that I will stay focused
21 on FIU's strategic priorities and not take on
22 any new initiatives that are not strategic and
23 that oftentimes dilute the scarce resources we
24 already have. I will be asking the question:
25 "What is the ROI on this project?" every time.

1 This question is in my DNA.

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

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

17 Fourth, university affinity and engagement.

18 Declining college enrollments nationwide
19 have required increased efforts on retaining and
20 graduating every student we admit. We
21 understand better than ever before that we must
22 do a better job of ensuring our students are
23 successful in college and that the cost of
24 losing a student is significantly more than the
25 cost of recruiting one. Students who are

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

16 You may have observed firsthand this great
17 affinity over homecoming week particularly on
18 Saturday where it was standing room only on our
19 housing promenades and plazas. It was very well
20 attended. These benefits are multiplied when we
21 create an engaged community of faculty and
22 staff, along with students where mentoring,
23 collegial discussions and encouragement take
24 place and where ideas for research and
25 innovation emerge throughout our great halls, in

1 our offices, in our Wolfe and Graham Centers, in
2 our food courts, on our plazas and lawns and on
3 the bay.

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

15 It is a source of immense pride for Panther
16 employers who hire Panthers. They know the
17 quality of the education our students receive.
18 They know the value proposition of an FIU
19 degree. Engaged alumni also support FIU
20 financially. Our alums are among the top donors
21 to FIU, and we have almost 300,000 alumni, and
22 most of them are right here in South Florida, in
23 our own backyard. Imagine the impact of their
24 advocacy in achieving FIU goals and objectives.

25 And, finally, we need to stay engaged with

1 our community. Our community and FIU are better
2 off when our students, faculty and staff
3 collaborate with the larger community. We can
4 enrich the lives of our residents through health
5 and civic partnerships, service, and research.
6 And we know that community will reciprocate by
7 supporting FIU. Many of the largest gifts to
8 FIU are from members of our community who were
9 not FIU alumni, benefactors who believe in FIU
10 and its mission and believe in our FIU students.
11 Let's face it. We are a Panther family and a
12 Panther community, and we work better together.
13 We will have greater affinity for FIU as an
14 engaged community of students, faculty, and
15 staff.

16 Just like our alma mater says: "Every
17 scholar, side by side."

18 We could be proud, very proud of what FIU
19 has accomplished over the past 50 years,
20 starting on an abandoned airfield, opening to
21 the largest enrollment of any educational
22 institution at that time, 5,667 upper division
23 and master students. And, now, we are educating
24 over 56,000 students, achieving \$246 million in
25 research expenditures, being the number one

1 producer of degrees to Hispanics, the Top 10
2 producer of baccalaureate degrees to
3 African-Americans and achieving national
4 rankings typically reserved for much older
5 institutions.

6 FIU has always had lofty goals and high
7 expectations and these have always, always been
8 exceeded, and we will continue with this
9 tradition during our next 50 years. Our
10 successes speak for themselves, and they are
11 speaking in a loud voice. And, yet, the best is
12 yet to come. We will continue to focus on
13 student success and research excellence. We
14 will continue to produce great leaders,
15 teachers, researchers, scientists, healthcare
16 providers, lawyers, innovators, and
17 entrepreneurs. And, I believe, together as a
18 Panther family, we have the opportunity to be
19 the world leader in solving the biggest problems
20 facing society today, the health of its people
21 and the environment we live in.

22 So, thank you for being here and thank you
23 for the opportunity for me to address you, our
24 students. Now I think we go into the Q & A.

25 (APPLAUSE)

1 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you so much to
2 everyone who is joining us in the audience. I
3 also wanted to share a little bit about the
4 members of our community who are joining us
5 through WebCast and through Zoom. So, outside
6 of the number of students that we have here
7 today with us, we also have 80 of them who are
8 joining us through the different platforms that
9 we have. Please feel free to just approach any
10 microphone and ask your questions, and if you
11 are joining us online, please feel free to use
12 the platform to ask your questions. I also
13 wanted to share that I recently got the number
14 of all of our members of our FIU community who
15 have joined us today and yesterday through the
16 various different session that we had with our
17 presidential candidate finalist. We have had
18 almost a thousand individuals from our community
19 join us, whether that has been through Zoom,
20 through WebCast and in person. So that's a
21 pretty amazing number, and we hope that in this
22 session and in our next session, we continue to
23 get an opportunity to meet all of you.

24 We have a question from a member of our
25 audience.

1 SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Brian Levine,
2 I'm a student here, a master student. I'm
3 taking my classes primarily at both the
4 Biscayne Bay campus and now at the FIU at I-75
5 campus, and I'm relying on some notes because my
6 memory is not as sharp as it used to and because
7 I didn't want to forget my points. A few of the
8 things I did want to bring up was: So,
9 previously I also was in the student government
10 representing as the governor of the BBC and I-75
11 campuses, now I'm still interested in them as an
12 emeritus of that position. So, the first thing
13 I wanted to bring to attention, and I had asked
14 about this once -- when I got the email about
15 these sessions, and I know you are not
16 responsible for setting this up, I immediately
17 replied to the email and copied several SGA
18 leaders about could there be a session at the
19 Biscayne Bay Campus. I was saddened by that. I
20 did not get an official response from the search
21 committee email. I don't know how -- who checks
22 that, but I did hear that it was not enough time
23 to pull that off, but I think that's actually
24 something important and it kind of stems to the
25 larger issue that makes my point, that

1 oftentimes people on some of our regional
2 locations and our BBC, Biscayne Bay Campus, feel
3 kind overlooked and oversight. It's not
4 necessarily something intentional, but it often
5 gets forgotten. And it's important that it'd be
6 consciously thought about and to make sure that
7 there is representation and activities including
8 the campus. There are still things there, but I
9 just feel in a lot of cases things will get
10 skipped.

11 The last in-person university town hall at
12 BBC was February 2022 -- 2020, two and
13 two-thirds years ago. Now, part of that relates
14 to the pandemic and this was right before the
15 pandemic, but even as they were brought back,
16 sessions here, that they have not restored at
17 BBC. And I think that's something important,
18 and it should be done at least once a year, if
19 not, more often.

20 Other ways that kind of the campus gets
21 overlooked is there was -- I'm not sure what
22 external relations is now called, I know they've
23 changed their names, but they came and they
24 recruited people from BBC to do like a photo
25 shoot. The photo shoot itself is not the big

1 deal, but what happened was they -- besides
2 coming very late, they didn't actually reach out
3 to find out when the hours of the food court
4 were open. And so they apparently wanted to
5 take pictures there, never thinking to either
6 reach out to Chartwells, check the hours, ask
7 somebody, just assuming, and these were the
8 people putting together stuff to advocate for
9 the campus. And it's not specifically that
10 commercial, but it's just one of the symptoms
11 of, you know, there are differences on the
12 campuses, differences, and people should be
13 looked at. Transportation is always a very
14 important issue.

15 Even so much as this Saturday going to the
16 football game, there was a bus to bring people
17 there, but there's often confusion. There were
18 details that -- exactly where the bus would be,
19 but some of the bus operator was given the wrong
20 information. I almost didn't see the bus come.
21 It came -- it wasn't sure where it was supposed
22 to pick up or drop off exactly. And, even
23 though it was stated they would be able to stay
24 until after the game, the driver informed us
25 that they would leave by 10:30, and so we

1 actually had to leave a little before just to
2 make sure because the bus didn't come straight
3 to the football field, it came closer to here.

4 Other things that are related to
5 transportation, there's a freebie system here,
6 and I know that covered the engineering center
7 and that's something that I think should be
8 looked into for BBC, and I've advocated for
9 before. I just learned over the summer that
10 they're not only on campuses, but they serve
11 different communities, and they just came to
12 North Miami Beach. The campuses, not
13 North Miami Beach, but literally, like, the
14 borders are very weird but very close, and it
15 seems like there's opportunities to partner for
16 that, and I would love to see that get expanded.

17 As well as in terms of transportation,
18 people have also asked for things about buses to
19 occur on weekends between campuses because
20 sometimes people do need to come and right now
21 there are no buses unless it's a special case
22 that they might have for a football game or some
23 special event and people do want to be able to
24 utilize that.

25 There are no buses necessarily during

1 commencement. As I realized last spring, they
2 were doing commencement on Saturday and Sunday
3 and I know it changed. There happened to be
4 buses on Saturday because of the finals, but I
5 was, like -- I was disappointed to see that
6 there were not buses for people who may be
7 taking classes, who have taken classes here and
8 are going to be graduating. I'm not saying to
9 move the commencement, but why not provide that
10 opportunity. It would also be a great
11 opportunity to encourage some carpooling and
12 other ways for people to take advantage of it.
13 People have asked about buses potentially to
14 I-75.

15 One thing that's important is that we need
16 the university to support and encourage the
17 colleges and schools to offer a critical mass of
18 classes. One thing people keep saying is,
19 "Well, we can't do this and do that because we
20 don't have enough students." I've seen students
21 come to campus that want to take classes there
22 but can't get those classes there. I've seen
23 students that are literally studying marine
24 biology, which the program is based there, and
25 have told me that they've had to actually come

1 here to take classes. And I don't think there's
2 anything wrong with having to come to both
3 campuses, but there are things that people say
4 there's not, but there's people that want that,
5 and I think it's important for that as well as
6 the regional campuses. And just there are
7 certain things that the campus at Biscayne Bay
8 has. We can't duplicate everything, but we
9 do -- besides hospitality, we have marine
10 science. And I remember my first year here in
11 2018, my surprise that they were doing a
12 program, a community presentation on the red
13 tide and instead of doing it at BBC, which hosts
14 the marine science program is literally on the
15 bay and other programs that are affected, it was
16 done here at MMC. I'm not against doing at
17 both, but I was just surprised that finally
18 something that's real strings to there, it
19 wasn't --

20 DR. TRESSELL: Ryan, give me just one
21 second. We're going to get to all the parts of
22 it, but if you can give him an opportunity to
23 address the first question.

24 SPEAKER: Oh, yeah, sorry, no, I just --
25 they're all in kind of one big thing so let me

1 just -- could I just finish the general point
2 and then I'll -- I'm through.

3 DR. TRESSELL: Go ahead.

4 SPEAKER: The other real key thing is to
5 kind of keep leadership at BBC. And one of the
6 positions that was just vacated because somebody
7 moved, the assistant vice president
8 Dr. DeSantis, my understanding is not going to
9 be refilled, and I just -- one of the things
10 that I think strategically that I think is
11 important to look at, to include and kind of
12 reexamine some of the restructuring that was
13 done in recent years because I think it really
14 kind of goes towards that, and it goes to your
15 point at the -- one of the last points about
16 engagement is there needs to be really dedicated
17 engagement, and I just think it's important to
18 have stuff there and dedicated positions. I
19 know you have been, you yourself, I saw you last
20 week, and I think that's great. My ideal thing
21 when the search committee started was saying
22 that I'd love to have a president that coming to
23 the campus was not a big deal because it was
24 just so routine. So, I thought it was really
25 nice to see you there and so I think you

1 understand the general sentiment.

2 DR. JESSELL: I do.

3 So, let me just respond first in terms of
4 the discussion related to the logistics. We did
5 have a conversation, but the production setups
6 were just so great since we were doing it
7 virtually. It was a decision to just have
8 everything here and make it fully available to
9 do six different sessions where everyone would
10 have an opportunity, you know, to do it even if
11 it was virtually because you can see how much is
12 involved in the setup. However, I will commit
13 to doing a town hall at BBC. I love that
14 campus. It has been a high priority of mine for
15 a good number of years. People in this room
16 know how committed I am to doing more and more
17 things there. I've been there several times as
18 the interim president, and I will continue to go
19 there because it really is special.

20 I hope you'll -- you would have found that
21 what we're doing there this fall is an
22 improvement over what we had overhead last fall.
23 We have a lot more students. I think Bayview
24 housing is about 90 percent occupied, and we
25 want to do more. We have some nursing programs

1 moving there. We want to do other programs
2 there. I've been having conversations with
3 Dr. Bejar about BBC and additional conversations
4 with the president of Broward College, the
5 meeting that we had at the I-75 campus just a
6 few weeks ago with their leadership team about
7 improving the programs that we have there. But,
8 we cannot be successful for FIU at 75 if
9 Broward College at I-75 is floundering, so we
10 want to make sure that we are in synch and do
11 the right thing to get students a quality
12 education in their own backyard. And I think we
13 have a lot of potential for student enrollments
14 right there just as we do for our north campus.

15 We will think about all of the things that
16 you said with respect to the buses. I don't
17 know that we've thought about buses for, you
18 know, commencement. The issue on the bus for
19 the football game, that's something that we --
20 number one, we'll make sure they know where to
21 go and when to go there, but we can easily work
22 to extend the hour so the bus will not depart
23 until the game is over. We want you to be at
24 the game through the very, very end, so we will
25 be listening to everything you said -- and the

1 people that are here are taking notes, and I
2 agree with what you said. We have not invested
3 the right support in BBC. We're making
4 progress, but I want to do even more.

5 SPEAKER: I appreciate that. And one point
6 to bring up, you mentioned Bayview housing. I
7 know there -- having lived there for a number of
8 times, I know and I've been reading the
9 contract, there is an option for the university
10 I believe in 2024 if it wants to exercise where
11 it could -- by and assume that I know there's
12 financial implications, but I do encourage that
13 to be explored and the provisions of the
14 contract to ensure that there is quality student
15 programming and services there because a lot
16 have been lacking, but I think there's some
17 provisions actually in the agreement with the
18 ownership of Bayview to ensure for
19 accountability, and I think that could be
20 explored more.

21 DR. JESSELL: All right. Thank you.

22 SPEAKER: Thank you.

23 DR. JESSELL: And thank you for being here.

24 DR. TRESSELL: Please.

25 SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Kaylee Long

1 Chappell (phonetic). I use they/he pronouns,
2 and I'm currently as the Pride Student Union
3 president and SGA SIPA senator.

4 As a leader on this campus, I am very eager
5 to see where you're going with student success,
6 research excellence and engagement on this
7 campus, but what I think is just equally as
8 important is diversity, equity and inclusion
9 initiatives on this campus, not only in the
10 State of Florida but in the state of political
11 discourse, there's a lot of rise anti-LGBTQ
12 legislation. I'm here as a leader that
13 represents the LGBTQ campus -- community on this
14 campus, so what do you plan personally and at
15 the administrative level to support not only
16 LGBTQ students but to expand on DEI initiatives
17 on this campus?

18 DR. JESSELL: So for the DEI, I will tell
19 you, this is an initiative that's very important
20 not only to me and the administrative team but
21 also to our Board of Trustees. About two years
22 ago, we put forth the DEI program that was more
23 than just a program. It involved funding, so we
24 would have the staffing in place to measure and
25 monitor how well we are doing. We absolutely

1 must have an inclusive student population and
2 inclusive faculty and staff participation. So,
3 we are absolutely going to be addressing that.
4 Every student is valued and respected here at
5 FIU. I think you were at the pride parade at
6 Miami Beach, weren't you? And I was there. It
7 was my honor to be with all of our students that
8 support the same goals of the pride community.
9 And you could see as we were on the parade route
10 throughout the City of Miami Beach, so many of
11 its citizens were out there with families
12 saying, "You know what, this is an important
13 initiative." We need to do more to promote
14 diversity, equity, and inclusion, so that is a
15 good way of doing it. It was a great pride
16 celebration, and it was a great way to show our
17 FIU pride. So we will continue to do those
18 types of things, and we'll be louder and
19 stronger in the future.

20 SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

21 DR. TRESSELL: Alex.

22 SPEAKER: Thank you and thank you,
23 Mr. President, for being here. Let me start by
24 saying how incredibly happy I was to hear that
25 the committee decided to nominate you for this

1 post. I speak for many who served with me that
2 there is no one better to take this role on than
3 you. So, I wanted to ask you a question to give
4 you a quick chance: How would you take this
5 institution into the Top 50? What are your
6 plans for the next three years as to how this
7 institution is going to grow and continue to
8 expand under your leadership?

9 DR. JESSELL: So I hope that, you know,
10 several of these things were already identified
11 as part of my comments.

12 Number one, we must stay keenly focused on
13 student success. And while I am very, very
14 happy with the progress that we've made on our
15 four-year graduation rate over the past few
16 years, particularly from last year to this year,
17 we can't take our eyes off the prize.

18 We need to continue doing that, which means
19 as a university community, we have to do
20 anything and everything we can to make sure that
21 every student that is admitted is graduated, and
22 that's one of the key elements of the -- of the
23 rankings. Now, keep in mind, when you look at
24 U.S. News & World Report, I mean, it's a ranking
25 that many, many people, you know, look at. It

1 is very well-established and it is very
2 well-recognized, but it's only capturing,
3 really, about 40 percent of the student success
4 initiatives. The other 20 percent, the key
5 element of 20 percent relates to the reputation
6 of our institution. And I suspect that if you
7 did a regression analysis of ranking against
8 age, you would see an upper sloping line that
9 is -- that is pretty positively correlated. The
10 older you are, the greater the reputation,
11 because you've had many, many, many years to
12 identify yourself. We're only 50. So in the
13 scheme of universities, even in the U.S. that
14 started almost 300 years ago, and if you look at
15 universities in Europe that were, you know,
16 1088, in Bologna, hey, they've had plenty of
17 years to establish great, great reputations.
18 So, we are going to jump-start some of that, and
19 I think we already have. We have reorganized
20 our external relations through strategic
21 communications so we can get the word out there,
22 so that would help in that particular ranking.

23 Thirdly, we need to stay focused as well on
24 our Pell students because I believe more and
25 more students, more and more decision-makers are

1 going to be looking at social mobility as the
2 important factor in ranking and institution. I
3 mean, let's face it, it's easy to take somebody
4 like you, let's say, 4.97 GPA, you know, 26,000
5 on the SAT, right, to be successful. All right,
6 it's a little exaggeration. But, when you can
7 take our neediest students that oftentimes come
8 from humble backgrounds, right, they're the
9 neediest kids, and there's a strong correlation
10 between wealth and the schools and turn out a
11 great graduate, that's really important. So
12 that's where we really shine. So, we just need
13 to stay focused on those things that are
14 important to FIU. We know the SUS performance
15 ranking system, that's very, very important.
16 And, if we keep doing those things, and doing
17 them well, staying focused, the rankings will
18 increase. We've got a great story. We've got
19 great students, great faculty, and we're doing
20 great things. It'll happen.

21 SPEAKER: Thank you and congratulations,
22 sir.

23 DR. JESSELL: Thank you.

24 SPEAKER: Hello, again.

25 You're probably tired of my face by now.

1 Nice to see you again, Dr. Jessell, and I wanted
2 to ask you this question today, particularly as
3 this is the SGA and student leader session. And
4 I wanted to talk to you about an action that SGA
5 took a few months ago. We passed a resolution
6 entitled, "Presidential Requirements In the Eyes
7 of Students Act or PRES Act," and it named all
8 of the qualities, ten different qualities that
9 the student body wants to see in the finalist
10 from the search committee. We have our
11 finalist, and I absolutely agree with my fellow,
12 Alex, that I could not be more happy with their
13 choice of you.

14 So I wanted to ask you if you would commit
15 to exhibiting as many of these attributes as
16 possible. Very quickly. They talk about
17 advocating for international students,
18 continuing to develop athletics, continuing to
19 support our Greek life students, making an
20 effort to become conversational in Spanish,
21 pushing for sustainability initiatives, valuing
22 BBC, and this last one I'm going to read in
23 full: Be a student-focused leader that
24 interacts with students daily, crosses
25 generational barriers to relate to youth on a

1 genuine level and charismatically makes all
2 students feel welcomed and at home on campus,
3 becoming an icon of FIU in the process.

4 So my question for you is: Would you take
5 these suggestions from the student government
6 into account? How would you do so? And more
7 broadly, what kind of relationship would you
8 like to have with the student government and
9 students leaders on this campus?

10 DR. JESSELL: Okay. So, absolutely, I'm
11 going to give myself a 93 score, okay? I'll
12 make an effort on Spanish, okay? So, I'm going
13 to see what kind of credentialing courses that
14 we have. I've always wanted to do that. It's
15 very, very sad when I was in school, it was in
16 middle school, they were doing Spanish language
17 programs, but they weren't taken very seriously
18 because the thinking was nobody's going to be
19 speaking Spanish in a few years, and it wouldn't
20 be a good use of resources. Now we know a lot
21 differently, but, yes, I will try that.

22 I love students. I can go back to my first
23 day at FIU walking through the Graham Center
24 literally, you know, shoulder to shoulder, and I
25 wrote -- I actually called my colleague, my

1 associate VP, who had taken over my job as VP at
2 FAU, and I said, "Dennis this is what I always
3 envisioned for FAU." I wanted to have a
4 university center that was filled with students,
5 and I just couldn't believe the excitement. And
6 I tried every day, I haven't been as successful
7 recently, to be every day, to get over to the
8 Graham Center, walk through and talk to
9 students, talk to the individuals that are at
10 the booths doing their promotions at the lake.

11 You are the lifeblood of FIU, and you keep
12 me young, okay? I'm reliving my life through
13 you. And even this weekend, I'm walking around
14 all the tailgating areas, all the promenades.
15 And that promenade, by the way, was done at
16 Tamiami for these types of initiatives. I even
17 did 1.75 pullups with the Marines at their's,
18 okay? So, I'm really getting into it. The
19 athletics, you know, I'm a big, big supporter of
20 all of the athletic teams, but all of the
21 programs that we have on campus because I think
22 they are just so important to the affinity.
23 When I first started here -- actually, before I
24 started, I was here for the budget discussions
25 when they decided as part of budget reductions

1 to -- to eliminate the marching band, and I
2 remember -- I remember -- yeah, Barry was hired
3 my second year.

4 But I remember going home and talking it
5 over with my wife and her response was, "Are you
6 sure you want to go to a place that's trying to
7 balance the budget by eliminating the marching
8 band?" How much can that cost? And it really
9 didn't cost that much. And it wasn't so much
10 the money or it really wasn't even the band, per
11 se, it was what came out of that marching band.
12 And at FSU, when I was a student there, the
13 first year the football team had a record of
14 zero and 11, the next year it was 1 and 10. And
15 yet people were still in the stadium. Why?
16 Because of the Marching Chiefs' marching band.
17 Right? So that's an important element. So, the
18 more we can do those things is how we're going
19 to get that real affinity and that real
20 one-on-one, that cohesiveness that we need as a
21 university community.

22 So, you have my commitment to work with
23 you. I've always had a very, very good
24 relationship with SGA and the SGA leaders here.
25 I value all the work that you do. You have a

1 very noble task, a very big task in serving our
2 students, and you do a great job. I've never
3 been disappointed with the efforts of our SGA,
4 and I mean it.

5 SPEAKER: Thank you.

6 DR. TRESSELL: The floor is yours.

7 SPEAKER: Good afternoon, sir. My name is
8 Chris, if you didn't know.

9 DR. JESSELL: We've met.

10 SPEAKER: So I have a question. As you
11 could see, the room is not even half full and
12 this is an occurrent thing in many events that
13 our students are not showing up, the affinity is
14 not there and sometimes it saddens me whenever I
15 go to different events and our organizations are
16 struggling to get the numbers up, it has to be
17 something really big. We have to put an
18 incentive out to really get students out. So
19 what would you do to really build that affinity
20 so students could feel like, "Yes, I'm a part of
21 this university, so attending this event will
22 bring value to us"?

23 DR. JESSELL: Well, I will work with SGA
24 because you know the things that are important
25 to students. Now, we did know that we needed to

1 do a much better job for athletics in terms of
2 getting students there, and I think that if
3 you've been to their games, the two home games
4 that we've had more students at those two games
5 than we have had in that area for a long period
6 of time, and we did that strategically. You
7 know with the housing that we did, we moved that
8 building -- we moved the rose house so that we
9 could have a huge promenade in-between old
10 housing and new housing that is very much
11 student centric, and that was very, very
12 deliberate. So, you have to have the right
13 venue so students can get engaged. And then
14 once you have the right venue, then you need to
15 figure out what is the best program that will
16 draw students there. It could be great space,
17 but if we don't do the right things to get
18 students there, it's not going to be successful.
19 So you're going to have to tell me what's really
20 important. You know, for me it might be
21 Guy Lombardo, but you probably don't want to
22 come to a Guy Lombardo concert. You know, the
23 band, not really Guy Lombardo, he won't be
24 showing up.

25 But you know what's important to students

1 and what really gets them excited. We know the
2 athletics will do that, but there are many, many
3 other things. The Panthers had a talent program
4 two weeks ago Sunday. How many students did we
5 have there? 4,000. It was packed. I haven't
6 seen that arena so packed for a long period of
7 time. And, again, even I was acting like a
8 student because there's nothing better. So
9 let's figure out what those programs are. I
10 don't have the answers, but I will tell you, we
11 can be part of the solution. We have a great
12 team. We will work with you and we'll work with
13 students. What's important to them and what's
14 important to them is what we should be doing.
15 What's important to you is what we should be
16 doing.

17 DR. TRESSELL: I think we have a couple
18 more questions from our audience.

19 SPEAKER: Hello, Mr. President. My name is
20 Franchesca Casanova. You had talked about your
21 ideas on affinity, and I wholeheartedly agree as
22 a member of Greek life and student government.
23 So can you talk about how you plan to show our
24 community just how exceptional FIU truly is.

25 DR. JESSELL: So our student community,

1 outside community?

2 SPEAKER: A little bit of both.

3 DR. JESSELL: Okay.

4 So we can do a lot to show internally and
5 externally how great we are by just expanding
6 the things that we are doing, okay? We know for
7 Greek life as an example, there were many events
8 that we do on campus to support each other and
9 support the FIU community. But our Greek
10 organizations, and this is all of our
11 organizations that do things on campus, we can
12 do things off campus. We can do major social
13 service projects in the community that will get
14 our name out there even more. And when the
15 community sees students out there at parades, at
16 events, at social service projects, doing beach
17 cleanups, helping in the high schools, that
18 really makes a difference because it really
19 makes an impact on the community.

20 So, those are the types of things that we
21 can be doing. And when we have our marching
22 band showing up at all different types of
23 events, not just an athletic event, but even a
24 major ceremony, like convocation when they are
25 there, that just highlights the great things

1 that they do as part of the university's
2 community.

3 And just walk through the Graham Center
4 today or look on the lawn of the Graham Center
5 today and we should be doing exactly the same
6 thing at BBC. Let's get some focus on major
7 activities to get that excitement up. There is
8 something for everyone at FIU and there is
9 something at FIU for everyone in the community.
10 It's just getting it out there. And we keep
11 doing it, the word is going to get out there.

12 SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Dr. Jessell. My
13 name is Karina Hernandez, and I'm on my third
14 year of studying environmental engineering here
15 at FIU. I'm also on SGA, and I represent the
16 college of engineering and computing, and I am
17 also serving as the chair of sustainability and
18 innovation. So with that being said, I have two
19 questions for you. I'll allow you to answer the
20 first one first. I would like to hear how much
21 of a priority sustainability and resilience is
22 to you as I believe that FIU has the potential
23 to grow to the top leader of this topic
24 throughout the country.

25 DR. JESSELL: Okay. So I -- number one,

1 let me start off by saying part of my comments
2 were the more students are engaged, the more
3 successful they're going to be. So I'm happy to
4 hear all the things that you're involved with.
5 So you're going to be successful. I also talked
6 specifically about your field, the environment
7 and environmental resilience. That includes so
8 many different aspects of our teaching and
9 research, and it includes something in every
10 discipline that we have at FIU. We know sea
11 level rise is a problem for this world and we
12 are going to need innovation in addressing how
13 we adapt to the rising seas, and that's going to
14 involve construction, it's going to involve
15 design, it's even going to involve legal in
16 terms of property rights, and it's going to
17 involve business and finance in terms of how it
18 impacts our economies and the cost versus
19 benefits of doing many of these mitigation
20 strategies.

21 We can see it right now over in Southwest
22 Florida, you know, in the islands of Sanibel and
23 Captiva. The question keeps coming up: How
24 much of that will be rebuilt? What do we have
25 to do to rebuild in a safe way?

1 So when the next storm like Ian comes
2 through or a stronger storm as we're starting to
3 see they're growing in intensity, that those
4 areas can survive. Or, we might have the
5 question: We need to do the net present value
6 of this. We may find that the cost of doing a
7 restoration or a mitigation program is so
8 excessive that it just does not make sense. Why
9 would we invest \$50 billion to develop an
10 enterprise and facilities and infrastructure
11 that might have a net present value of
12 5 million? That's an extreme, but we're going
13 to have to make some of those tough decisions as
14 we look forward. So, it might be better off to
15 relocate individuals to different areas and put
16 in new infrastructure in safer areas because
17 it's going to be a more cost effective and
18 longer term solution to the challenges that we
19 have.

20 So, the work that you're doing, you know,
21 is amazing, but you're going to touch on every
22 discipline at this university, and I think, as I
23 said, I think that multidisciplinary approach on
24 something as important as environment is going
25 to give us all kinds of opportunities for both

1 research and teaching excellence.

2 SPEAKER: Right. And one of my ideas,
3 actually, being that we have this relevancy of
4 Hurricane Ian disrupting Fort Myers and those
5 areas, we are not so far off. That could be us,
6 and it could have been us. It was in that
7 direction.

8 DR. JESSELL: It could very easily have
9 been us or Tampa, absolutely.

10 THE WITNESS: Right. So with that being
11 said, I think it's really important that we
12 start doing events on a mass basis being, like
13 you said, this is a multidisciplinary issue and
14 having maybe forums or something of the like so
15 people are actually interacting with this issue
16 and educating people along with that topic.

17 Also, with that being said, my second
18 question was: As you know, the STEM careers are
19 on the rise for specific reasons like this and a
20 big issue is funding for research and materials
21 for this research. I think that this is a topic
22 that we've needed to work on, on a university
23 basis and on a nation basis. What are you
24 willing to do for that?

25 DR. JESSELL: So, you know, I had mentioned

1 that quality research requires investments. It
2 doesn't happen for free. We have been very
3 successful as a university in increasing our
4 opportunities for external research funding.
5 We're almost, you know, 250 million right now,
6 and we should be about 350 million by 2025, the
7 way that we are going. And by having those
8 interdisciplinary approaches gives us a greater
9 opportunity to get more funding so you're not
10 limited to just one or two federal agencies or
11 state agencies for funding, you might be
12 eligible for dozens or hundreds of opportunities
13 for funding. Just the business side of this
14 might get us a funding opportunity from commerce
15 that we might not have had before.

16 When you look at the social aspects, okay,
17 of health funding could really come in, in
18 addressing some of these issues. Because it's
19 not going to be an easy process. There are
20 going to be a lot of mental health challenges
21 when we go through these things. I mean, those
22 people over in Fort Myers Beach, I mean, they're
23 going to be struggling emotionally. And
24 understanding the impact of these extreme events
25 on society and people could also open up funding

1 opportunities for us. So, I think the real key
2 is to really expand the interdisciplinary
3 approaches, stay very, very focused on what we
4 can be a world leader in, and I think
5 environment and also health are the two areas
6 that give us those opportunities. Otherwise, I
7 mean, we're always putting, you know, dollars
8 into research infrastructure, research
9 enterprise every year when we do our carry
10 forward, which are remaining fund balances, we
11 make investments in startup funds for faculty,
12 we make investments in labs. We're building the
13 new engineering building. Actually, it's going
14 to be two buildings. The first when they -- I
15 think they started construction. I saw the
16 trailers out there and I saw the backhoes out
17 there already. I think they actually started
18 digging, but I haven't been on the site yet, but
19 I will get over there this week and then we'll
20 be starting the next one in two years once that
21 is done. So we are making those physical
22 investments as well into the program.

23 SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Jessell.

24 DR. JESSELL: You're welcome.

25 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you so much for your

1 question.

2 Valentina, you will be our last question
3 for this particular session, but I do want to
4 invite all of you to attend our next session,
5 which starts at 2:30. We just need an
6 opportunity to wrap this one up really quickly.
7 All of our transcripts as well as the videos for
8 all of our sessions are going to be made
9 available to you all through the presidential
10 search website, so please feel free to log on
11 later on and you can view it. They will be made
12 available towards the end of the week, if not
13 early next week.

14 Valentina.

15 SPEAKER: Thank you.

16 Hello, Mr. President.

17 DR. JESSELL: Hello, Valentina.

18 SPEAKER: Nice to see you.

19 My question is pretty simple. I just
20 wanted to know if you could share with us what
21 it means to you to be the next nominee for
22 president of FIU.

23 DR. JESSELL: Well, I have to tell you, I
24 am so excited. I was truthful when I said the
25 rewards over the last nine months have been

1 amazing. I mean, it's a big job. Even working
2 with the university president here and at FAU as
3 a direct report for a good number of years, you
4 got to see it. I didn't really do it. So
5 there's a big difference between seeing and
6 doing, and it has been absolutely, you know,
7 amazing. I will work -- maybe we can use this
8 like the closing comments, but I will work
9 tirelessly for our students, our faculty and our
10 staff. I truly am a Panther, okay? I just
11 bleed blue and gold. I love this place. It is
12 absolutely amazing. I love our mission. I love
13 what we do to enrich our students' lives and
14 what we do to enrich this community. So, I'm
15 going to be a hard worker. Alex will know
16 because he was president of SGA, and he was
17 often at our building late at night, and, you
18 know, there are just a couple of people on the
19 floor 8, 8:30, 9 o'clock, and I was generally
20 one of those, Michelle was one, right? So you
21 know how committed we are. You don't do this as
22 an administrator, you don't do this as a student
23 leader if you don't love this place, if you are
24 not committed to achieving the goals of FIU.

25 And, so, I want to be a partner with you.

1 That was one of the first questions: How am I
2 going to partner? I'm going partner with the
3 students because, I mean, you have a lot of the
4 answers. You know what's important, you know,
5 to students, so I will be right there with you.
6 I will work as hard as I can to move FIU
7 forward.

8 (APPLAUSE)

9 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you, Dr. Jessell.

10 And thank you all for attending our
11 session. We really appreciate that all of you
12 attended in person as well as through Zoom and
13 our WebCast.

14 (Students Session concluded at 2:06 p.m.)
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1 (Community Session)

2 (Session commenced at 2:32 p.m.)

3 DR. TRESSELL: Good afternoon, everyone.

4 My name is Dr. Sofia Trelles, and it is my
5 pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the members
6 of our FIU community who are joining us today
7 for the opportunity to meet and hear from the
8 presidential candidate finalist, Dr. Kenneth A.
9 Jessell. R. William Funk & Associates have been
10 selected to assist the university in its search
11 for FIU's sixth president.

12 The firm has conducted more than 430
13 searches for colleges and university presidents
14 and chancellors. Mr. Funk and his team are
15 joining us today through Zoom and have the
16 ability to answer any of your question in
17 regarding to the search process.

18 All of yesterday's and today's sessions
19 have been available to our community to attend
20 in person through Zoom and through WebCast. Our
21 session today will be approximately an hour
22 long. And after the candidate's presentation,
23 we will open it for a Q & A session.

24 Dr. Kenneth is interim president of Florida
25 International University, a position he has held

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

18 Dr. Jessell is also a professor of finance
19 in the college of business administration here
20 at FIU. It is my pleasure to introduce you to
21 Dr. Jessell.

22 (APPLAUSE)

23 DR. JESSELL: Thank you, Sofia, for your
24 kind introduction, and thank you for being here
25 in person as well as virtually. It is so much

1 of an honor for me to be here with you today to
2 talk about my candidacy for the sixth president
3 of FIU.

4 As most of you know, I was not intending to
5 be a candidate for the permanent position of
6 president; however, sometimes our plans change
7 and something that was never dreamed of presents
8 itself as a dream come true. And over the past
9 nine months as interim president, I have learned
10 to love FIU more than I could have ever
11 imagined, and I have found both the
12 opportunities and the challenges of the position
13 to be more rewarding than any of my other
14 positions over a 39-year career.

15 I have been rewarded professionally more
16 than I thought possible. And while I have been
17 at FIU for 13 years, for some of you this may be
18 the first time that we have interacted in person
19 or virtually, so let me tell you a few things
20 about Ken Jessell. I was born and reared in
21 Fort Lauderdale, Florida. And except for the
22 time that I spent at Florida State University as
23 an undergraduate student earning a bachelor of
24 science degree in political science and a
25 graduate student earning an MBA in finance and a

1 Ph.D. in finance, I have lived in South Florida.
2 For many years, almost all of those years it was
3 in Broward County. And since 2009, I have been
4 a proud resident of Miami-Dade County.

5 I am a product of Broward County's K-12
6 public schools, and I am a proud graduate of
7 Fort Lauderdale High School, the flying elves.
8 I'm a first-generation student, and I have a
9 wonderful support structure with my family. I
10 have my wife, Lori, and in December we will be
11 married for 46 years. I have a son, John; a
12 daughter, Amanda; a son-in-law, Jeffrey; and an
13 amazing 18-month-old grandson, James. There is
14 nothing better than being a grandparent. And my
15 mom is still here. She will be 93 in about
16 three weeks.

17 So even though I haven't been a global
18 traveler, as you can tell, I've really never
19 spent much time out of the State of Florida or
20 outside of South Florida, I have had a very
21 exciting and enriched career for 26 years at FAU
22 and now 13 years here at FIU. So, 39 years in
23 higher education and 39 years doing the things
24 that matter most, the things that are most
25 important to me. Being in a university

1 environment where we do great things in
2 advancing knowledge and training and preparing
3 our students for the opportunities they will be
4 facing in the years ahead.

5 I would now like to spend a little time
6 discussing the priorities I will be focusing on
7 if given the opportunity to serve FIU as its
8 sixth president. The first is student success.
9 And this is an amazing part of the job and one
10 of the most rewarding parts of the job. As a
11 national urban public research university, FIU
12 will continue to invest in our students and
13 their academic and career successes. Our FIU
14 faculty must be not only excellent scholars, but
15 also proficient in evidence-based teaching
16 practices. We embrace our faculty who bring
17 path-breaking research into the classroom as
18 part of evidence-based and inclusive teaching.
19 Our culture of teaching excellence facilitates
20 learning so our students are critical thinkers
21 who can take what they have learned in the
22 classroom or in the lab and apply their
23 knowledge to solving problems.

24 We must continue to innovate our curriculum
25 so it is aligned with career needs and to adopt

1 different designs and methods for learning that
2 are more meaningful for today's 21st century
3 learners, including experiential learning,
4 competency-based learning and
5 micro-credentialing. Our system of shared
6 governance and collegial discussions and
7 cooperation are more important now than ever
8 before in keeping our curriculum relevant.

9 FIU continues to be a leader in innovation.
10 Our global learning for global citizenship, QEP
11 that we adopted in 2010 is successful because we
12 know the value proposition of our students
13 understanding both culture and cultures within a
14 global framework. In our 2021 QEP, critical
15 skills for the 21st century, focuses on student
16 attainment of skills related to artificial
17 intelligence data and emotional intelligence
18 through micro-credentialing courses. However,
19 we are already seeing the expansion of A.I. and
20 E.I. throughout our curriculum. I cannot think
21 of a single program that does not have
22 significant A.I. and E.I. applications and
23 wording opportunities and these skills translate
24 into jobs, jobs that are so important for our
25 knowledge-based economy of today.

1 And we will continue at FIU to be
2 accountable to our stakeholders and measure our
3 progress and performance in educating our
4 students, including retention and graduation
5 rates, employment and strategic degrees, as well
6 as other key metrics related to research and
7 access.

8 FIU's keen focus on performance has been
9 the primary reason we have excelled in both
10 state and national rankings as well as why we
11 have received significant incremental state
12 performance funding and philanthropic funding,
13 such as the \$40 million MacKenzie Scott gift
14 that we received last year.

15 And I am committed to our goal, our
16 university goal of achieving Top 50 university
17 in U.S. News & World Report rankings in just
18 three years. We are in the fastest rising
19 university in U.S. News public rankings in the
20 last ten years. We are up 62 spots and are now
21 ranked Number 72 of all public universities in
22 the country. And I know it gets harder and
23 harder to increase in the rankings as we rise in
24 the rankings, but I know that we can get there
25 with the right focus and the right investments.

1 Indeed, we have already achieved many
2 Top 50 rankings in the past few years, including
3 those focusing on economic mobility, return on
4 investment, innovation, and research expenditure
5 growth. FIU will remain committed to
6 maintaining our focus on access by providing
7 educational opportunities to our Pell-eligible
8 students. Our students with the greatest
9 financial need, almost 50 percent of our
10 students and ensuring that they graduate as
11 quickly as our non-Pell students.

12 We all know an FIU education is not
13 restricted to students with high financial
14 resources and our Number 4 ranking in social
15 mobility by U.S. News and Number 32 ranking in
16 Washington Monthly reflect our commitment to
17 improving the lives of our students, their
18 families and our community. We are committed to
19 improving these impressive rankings even further
20 in the years ahead.

21 Second, I would like to talk about research
22 excellence. FIU is an R1 public research
23 university and is in the Top 3 percent in
24 research production of all universities and
25 colleges in the country. And I remain committed

1 to the research enterprise of our university and
2 the planned investment of resources to expand
3 research opportunities. Research is critical to
4 expanding knowledge, developing innovative
5 solutions to problems and gaining a better
6 understanding of the complex world we live in.
7 Our research expenditures have surpassed
8 \$245 million, and we are in the Top 10 of
9 research expenditure growth of R1 public
10 universities over the past ten years, and we are
11 poised to hit the \$400 million mark by 2025.
12 And we already exceed the research expenditures
13 required for preeminent research university
14 designation by the Florida Board of Governors.

15 Quality research requires investments, and
16 I believe the greatest opportunities for
17 expanded external research funding at FIU are in
18 the areas where we have already achieved a
19 competitive advantage through established
20 infrastructure and nationally and
21 internationally recognized and acclaimed
22 academic and research programs such as those in
23 environment and health.

24 This is especially true when we focus on
25 interdisciplinary research that involves most,

1 if not all, academic programs at FIU. For
2 example, environmental resilience covers
3 everything from sea level rise, ecosystems,
4 saltwater intrusion and water quality, extreme
5 weather events and building mitigation to name
6 just a few.

7 Environmental research will include the
8 sciences, architectural design, business,
9 education, sociology, health, forensic science,
10 engineering, construction, global affairs,
11 technology and computer science, law and health,
12 as well as main other disciplines, and I believe
13 that this focus on interdisciplinary research
14 will enable us to maximize the opportunities for
15 grant awards and research that will solve global
16 problems.

17 We know, too, that industry partnerships
18 are critical to both basic and applied research.
19 We will need industry at the table to solve the
20 challenging problems we, as a community, nation,
21 and world are facing.

22 The third is sustainable resources. FIU
23 must have sustainable and sufficient human,
24 physical and financial resources to fulfill our
25 mission of outstanding teaching, research

1 excellence and community engagement. The
2 recruitment and retention of our best faculty
3 and staff are my highest priorities. I
4 understand the difficulties of current market
5 conditions, both economically and human
6 capital-wise. It is hard to find a talent that
7 we need, and we are losing great talent day in
8 and day out.

9 Our team proposed and the FIU Board of
10 Trustees approved last month a \$60.7 million
11 legislative budget request for Top 50
12 operational support and this request was also
13 submitted to the Florida Board of Governors.
14 Included in this request is almost \$26 million
15 to retain our outstanding faculty and staff who
16 have demonstrated sustained exceptional
17 performance and commitment of quality teaching,
18 student success and research.

19 Also included is \$15 million in scholarship
20 support in students, 5 million for hiring
21 additional faculty in areas of strategic
22 importance and in areas where we know we need to
23 decrease the student-to-faculty ratios. And
24 there's \$12.5 million for investments in
25 technology to improve operational efficiencies

1 and cover recurring costs. I will advocate to
2 the Board of Governors and legislative
3 leadership for these additional funds to support
4 FIU, and I have already done so.

5 Additionally, I will advocate for
6 additional funding to achieve a level of funding
7 for FIU that is fair and equitable compared to
8 the funding received by our sister institutions
9 in Florida. And you have my commitment that I
10 will stay focused on FIU's strategic priorities
11 and not take on new initiatives that are not
12 strategic and that oftentimes dilute the scarce
13 resources we already have. I will be asking the
14 question, "What is the ROI on this project?"
15 every time. This question, by the way, is in my
16 DNA. I will also work tirelessly on expanding
17 our sources of revenues, particularly
18 philanthropy, net auxilliary revenues and
19 external grant funding and find ways to provide
20 high-quality administrative support services and
21 achieve cost savings through shared services,
22 including human resources, information
23 technology, business and financial services and
24 research administration.

25 Additionally, I have already asked the FIU

1 foundation to prioritize student scholarship
2 funding in their annual development goals and to
3 focus on gifts that meet strategic priorities of
4 FIU and advance our mission as part of their
5 annual plan.

6 Fourth is university affinity and
7 engagement. Declining college enrollments
8 nationwide have required increased efforts on
9 retaining and graduating every student we admit.
10 We understand better than ever before that we
11 must do a better job of ensuring that our
12 students are successful in college and that the
13 cost of losing a student is significantly more
14 than the cost of recruiting one.

15 Every student we bring in, we want to
16 graduate. Students who are engaged with their
17 university through student clubs and
18 organizations, Model UN, Student Ambassadors,
19 Greek Life, Athletics, Marching Band, Panther
20 Camp, and the dozens of other student groups we
21 have at FIU typically achieve greater gains in
22 learning, are more staffed with their college
23 experiences, experience stronger mental health
24 and well-being, feel more prepared for life
25 after college and are more likely to promote

1 their institution and to give back financially
2 to their alma mater at higher rates once they
3 graduate. And this engagement translates to
4 higher retention and higher graduation rates for
5 our students, which improve our metrics and our
6 rankings.

7 You may have observed firsthand this
8 affinity over homecoming week, particularly on
9 Saturday where it was standing room only on our
10 housing promenades and plazas. It was shoulder
11 to shoulder, and the excitement was everywhere,
12 and these benefits are multiplied when we create
13 and engage faculty and staff along with our
14 students where mentoring, collegial discussions
15 and 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 Biscayne Bay.

20 This affinity also translates to stronger
21 alumni engagement. The experiences of our
22 students while they are here will define how
23 active and supportive our alumni are after they
24 graduate. Alumni give back in many ways. They
25 provide mentoring and internship opportunities

1 for our current students and help improve job
2 placement rates once our students graduate and
3 they help with admissions by serving as
4 ambassadors and telling FIU's promising story of
5 hope and achievement. It is a source of immense
6 pride for Panthers who hire other Panthers.
7 They know the quality of the education our
8 students receive, they know the value
9 proposition of an FIU degree, and I know you do
10 as well.

11 Engaged alumni also support FIU
12 financially. Our alums are among the top donors
13 to FIU, and we have almost 300,000 alumni and
14 most of them are in South Florida, right in our
15 own backyard. Imagine the impact of their
16 advocacy on FIU, how their advocacy can promote
17 our outstanding teaching and our outstanding
18 research and our outstanding community support.

19 And, finally, we need to stay engaged with
20 our community. Our community and FIU are better
21 off when our students, faculty and staff
22 collaborate with our larger community. We can
23 enrich the lives of our residents through health
24 and civic partnerships, service and research,
25 and we know the community will reciprocate by

1 supporting FIU.

2 Indeed, many of the largest gifts to FIU
3 are from members of our community who were not
4 FIU alumni, benefactors who believe in FIU and
5 its mission and believe in our students. Let's
6 face it. We are a Panther family and a family
7 community, and we work better together.

8 We will have a greater affinity for FIU as
9 an engaged community of students, faculty and
10 staff, just like our alma mater says: "Every
11 scholar side by side."

12 So where does this take us? We can be
13 proud, extremely proud of what FIU has
14 accomplished over the past 50 years, starting on
15 an abandoned airfield, opening to the largest
16 enrollment of any educational institution at
17 that time, 5,667 upper division and master
18 students. And now, today, we are educating over
19 56,000 students, achieving \$246 million in
20 research expenditures, being the number one
21 producer of degrees to Hispanics, being a Top 10
22 producer of baccalaureate degrees to
23 African-Americans and achieving national
24 rankings typically reserved for much older
25 universities.

1 FIU has always had lofty goals and high
2 expectations and these have always been
3 exceeded, and we will continue with this
4 tradition during our next 50 years. Our
5 successes speak for themselves, and they are
6 speaking in a loud voice. And yet the best is
7 yet to come. We will continue to focus on
8 student success and research excellence. We
9 will continue to produce great leaders,
10 teachers, researchers, scientists, healthcare
11 providers, lawyers, innovators, and
12 entrepreneurs, and I believe together as a
13 Panther family, we have the opportunity to be
14 the world leader in solving the biggest problems
15 facing society today: The health of its people
16 and the environment we live in.

17 Thank you, again, for being here. Thank
18 you for allowing me the opportunity to be with
19 you and to present my priorities.

20 And now I think, Sofia, we go into the
21 Q & A session. Thank you.

22 (APPLAUSE)

23 DR. TRESSELL: So thank you all for joining
24 us in person through our WebCast, as well as
25 through Zoom. I am happy to announce that we

1 have had over a thousand members of our FIU
2 community join us over all of our sessions,
3 today as well as yesterday. And we are really
4 excited to have this Q & A session so that you
5 can ask your questions of our finalist. I would
6 also like to share that we do have our search
7 firm available with us today through Zoom in
8 case anyone has questions regarding our search
9 process specifically. Mr. Bill Funk will be
10 able to answer those questions directly.

11 Please feel free to approach the microphone
12 if you have any questions. We have also
13 collected some questions as we prepared for
14 today's session, and I will be reading those.
15 And anybody who is joining us through Zoom, you
16 can ask questions through that platform, and I
17 will be reading them here.

18 SPEAKER: Hi, Dr. Jessell. My name is
19 Dylan. I am the president of ROSC on campus,
20 and I'm also --

21 DR. JESSELL: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear
22 you.

23 SPEAKER: I'm the president of ROSC which
24 is the Registered Student Organizations, and I'm
25 also a senator for CASE.

1 So I am not sure if you know, but we've
2 been working on a time capsule that we would
3 like to bury at the end of the year. So my
4 question is: If you had the opportunity to put
5 something in it to mark FIU history, what do you
6 think you would do?

7 DR. JESSELL: Boy, that's a -- that is a
8 tough question because there are, like, a
9 thousand things that I would put in there, but
10 if I had to select only one, I would take the
11 recent one-pager, front and back, that talks
12 about FIU's successes.

13 I addressed several, but not all in my
14 conversation today, and I think having that in
15 the time capsule so people could see what we
16 achieved in our first 50 years and that really
17 represents a culmination of 50 years of effort.
18 That didn't happen overnight, 50 years of
19 effort. And then when we get to 100 hundred,
20 when I and a few others here will be opening it
21 and comparing it to the standards and
22 accomplishments of the current day, I think that
23 would be amazing.

24 So, if that -- if I could only select one
25 thing, that would be it.

1 SPEAKER: Awesome. Thank you so much.

2 DR. JESSELL: And if you need something to
3 put in, I can get you that.

4 SPEAKER: This question is for our FIU
5 Presidential Search Committee who recently
6 approved a range of compensation for FIU's next
7 president. The last university president had an
8 approximate base salary of \$502,000. How are we
9 to justify the proposal of a base salary
10 increase range between 600- to 700,000 for FIU's
11 next president when many full-time employees are
12 still making less than \$60,000 and have not had
13 an increase of over \$10,000 in many years. And
14 unlike leadership, most likely will not be
15 getting additional compensation in the form of a
16 potential bonus or other benefits?

17 DR. TRESSELL: We do have a member of the
18 committee here with us, Trustee Tovar.

19 TRUSTEE TOVAR: Listen, I think that's a --
20 it's an interesting question, but it's two
21 different things. When we set out to look at
22 the compensation for Dr. Jessell, what we wanted
23 to do is take into consideration what is fair
24 and what is just. We looked at many
25 universities throughout the country, and we

1 looked at the state system. And really if you
2 look at that range that we're in, it's not one
3 of the top paid university presidents. I
4 believe it's Number 5. And so you look at the
5 complexity of the job. You say there's 57-,
6 58,000 students, and I say it's like running a
7 mini city because not only do you have the
8 students, you have the faculty, staff, you have
9 the multiple campuses, you've constantly got
10 ongoing projects going on.

11 So, we want to be fair, we want to
12 compensate Dr. Jessell for what the type of job
13 that it is. And, frankly, if it was in private
14 industry, I would tell you he'd probably be
15 getting paid ten times more. Now, when you look
16 at the faculty and staff compensation, we're
17 cognizant of that, too. And, so, unfortunately,
18 we're in a system where I wish I could wave a
19 magic wand and say, "There's more funds." We do
20 have a budget, and we constantly sit here and
21 try to figure out how we divide the pie. We're
22 constantly asking in different places the
23 legislature as far as fundraising and everything
24 else and then we talk about the lack of
25 increase, but I think there's a little bit of

1 loss there because there has been increases as
2 we've had carry forward funds. We've used a lot
3 of those carry forward funds to either give
4 people raises where we're trying to retain and
5 we're trying to, again, compensate people
6 fairly. There's been other instances where
7 we've taken these carry forward funds and said,
8 "We can't make a commitment long-term," but then
9 we do bonus structures to make sure that people
10 do have as fair a wage as we could make it.

11 So, again, it's a balancing act, and I
12 think regardless of whether we paid Dr. Jessell
13 a little bit less, it wouldn't be like we could
14 resolve the entire issue or even a good portion
15 of it. So, it's not -- it's not one or the
16 other, it's we're addressing the compensation
17 issue for the president coming in. And, again,
18 I think it's fair and it's just, but it's a
19 compensation that also takes into consideration,
20 as I said previously, that part of the job of
21 the president is a willingness and a desire to
22 serve.

23 So, did I answer the question, Sofia?

24 DR. TRESSELL: You did.

25 TRUSTEE TOVAR: Okay. Thank you very much,

1 thank you.

2 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you so much for
3 providing a little bit of insight as to that
4 process.

5 (APPLAUSE)

6 DR. JESSELL: Would you like me to --

7 DR. TRESSELL: Yes, please.

8 DR. JESSELL: Because there are really two
9 parts of the question. I could not answer the
10 first, but let me talk about the second part of
11 that is, you know, what we're trying to do.

12 As I mentioned, the retention of our
13 outstanding faculty and staff is a very, very
14 top priority, not only for me but for the
15 administration and the Board of Trustees. In
16 addition to the \$60 million advocacy, which
17 included 20-something million dollars for salary
18 components for our faculty and stuff, we are
19 also going to be advocating the legislature to
20 be included in the salary increases that were
21 awarded to all state employees this past year.
22 Many of you may know that all state employees
23 received a 5.28 percent salary increase, but all
24 university employees were excluded from that,
25 that award. And we were all, you know, saddened

1 when we read the allocation document to find
2 that university employees were not included.
3 So, that's going to be another one of our
4 advocacy positions.

5 Secondly, we're looking at opportunities to
6 restructure a little bit and redistribute some
7 of those savings we have in restructuring back
8 to our employees. Our thinking is we may have
9 one or two less employees, but we can get
10 greater productivity if we are fairly
11 compensating those other employees. So, they're
12 willing to work a little bit more in return for
13 a just level of compensation. And we've done,
14 you know, several of those already. We did some
15 even before the budget construction this year,
16 and that's why we were able to get by with the
17 balance budget doing only 1.5 percent reduction
18 as compared to 2.5 percent, you know, percent
19 reduction. So, that makes it a lot better for
20 us as an institution.

21 But we do get it. We are working very,
22 very hard. We were able to do a little bit for
23 the faculty, you know, this year, in terms of a
24 recurring adjustment, not nearly sufficient, not
25 what anybody wanted for our lowest paid

1 employees. We did a \$3,000 bonus. That
2 translates to about a 10 percent salary
3 adjustment for the one year. And we have to
4 find ways of making sure that amount, you know,
5 continues on a recurring basis. So, we do
6 recognize the issues, we are committed to
7 retaining our faculty and staff by rewarding our
8 faculty and staff.

9 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you.

10 We do have a question from a member of our
11 audience.

12 SPEAKER: Yes, hi, good afternoon. Trustee
13 Tovar, I wish I would have known I had to dress
14 up today, I would have presented myself a little
15 bit better, but I know that we are in good hands
16 with you at the helm of this Presidential Search
17 Committee. I know you're Cuban born and raised
18 in Puerto Rico. My wife happens to be
19 Cuban-Puerto Rican, so I understand that we are
20 in good hands, boy. Let me tell you. A.J.
21 Meyer, Class of '09 and '11, two-time offender
22 of FIU as well as former student body president
23 and had the opportunity to be on the Board of
24 Trustees when we selected our fifth president
25 and now have the honor of being a friend to

1 hopefully our future sixth president. So I come
2 as a member of the FIU community that bleeds
3 blue and gold as a former student body president
4 in full support for your not only nomination but
5 selection as our sixth president of Florida
6 International University.

7 My question really resides around your
8 creativity. When I was involved in the Board of
9 Governors and you were at Florida Atlantic
10 University, you brought forth some of the most
11 creative P3 opportunities that the state had
12 ever seen in a state university system at the
13 time. And as we talk about revenue generation
14 and other challenges that we have and
15 understanding the limitations with respect to
16 the Board of Governor's rules and regulations,
17 are there initiatives that you're exploring to
18 bring back that creativity and that creative
19 side of yourself to really explore unique areas
20 to not just grow the university, but to create
21 additional revenue for the university? Thank
22 you.

23 DR. JESSELL: Absolutely. We have to look
24 at, you know, the private sector. We have to
25 look at industry and having public private

1 partnerships really can make a big difference in
2 achieving some of our goals. We did do the
3 public-private partnership housing at BBC, we
4 did the Royal Caribbean performance production
5 and rehearsal facility at BBC. We entered into
6 an arrangement with a private developer in a P3
7 project for I-75. I know we have a lot more
8 work to do there, and that is something that is
9 on our radar screen. And we are going to be
10 looking at even additional opportunities. You
11 know we have the hotel conference center and
12 alumni center. Sadly, because of Covid and some
13 of the market conditions of today with higher
14 materials and labor costs as well as higher
15 financing rates, it's been a little bit of a
16 challenge to get that project moving, but we are
17 still optimistic that that will happen and then
18 that will give us the opportunity to do even
19 more activities that will contribute to what is
20 very important to me, the fourth thing that I
21 described, and that is engagement with the
22 university, the affinity with the university.
23 We can do a lot more with conferences right here
24 on campus. We can support families as they're
25 coming for commencements and graduation

1 ceremonies and convocation ceremonies, athletic
2 events and the like. We are looking at that.
3 We might have another one in terms of the
4 aquatic center. We just got in the last two
5 weeks the consultant's report because we think
6 that might be an opportunity to do something
7 grand, not only for FIU but for the community by
8 having a world-class aquatic center right here
9 on campus, an aquatic center that will serve not
10 only our competitive athletes in the swimming
11 program but our students at FIU as well as
12 members of the community, and that could help
13 them develop an affinity toward FIU. I know
14 that your two children are already proud
15 Panthers, and it's because you're bringing them
16 to football games and many other events, and
17 that's how that cycle goes. And those types of
18 opportunities we absolutely need to continue
19 looking at.

20 Many of the things that we did, you know,
21 after we did them, the regulations changed, made
22 it a little bit harder even for the ones that we
23 did, which I thought were very, very sound
24 projects, it took a little bit of time to get it
25 through the Board of Governors, but at the end

1 of the day we did. I think we just have to have
2 a quality program, one that makes sense
3 financially and programmatically and one that
4 will really help elevate the university.

5 SPEAKER: Dr. Jessell, first of all, thank
6 you for all that you have done and continue to
7 do and will do for our FIU. My question is in
8 relation to the FIU foundation. As you are
9 aware, FIU supports the foundation each year
10 with certain operating expenses. This support
11 is key to the success of the foundation in its
12 ability to help move FIU forward with
13 scholarships, professorships, research and
14 capital projects. How will you, as president,
15 continue to support FIU's foundation efforts and
16 help cover certain operating expenses to ensure
17 continued success?

18 DR. JESSELL: Our foundation has been
19 amazing for the university. In fact, it was
20 even here before the university was here. They
21 did a lot of the initial fundraising. It is
22 definitely a value provision, but I think every
23 activity, every program, every business that we
24 have at the university has to be evaluated on a
25 regular basis, so this is how I approach even

1 the foundation. So, yes, we do provide funding
2 for foundation and development activities. And
3 the reality is we would need to be providing
4 that level of -- of that funding even if we
5 didn't have a foundation. We don't want to
6 ignore, which I talked about earlier, the major
7 impact that our alumni have. So, even without a
8 foundation, we would have to spend money just to
9 cultivate those relationships with alumni.

10 The important thing is that as we look at
11 the investments, that we also look at what is
12 the value proposition, what is coming back in,
13 in a positive net present value; and what would
14 be appropriate for the investments that we are
15 making? There are many, many good benchmarks
16 out there. So if we spend a dollar, can we
17 bring in on a net present value basis two
18 dollars or three dollars or four dollars or five
19 dollars? What is the best practice? What do we
20 see out there in terms of comparable foundations
21 with comparable types of institutions and what
22 they're bringing in? So, I am very committed to
23 working with the foundation to make sure that we
24 have the right value proposition in place.

25 I do want us to be more focused, I think

1 that it will help us in raising more dollars as
2 well as reduce our operating expenses. As I've
3 said in the presentation, I've already
4 challenged the foundation in terms of
5 scholarship funding. Scholarship is cash
6 funding that our students need, and the more
7 students we can graduate, the more they can be
8 giving back to the university. They recognize
9 the value proposition, and I know they are
10 committed to FIU and they want to continue with
11 that tradition.

12 And, secondly, I want to be laser-focused
13 on the things that we're going after. And even
14 with -- even within the university, I mean, time
15 and time again, and these are the questions that
16 our Board of Trustees is at, yeah, it's nice to
17 bring in, you know, 5 million, but you're also
18 going to have \$5 million in expenditures. So,
19 it really at a net basis doesn't help us move up
20 the bar, if it's not strategic. If it is
21 strategic, it makes a lot of sense. If this is
22 something that we really want to do, it is
23 really strategic for the university, we
24 absolutely should be doing it. But if it really
25 doesn't help us in the rankings, if it really

1 isn't strategic, why take the time and effort to
2 spend \$5 million when you're getting \$5 million
3 back? Because that is taking away to the things
4 that are very, very important.

5 I will say that our foundation volunteers
6 are second to none. I am honored and privileged
7 to work with them. I am honored and privileged
8 to work with some of the best alumni people that
9 we have as part of that process, and I will
10 continue to work very, very closely with the
11 alumni and development teams at the university.

12 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you for sharing that.
13 We have a question from -- we have a question
14 from a member of our audience.

15 SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. President. My
16 name is Alex Rubido. I'm a former student body
17 president, and I had the honor of serving while
18 you took office last year.

19 My question is related directly towards
20 student affinity. You talk about how important
21 student affinity is. We're a young university,
22 just turned 50, we're celebrating and student
23 affinity runs the institution. It gets students
24 involved, it continues their engagement after
25 they graduate, encourages future donation.

1 Can you talk a little bit about your
2 specific plans on increasing student affinity
3 and Panther pride at FIU?

4 DR. JESSELL: Yeah. So, number one, I want
5 to meet with so many of our student groups and
6 have conversations with them. I want to get
7 them excited. Many of you know, I was a member
8 of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, the FIJIs. I'm a
9 strong supporter of the Greek system. This past
10 Friday night I was the key speaker at the
11 FIJI -- it's called pig dinner because they
12 roast a pig and it goes back to 1882 University
13 of California at Berkeley. And I did that with
14 a keen focus on affinity and responsibility.
15 I -- they'll be coming back in a year and a
16 half, and I wanted to get the alumni excited
17 about supporting the fraternity as it comes
18 back. And I consider all of the Greek brothers
19 and sisters as my personal brothers and sisters.

20 So, during the events over the weekend, I
21 think I went to almost every fraternity,
22 sorority that had a tent over there in the
23 promenade. And I will do that with the band, I
24 will do that with our pride group, I will do
25 that with all of our college groups, just to

1 show that I value what they're doing and
2 recognize how important they are to the success
3 of our institution and the success of their
4 fellow students. As I mentioned, students that
5 are engaged do better in college. They have a
6 better learning experience, they retain better,
7 they graduate better, they give back more, and
8 that helps us improve the cycle going forward.

9 So, I think that's probably the most
10 important thing that I can do is meet with the
11 groups and tell them how much I love them and
12 how important they are to the university. And
13 whenever we can, we will advocate for them and
14 help fund them, et cetera.

15 SPEAKER: Thank you, and, once again,
16 congratulations on your nomination.

17 DR. JESSELL: Thank you.

18 DR. TRESSELL: The floor is yours.

19 SPEAKER: Thank you. Good afternoon, sir,
20 my name is Myrna Sonora. I have been a member
21 of the president's advisory council since 2015.
22 I'm very happy to be here and to have this
23 opportunity. I also am the regional vice
24 president for an organization called "Prospera,"
25 an economic development agency that helps

1 minority businesses start, sustain and grow. We
2 are also partners with programs like the SBDC at
3 FIU and the startup FIU program. Just to name
4 two of many, we also work with the procurement
5 folks. But, with regards to the SBDC at FIU in
6 particular, we were successful in our bid for
7 the SBA Navigator grant that was, I hope you
8 understand, in our sector, incredibly important
9 because only two grants were received in the
10 southeast, both of them in Florida, one at your
11 university. So, kudos to the Navigator folks
12 that are doing that work.

13 And I think to your point with regards to
14 bringing the community into the campus and to
15 make them more a part of what's happening, I'm
16 interested in getting a sense for your support
17 for entrepreneurship initiatives like the ones
18 that you have had so far that have been so
19 successful.

20 DR. JESSELL: Absolutely. And when I
21 talked about engaging with the community, I
22 really -- I really meant it. We are going to be
23 a better institution by having that community
24 involvement. I want to have every student have
25 the opportunity for an internship every semester

1 or every year, so it's not weighted at the very,
2 very back end, because I think that enriches
3 their academic experience and also asks the
4 types of questions and do the type of work that
5 will get ready for those types of careers and
6 jobs.

7 We do have excellent programs already in
8 place. You mentioned the startup, you mentioned
9 SBDC. So many of our businesses in
10 South Florida are really the small businesses
11 and these are many of the types of businesses
12 that our students will be going into and
13 creating on their own. So without that
14 partnership, we will not be as successful in the
15 community, so we definitely want to do a lot
16 more there.

17 SPEAKER: And to support that point, just
18 as a final observation, 70 percent of small
19 business -- of business licenses issued in
20 Miami-Dade County are the business that have
21 four or less employees. So, it is a critical --
22 it's mode of the economy, but it's a critical
23 mode of the families, so I'm delighted to see
24 that you want to continue to support those
25 initiatives.

1 And one final shout out to the folks in
2 your external affairs team, they are practicing
3 what you preach. We will be hosting our staff
4 retreat here on campus on Friday and all 40
5 employees from all over the United States will
6 be here, so thank you for hosting us and thank
7 you, guys, for finding the space.

8 So, congratulations, we'll be watching you.
9 I am going to hold you to your word.

10 DR. JESSELL: You can hold me to my word.

11 SPEAKER: Thank you.

12 DR. TRESSELL: We have another question
13 from a member of the live audience.

14 SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Krista Schmidt.
15 I am currently a law student here at FIU Law.
16 So I just wanted to hear a little bit about how
17 you're going to support the law school, the med
18 school and the graduate programs.

19 DR. JESSELL: So, the med school and the
20 law school and the graduate programs, you know,
21 are very, very important for any university, but
22 particularly for FIU. First, it shows how
23 persistent we are to have both a medical school
24 and a law school at a university that's only 50
25 years old is truly amazing.

1 Secondly, you heard in my discussion, my
2 perception -- and my commitment to the health
3 initiatives. This is an area where we can
4 really excel as an institution in terms of
5 research and collaborative research. It is a
6 medical school, but it's also all of our health
7 components, right? Also, public health,
8 nursing, the sciences, it all -- it all blends
9 together, and that makes us a stronger
10 institution that will help us in terms of
11 additional dollars coming into the university.

12 So, our med school, as young as it is, is
13 already doing great things. Our law school,
14 we're very, very supportive of the law school,
15 and the law school has earned that support. As
16 young as it is, look at what we're able to
17 accomplish. We have had consistently the
18 highest bar passage rate of any of the
19 universities in the State of Florida, and we
20 have universities in Florida with law schools
21 that are well over a hundred years old and we
22 beat them time and time again. So, that level
23 of support is very, very important.

24 All of our graduate programs, we're not
25 going to get the right diversity, we're not

1 going to get the right talent that we need in
2 the professoriat at our institutions without
3 having strong researchers in place that can step
4 up to the plate and move on. We also can't have
5 the great levels of scientific achievements that
6 we can achieve as a nation without having
7 trained scientists, trained researchers and
8 trained innovators, not just in the lab, but
9 even in terms of the research that they're doing
10 in their offices. I mean, just think about
11 option pricing and derivatives, that didn't
12 happen automatically, and those things were
13 really were just coming out when I was in school
14 and now that's almost a dinosaur in terms of the
15 financial markets. And, so, those things really
16 contribute to the value of society.

17 SPEAKER: Thank you for your support.

18 DR. TRESSELL: We do have time for just a
19 couple of more questions before, unfortunately,
20 we do have to finish our last session.

21 Please, the floor is yours.

22 SPEAKER: Hi, how are you. My name is
23 Zachary Stangl and a proud brother of Phi Delta
24 Theta and also a member of Student Government.
25 The question was asked on how you would grow

1 institutional affinity. However, as a Greek
2 myself, I've seen firsthand the effect that
3 Greek life has on institutional affinity. But
4 with a population of Greeks more or less a
5 thousand students, you know, in a university
6 with well over 55,000, how would you grow the
7 Greek community here at FIU, understanding that
8 you have -- that you have -- we have your full
9 support?

10 DR. JESSELL: Yes, so, it's not a large
11 number and sadly it is a smaller number than
12 when I started FIU in 2009; is that correct?

13 SPEAKER: (Nodding head.)

14 DR. JESSELL: Which tells me that we have
15 not been very Greek friendly, and I am committed
16 to being very Greek friendly. My first week, I
17 was already meeting with our Greek advisor
18 leadership team to talk about things that we can
19 do differently. Now, it also comes with
20 responsibility, and we know that the problems of
21 Greeks are not unique to Greeks, but it turns
22 out when there's a problem in any of our Greek
23 chapters, that's what comes up in the headlines.
24 It's a Greek chapter.

25 And, so, as I said on Friday night, I

1 really hammered that aspect of responsibility,
2 so that's first and foremost. But it's not just
3 to avoid a problem, it is to encourage the level
4 of Greek growth and development that we want and
5 need. We need the graduates and the current
6 chapter members to really set the tone, and we
7 set the tone on what's really important, that we
8 are equal on day one of membership, not the
9 archaic pledge periods. That's when we're going
10 to start to see even greater affinity and
11 desirability of the Greek system.

12 Secondly, I want to make sure we have the
13 right infrastructure in place. I believe the
14 team that we have in our Greek leadership group
15 are about the -- they are -- honestly, they are
16 the best that I have ever worked with. I'm
17 hopeful that you agree with that, based upon
18 your work with them.

19 Thirdly, about two months ago, I actually
20 participated in, as a panelist, a Greek forum
21 where we had a lot of Greek members coming in to
22 talk about the opportunities and the challenges.
23 I think that as administrators the more we
24 listen, the more we're going to be able to
25 resolve the complexities of Greek life and

1 expand and grow the Greek life that we want.

2 And then, finally, making sure that we have
3 the right infrastructure in place. When we did
4 the road realignment, Tamiami Hall and that
5 promenade, in my mind, that was like a Greek
6 village. I wanted to have a place where Greeks
7 could congregate, not have them at, like, four
8 different points of the globe, if you will,
9 right? I wanted them to be in an area where
10 they could show collaboratively their enthusiasm
11 and excitement and also help in the recruiting
12 of additional Greek members. So, I think we're
13 starting to do that. I am happy to meet with
14 all of the Greek organizations. I have talked
15 to your brothers and many others, and it really
16 has paid off.

17 I was not only impressed with the number of
18 Greeks that we had on our first game and in our
19 second game, in the tailgating area, but more
20 importantly how they came into the stadium. So,
21 I want to make sure that we're doing the right
22 types of events and we have the right programs
23 that they'll not only attend but stay the entire
24 event.

25 So, you know, I'm with you a hundred

1 percent. As I have told many of you over the
2 years when I meet with you, my closest friends
3 today are my Greek fraternity brothers. The
4 best man at my wedding is a Greek brother. The
5 godfather of my son is a Greek brother, and I
6 can go on and on. There was only one that I was
7 disappointed in one time, that was for my
8 daughter's wedding. I had 14 wives, so the
9 wives of the brothers are as important, but only
10 13 brothers. And he didn't come because he
11 said, "Why did you schedule your daughter's
12 wedding on the FSU-Clemson game?"

13 And I said, "Well, actually, you should be
14 talking to the coach" because a wedding, if
15 you've ever done a wedding, you know you don't
16 just do that in one year, you know it's about
17 two years out. But at least his wife cared.
18 And I have vacationed as a group. I've got a
19 chat here. We're doing a big vacation in March,
20 and I'm still going on. I made that commitment,
21 so I will not be here for two weeks in March to
22 do the river cruise with my fraternity brothers.

23 So count me in to do anything that I can.
24 And if you have ideas, if you say, "Ken, come in
25 and talk to our fraternity, come in and talk to

1 our sorority, come in to a recruiting group," I
2 will be there.

3 (APPLAUSE)

4 DR. TRESSELL: Thank you for your support
5 for the FIU community, and I would like to thank
6 all of you for attending, whether that was in
7 person, through WebCast or through Zoom.
8 Additionally, I would like to thank all of those
9 members of the FIU community that helped make
10 sure that these events today and yesterday were
11 able to be executed in such a manner that is
12 respectful of our process.

13 Thank you so very much. And if you are
14 interested in either reading the transcripts or
15 watching the videos from any of our six
16 sessions, they will be available on the
17 presidential search website. Thank you, all.

18 (Community Session concluded at 3:31 p.m.)
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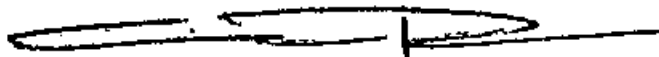
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA

COUNTY OF MIAMI-DADE

I, GINA RODRIGUEZ, Registered Professional
Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter,
certify that I was authorized to and did
stenographically report the foregoing
proceedings and that the transcript is a true
and complete record of my stenographic notes.

Dated this 14th day of October, 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'GINA RODRIGUEZ', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

GINA RODRIGUEZ, RPR, CRR

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FLORIDA RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

Rule 1.310

(e) Witness Review. If the testimony is transcribed, the transcript shall be furnished to the witness for examination and shall be read to or by the witness unless the examination and reading are waived by the witness and by the parties. Any changes in form or substance that the witness wants to make shall be listed in writing by the officer with a statement of the reasons given by the witness for making the changes. The changes shall be attached to the transcript. It shall then be signed by the witness unless the parties waived the signing or the witness is ill, cannot be found, or refuses to sign. If the transcript is not signed by the witness within a reasonable time after it is furnished to the witness, the officer shall sign the transcript and state on the transcript the waiver, illness, absence of the witness, or refusal to sign with any reasons given therefor. The deposition may then be used as fully as though signed unless the court holds that the reasons given for the refusal to sign require rejection of

the deposition wholly or partly, on motion under
rule 1.330(d)(4).

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ARE PROVIDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.
THE ABOVE RULES ARE CURRENT AS OF APRIL 1,
2019. PLEASE REFER TO THE APPLICABLE STATE RULES
OF CIVIL PROCEDURE FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION.

VERITEXT LEGAL SOLUTIONS
COMPANY CERTIFICATE AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Veritext Legal Solutions represents that the foregoing transcript is a true, correct and complete transcript of the colloquies, questions and answers as submitted by the court reporter. Veritext Legal Solutions further represents that the attached exhibits, if any, are true, correct and complete documents as submitted by the court reporter and/or attorneys in relation to this deposition and that the documents were processed in accordance with our litigation support and production standards.

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