

FIU expecting 62,000 students, 1,200 new faculty by 2020

By Scott Blake

Florida International University is carrying out a major growth plan to become "an engine of change" for South Florida's economy, but it won't come without a price.

The Miami-based university projects student enrollment will rise to 62,000 by 2020, up from nearly 48,000 now — a large majority of whom, about 85%, come from South Florida.

FIU also plans to hire about 1,200 new faculty members by 2020, including adding 800 new positions.

The additional faculty members are expected to pull in millions more in grants for research and other work, but tuition increases will be needed to help pay for larger budgets to run a larger university, said FIU President Mark Rosenberg.

"We insist our university can be a solutions center for this community," Dr. Rosenberg said in a speech last week to the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. He called it a plan to build "a new American university."

FIU's current \$1.1 billion annual budget is expected to increase 50% to 60% in coming years. Meanwhile, FIU's tuition, which now averages about \$5,200 a year, is expected to rise by 50% to 70% over the next five to 10 years, according to Dr. Rosenberg.

Currently, FIU's tuition is well below the national average of about \$8,400 a year, he said.

A major accomplishment was the opening of FIU's Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine in 2009. The College of Medicine received provisional accreditation last year and expects to receive full accreditation next year.

Meanwhile, the College of Medicine has welcomed its third and largest class — 80 students, selected from nearly 4,000 applicants, according to FIU.

The Florida Board of Governors authorized the creation of the medical school in 2006 in response to the Association of American Medical College's recommendation for new and expanded medical schools in the US to meet demand for the next generation of physicians.

More recent expansions include the opening last fall of a 60,000-square-foot facility on Brickell Avenue, geared to business and professional education, and a 16,000-square-foot venue in South Beach, geared to architecture and design.

In addition, FIU is part of a coalition of organizations promoting the growth of the life sciences industry in South Florida — part of what Dr. Rosenberg described as the emerging "knowledge economy."

He said the school's approach to higher education includes a greater emphasis on economic development, producing graduates in fields to better meet the current and future needs of the region's job market.

That includes continued expansion of FIU's math, science and engineering programs. A few years ago, for example,

FIU had only 10 students majoring in physics. Today, about 130 are majoring in physics.

It also includes getting Greater Miami businesses more involved with the school, including on-campus job recruitment. Last year, about 136 FIU students found jobs that way, Dr. Rosenberg said.

"Can public and private institutions become instruments of change?" he asked the chamber of commerce. "The business community has to help us get those questions answered if we are to survive and thrive."

Meanwhile, FIU is getting more involved in Miami-Dade public schools. The university's dual enrollment program, which allows high school students to take college courses, now has about 3,200 students, up from 480 when the program began in 2009, Dr. Rosenberg said.

"These," he added, "are the people who will lead our community in the next 10 to 12 years."

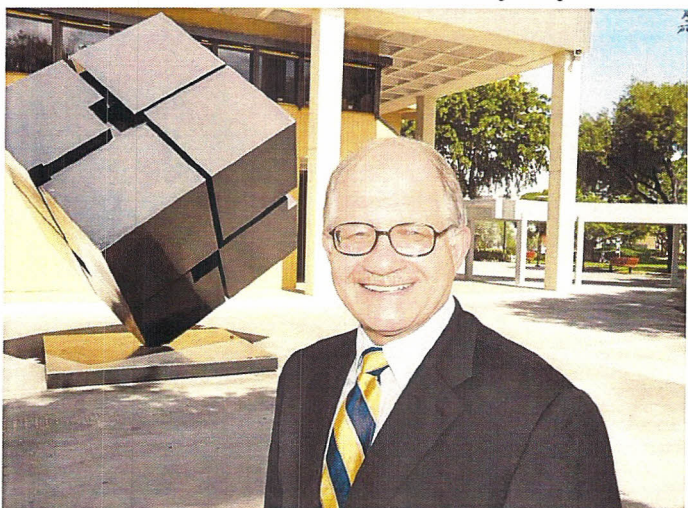


Photo by Maxine Ustun

To meet growth, says President Mark Rosenberg, Florida International University's \$1.1 billion budget is expected to increase 50% to 60% in the coming years and tuition to rise 50% to 70% within 10 years.

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