Address at the Hurricane Season Symposium

Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on December 1, 2017.
Good afternoon! Welcome to FIU!

A very special thank you to all of those who have helped make this very important event possible! And thank you to Ruben, Amy and everyone at FIU’s EOC who have worked tirelessly for this university – especially over these past few months!

Today, we can all breathe a sigh of relief: Hurricane season is officially over! Yes, we are relieved!

But, we are all here today, because we also know our work is never over… We know that hurricanes are – and will remain – a part of our lives. We know what lays behind the destruction – we know the heartbreak and loss. We know it’s up to us to help uplift this community during our darkest, most difficult times.

Aug. 24, 1992: A date that will stay with many of us. This year, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of Hurricane Andrew. This anniversary was especially personal for me, as someone whose family lived through this tragedy. I have lived and worked in South Florida for more than 40 years. I have experienced many tropical storms and hurricanes, including Andrew…

One thing is certain: Hurricane Irma was a truly powerful and terrible storm – one that we had not experienced for many years. And we were incredibly fortunate… Nothing can compare to the devastation and loss of life in Houston, Monroe County, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

From these experiences, we learned many important lessons both personally and as a community. We learned about our humanity… about our capacity to stretch and help each other… about what we must do going forward to help take care of the most vulnerable among us.
Right here at FIU, we came together FIUStrong!

We provided shelter to more than 500 Monroe County evacuees, including special needs evacuees. And even after the storm, we continued to help those in need...

We provided shelter for 100 special needs evacuees from the U.S. Virgin Islands. They were dialysis patients from the areas hardest hit by hurricanes Irma and Maria. The FIU-FAST team also made a life-saving difference in our own community! The team of doctors, nurses and other medical personnel were deployed to assist at West Kendall Baptist Hospital and Jackson South.

We also have not turned our backs on our neighbors in Puerto Rico or the Caribbean… In October, we welcomed students from Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands to our FIU! So far, more than 600 students have applied to our FIU. Many of them will start as visiting students in January!

As you can see, our FIU community does not ask for a lighter load but for broader shoulders!

Our successful efforts to recover, rebuild and do our part to heal our community were possible because of YOUR support. You rolled up your sleeves and asked how you could help. You shared our sense of urgency and motivation to act.

As I said, this hurricane season, we all learned important lessons about helping our communities. Today, I hope that we can all share these lessons with one another, so that we can better respond and recover from future storms, and continue to make a positive impact in our community.

Remember: It truly takes many hands to build a better tomorrow.

Thank you for taking responsibility and standing with us!

We look forward to continued collaboration with you in the future!