



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

CANES KICKOFF NEW STUDENTS WELCOME

Presented by President Julio Frenk
at the University of Miami Convocation Center
on August 17, 2016

Good afternoon. Felicia and I are really delighted to extend a very warm welcome to all of you— you are the newest members of our Hurricanes family. Welcome to the family.

I want to start by giving a very special thank you to the Orientation staff, to the resident assistants, and to the first-year fellows who are the heart and soul of orientation. They are really the great role models of what it is to be a Miami Hurricane. Thank you to all of you.

Choosing the U

I want to talk tonight about choices. The University of Miami is a magnet for talent—we attract and retain the brightest talent from all over the world to our campuses to think, live, and work together.

More than 32,000 students applied this year to the University of Miami, and we are thrilled that you chose the U.

As you will realize over the coming months and years, it's not only a great choice now, but it will be a great choice for years to come. You join a network of talented and dedicated faculty, staff, alumni, and students—just like you—who have chosen to be a part of the U.

Your decision opens a pivotal doorway to many, many other choices that will guide your individual journey here on campus and beyond.

Just yesterday I celebrated my one-year anniversary as president, so in a sense you could say that I am a sophomore. And I too am looking forward to this new school year filled with such great promises and opportunities for each of us.

Let me tell you a little bit about your fellow new students:

The incoming class of 2020: You are the class of 2020, the class of perfect vision. I am a doctor so that is an ophthalmologist joke. But the class of 2020 is 2,145 students strong. A third of you come from Florida, and the rest come from another 42 states, all over the country.

We also welcome 556 transfer students who have made a second bold choice to redirect their path and study here at the U. Welcome!

You are a very global group, representing 67 countries. The top three are China, Kuwait, and Venezuela. And from a racial and ethnic standpoint, you are an incredibly diverse group— and in fact you are more diverse than the nation as a whole.

Let me tell you, the diversity of your class is not accidental. The University of Miami makes its home in one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the entire world, the city of Miami. As a campus community we have thrived by drawing together talented and passionate individuals from all walks of life to discuss, debate, engage, agree, and disagree together.

Fostering and valuing diversity in all its dimensions is at the heart of a strong education, and given my own background, this is really a personal priority for me.

Choosing Our Greatest Potential

This university was founded 91 years ago, and at 91 years young, the University of Miami is really a very exciting place to be at. This is a great moment for the University because we are actively engaged in an ambitious and collective endeavor to transform the future of this institution by the time we celebrate our centennial in 2025. As you know, the University of Miami already enjoys a great reputation—that's why you chose to come here. But if you know anything about being a 'Cane, it is that we always choose to reach for our greatest potential.

We are charting what we call the Roadmap to Our New Century, and over the next decade we will ardently pursue our four key aspirations.

The first is to be the hemispheric university by leveraging our geographic advantage in a city at the confluence of the Americas. We are a global university with a distinct hemispheric advantage.

Second, we want to be the excellent university by continuing to foster the drive for achievement that is the spirit of the U and enhancing opportunities for scholarship across disciplines.

Third, we want to be the relevant university by continuing to serve local and global communities as we develop solutions to real life problems.

And last but not least, we aspire to be the exemplary university because we aspire to be a model for values of integrity, of respect, of resilience as we seek to expand opportunity for all.

Each of you has a role to play in fulfilling these aspirations in the classroom, the laboratory, the playing field, the performance hall, and the community. I look forward to sharing the concrete plans to bring these aspirations to life and welcome you as part of our common endeavor to animate the Roadmap for the future of the University of Miami.

Your Roadmap

But you have a roadmap too. Your personal roadmap, the decisions you make—about your curriculum, your involvement on campus, whether you turn a passionate belief into a powerful advocacy for change—all of these greatly influence not only the person you will become but the community we shape together.

Your choices about the depth and ways in which you interact with your fellow 'Canes have far-reaching impact.

Whether it's a simple gesture of kindness, a word of gratitude, or a commitment to have challenging conversations...you have the capacity to help us create and promote a culture of belonging at the University of Miami.

I might be the president, but I cannot create a culture. Students have the ability to choose how we will live and learn together, and so I invite you to consider how your thoughtful actions can build a community where everyone feels valued and everyone is empowered to add value. That is what I mean by a sense of belonging, everyone feels valued and everyone has a chance to add value. This means caring for one another. It also means sometimes choosing to challenge our own assumptions.

Another tremendous benefit of an education at the University of Miami is the incredible breadth of academic choice you have. You can explore the courses of 11 schools and colleges. And our emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, teaching, and research in undergraduate education means many of you will choose more than one major or multiple minors.

We believe you will get the most from your college education if you love what you study and you study what you love. When I arrived here I was impressed with our Cognates Program of general education. This is one of the most original reforms of undergraduate education, and it was led right here at the University of Miami by Dr. William Green, who you just heard speak, by Provost Thomas LeBlanc, by the all the deans, and the very talented faculty. The Cognates Program of general education is one of the best innovations in undergraduate education and is designed to give you the structure to navigate all the choices available to you and enable you to craft a knowledge base across disciplines to explore your own passions, your interests, and the questions that motivate you and intrigue you.

Your education will prepare you for an increasingly complex employment landscape. By the time you graduate from the University of Miami, many, many of you will be working in jobs that do not even exist today. An education at the U is designed to offer you choices, strengthen your intellect, call on your independence and resilience, and prepare you for a future that we cannot see, yet we know you will take a leading hand in shaping. And this is really the uniqueness of a University of Miami experience.

And beyond the knowledge and the skills you will need to succeed in your chosen career, your time here—if you let it—will enrich your outlook and reinforce your commitment to build a better world. I call on each of you to choose to engage and to participate. Your living classroom should include research, volunteering in the community, and getting to know this incredible city you now call home. There are more than 285 student organizations seeking your energy and leadership—and 40 of those focus on civic engagement.

Being a Miami Hurricane means cheering each other ...both on the field and off. There are approximately 400 student-athletes who represent our university with distinction and pride, and they would love your support. We even produce Olympic medalists! We are very proud of our student athletes.

Facing Choices

I know it can sometimes feel overwhelming to face all these choices about who you aspire to be and how you want to move through the world.

But, like everything else in life, making good choices takes practice. You may stumble a few times, but what matters is the vigor of your preparation, the tenacity of your engagement, and the grace with which you handle the result. That is being a 'Cane.

Remember that you have a brilliant and dedicated network of teachers, mentors, and advisors who are here to help you during your journey. They will help you stretch with new experiences and challenges, and they will be there for you when you need them. You are the reason we come here, you are the reason we work in a University. In this University, our motto is students first, and please do not hesitate to reach out to each and every one of us for anything you need. We want this to be the best four years of your lives.

Now that you are here, don't let the time pass you by. Get to know your fellow students. Start writing your unique UM history. Strive to make a difference on campus by being a leader, in both visible and quiet ways. You will create a lasting legacy that will make you a Hurricane for life.

The choices others have made in generations before you have led to this very special moment. When I think of the arc of choices I have made in my own life, it really begins with my paternal grandparents who in the 1930s fled from Germany to Mexico, which welcomed them with open arms. The kindness strangers showed to my family had a direct impact on my choice to study medicine and sociology and to dedicate my life to improving public health and education around the world.

Today you are taking an important step in charting your own life trajectory—through your choices, your courage, and your compassion.

Parents, thank you for sharing your students with us. They are joining a community of learning that supports their expanding view of the world...that encourages exploration and expression and immerses them in the rigors of what it means to be responsible for their choices and for one another.

We are here to provide your students with the support they need to succeed and graduate, and your family will play a vital role in reinforcing the learning and development that will take place here. Once again, welcome to the University of Miami. I am so delighted that we chose one another. This is going to be an amazing year. I look forward to meeting many of you at the new student picnic on Sunday and then at many, many occasions.

We are a family. We are One U. Welcome! Thank you!