



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

ADDRESS AT NEW STUDENT CONVOCATION

Presented by President Julio Frenk at the University of Miami's
BankUnited Center
on August 19, 2015

Welcome to the University of Miami. I hope you're all as proud to be a Miami Hurricane as I am. We are starting this exciting journey together as the newest members of the University community.

With more than 2,500 new students—first-year and transfer students—we have much to look forward to. Our horizons are indeed bright with so many opportunities for growth and success before us.

The theme for this year's orientation is "Discover the U." I hope you'll embrace the life-changing spirit of discovery and take the time to explore all we have to offer at the U...and beyond.

You've joined the best University for you at an incredibly exciting time in our history. I am honored to serve as the University's 6th president as we celebrate 90 years as a hemispheric and global center of excellence.

As we commence on the road to our second century, you will help us redefine and shape what is the very best at the University of Miami...and we, in turn, will help you shape and redefine your future.

University of Miami and Higher Education

As our newest students, you are a dynamic factor in the real-time equation of higher education in our greater society.

Universities play an absolutely crucial role in this very convoluted 21st century. You are now part of an ongoing public discussion about the role of universities in fostering the sort of values and behaviors the world needs if it is to survive and continue to thrive—this is very important.

Universities have a single product. But it's a very powerful product. Our product is knowledge.

It is knowledge about the world that allows us to understand it, appreciate it, and change it for the better. Knowledge is a common connector of human beings. It is what makes us human.

Knowledge is the fundamental building block of civilization. Freedom thrives with knowledge. Democracy cannot exist without knowledge.

Being a student at the University of Miami is about being fully engaged and fully immersed in the creation and application of knowledge.

You will have access to many, many learning and research opportunities...both in and out of the classroom. Seize these challenges. Our extraordinary faculty are world-class experts in their fields, and they are here for you.

Knowledge is reinforced when you step outside of your comfort zone. So explore disciplines outside of your major, take courses in subjects you don't know much about, keep an open mind. Learn to listen - to other views, to other ideologies, to other philosophies - even if they make you uncomfortable.

UM Global Community

We are at a critical juncture in the continued evolution of higher education...and perhaps no other institution is as strategically situated as the University of Miami to adopt and adapt to emerging opportunities. We are positioned at the gateway not only to the Americas...from Canada to the southern tip of the hemisphere...but also eastward and westward to embrace the entire globe.

Ours is an interconnected and interdependent world like never before possible in human history. The pace and intensity of our daily interactions is truly unprecedented. And there are new forms of connectivity that were not even dreamt of 50 years ago.

We have reached a point where no country, no company, no university by itself can meet all the challenges that it is expected to meet without taking into account what happens in the rest of the world. This means that we must educate young people who truly are global citizens while ensuring they are grounded in the reality.

I don't see a dichotomy between being locally grounded, rooted in your community, and having a sense of belonging to a larger global community. It is the only way for understanding to thrive, because at the same time that we're interconnected, we are also seeing the reemergence of ideologies and movements that would separate and divide us.

Reaching a level of global understanding is going to be important. This is one of the absolutely essential goals of universities—to foster deeper, more integrated layers of understanding between communities both those in our backyards and those across the globe.

This is a global university, and you are citizens of a dynamic global community. Every year, approximately 3,750 international students and scholars, professors and researchers from 120 countries representing every region of the world study, teach, and conduct research at the University of Miami.

Studying abroad is part of an enriching learning experience, and I strongly encourage you to spend a summer, a semester, or a full year abroad studying anything from architecture in Australia...to business in Japan...or engineering in Chile.

Embracing Diversity

I am a strong believer in diversity, not just because it is the right thing to do from an ethical point of view, but also because it is the smart thing to do.

Diversity is inherently a value that we need to promote. Diversity enriches us. A diversity of perspectives elevates the experiences of everyone. It expands our outlook and our way of analyzing, understanding and attacking problems.

We need, as a community, to deal with the reality of human differences - by choosing the pathway of celebrating, promoting and making the most of diversity and using it as an antidote to inequality.

As a community of learning, we must model the sort of values and behaviors we would like to see reflected in the larger society of which this university is a part. Look around you. Our diversity is what makes our university a unique place to live and learn. Enjoy our cultural diversity right here in South Florida. This is a vibrant community with a wealth of cultural experiences that will enhance your education and enrich your personal lives.

Campus Life

For most of you, our residential colleges will be your home away from home for the next few years. For those of you commuting to campus, the Department of Orientation and Commuter Student Involvement can serve as your connection to campus life.

You will soon find out there's always something to do on campus. Every day is packed with activities: late night programming, movies, lectures, concerts, art exhibits and athletic events.

Explore who you are as a leader - whether on a team, an executive board, or with your classmates and friends - initiate new ideas and explore new interests. Get involved. There are more than 285 student organizations including political and academic organizations, fraternities and sororities, sports clubs, and religious and volunteer organizations.

Make each day count by making a contribution to our world - leading, serving, participating. And stay healthy; stay active - intellectually, physically, and emotionally. It is the best recipe for a productive and happy college experience.

There are many, many resources here to support your wellbeing. The Herbert Wellness Center celebrates 20 years of excellence. Use it to stay healthy and connect with other students through club sports, intramurals, and other wellness opportunities.

Of course, this connects to athletics.

Athletics

The Miami Hurricanes have one of the proudest traditions in intercollegiate athletics within the NCAA. Our world-class athletes compete at the highest level and represent the U on the global stage with distinction.

Our baseball team returned to the College World Series for the 24th time in program history, capping off a year that also featured NCAA appearances in volleyball, women's basketball, women's tennis, golf, and individual NCAA appearances in track, diving and tennis.

Track superstar Shakima Wimbley won gold and silver medals at the Pan American Games, and women's soccer goalie Catalina Perez represented Colombia in the Women's World Cup this summer. Today I met with our amazing football players.

I hope you will support our teams and your fellow students by attending games at Sun Life Stadium and on campus. And beyond being a spectator, this is a great time for you to become active in the wide range of intramural sports on our campus.

Closing

Finally, learn as much as you can about the University before classes start. Take advantage of the resources available to you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know. Student Affairs, your Orientation Staff, Resident Assistants, First Year Fellows, Transfer Assistants and Commuter Assistants, as well as the entire UM community are here to help you - our doors are always open.

We are on our shared pathway to creating knowledge and gaining understanding and putting both of these at the service of our shared humanity. This is just the beginning.

It's going to be a great year. Students: I look forward to seeing all of you at the President's Picnic on Sunday. Families: Thank you for entrusting us with your students. I look forward to meeting you at the President's Reception for Families on Thursday afternoon.

Enjoy your time here and Go 'Canes!