

When Provost Wartzok asked me to participate on this panel, I agreed because I figured that I would practice what I preached with my students. I tell them that, occasionally, they should take themselves outside their comfort zones, intentionally. I am much more comfortable in my research lab mentoring students or lecturing about forensic chemistry. I'm very happy I did agree.

I am starting my 12th year at FIU as a faculty member and, I don't know if its me but, this fall, there is a palpable difference around campus. Starting with that wonderful installation ceremony for our new president. It was electric! The beautiful symbol of passing the torch from generation to generation. passing the fire (let me say, the fire in the belly) from the founders to the current faculty and then to the students.

I am fortunate to work in a department in which we still have some of the original faculty that were hired when the institution was created and these colleagues focused on excellent undergraduate education back then - but the fire in their belly is still alive for excellent undergraduate education. I see it every day. We have a tradition of producing an excellent product in our graduates (not just an excellent value) in that we have full professors at great research universities and CEO's of major corporations amongst our alumni in the chemistry department.

I'd like to call attention to President Rosenberg's message that "no matter what is going on around you in the world today ... your work matters! The life of the mind matters ..."

To these more senior faculty, the changes we've experienced at FIU focusing more and more on research provided a challenge but it did not matter to them, they kept the fire in their belly for high quality undergraduate education and passed this fire down to the next generation.

I can say lot's more about how we keep this fire alive in research, just this week, one of our faculty was singled out by the NSF in one of their digest communications describing his work on the chemistry of the atmosphere of Titan.

The President has invited us to examine, debate and revise his concepts in "Hit the Ground Running". He lists four points and I'd like to address the last one on community engagement and how this fits with the life of the mind at FIU. If we are to survive and thrive, we need to engage the community outside the campus, bring them on to campus and have us and our students step outside and conduct meaningful interaction. The thoughtful white paper drafted by faculty describes how this can be accomplished. Academics should be open to such notions as strengthening university-industry partnerships for economic development, something we don't traditionally value in the academic setting. Engaging the community extends the life of the mind beyond the campus boundaries. I know first-hand how effective this can be in promoting our teaching and research agenda.