



## MEMORANDUM

To: FIU Community

From: Ronald Berkman, Executive Vice President & Provost

Date: August 23, 2007

Subject: Welcome to a New Academic Year

Welcome back to a new academic year at FIU! With new faces, a new schedule, and a renewed commitment to meeting the needs of our students, we are very excited about the approaching Fall semester.

Expected to arrive on campus this week are approximately 2,300 Freshmen, 2,000 new transfer students, another 1,300 new graduate students, and approximately 75 new faculty and instructors. Together, let us welcome all of them as new members of our FIU family. I sincerely hope that you will participate in Freshman Convocation on August 26, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. An estimated 2,000 new students and their families will attend this induction into the community. Following the ceremony, we have a Welcome Back Faculty Reception at the Green Library at 4:30 p.m. We appreciate all the work of University volunteers in organizing this important weekend.

As you know, we will initiate the Monday, Wednesday, Friday class schedule this semester. I appreciate the support of the Faculty in this transition, and believe that it will improve student outcomes, retention, and graduation. Although there was uncertainty about how student registration patterns might change as a result of the new schedule, registration has gone very smoothly, and we have a good distribution of course times. A significant group of students have also availed themselves of the opportunity to register for Fall and Spring. There is much to refine and improve, but academic units and administration did a remarkable job of launching this initiative. Once again, please be patient with students as they learn to navigate this change, particularly the ten minutes between class starts on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

We have also been successful in managing our enrollment to match state support. There will be fewer Freshmen, but with stronger academic preparation. This Fall we admitted 2,280 new FTIC students with a mean SAT of 1142; last Fall we enrolled 2,332 FTIC students with a mean SAT of 1134. The summer undergraduate FTIC admissions declined by 22% and the mean SAT increased by 21 points.

### Office of the Provost

University Park · Miami, FL 33199 · Tel 305-348-2151 · Fax 305-348-2994 · [www.fiu.edu](http://www.fiu.edu)

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Our challenge now is to bring these students fully into the academic and student communities. Please post your office hours on your syllabi and encourage your students to visit with you. The single most important point of building community is the relationship between you and your students in the classroom.

While the final story on this year's state budget is not complete, there has been a significant decline in revenues. Given the knowledge that there has already been a 4% cut to the SUS budget, but the reduction could be higher, we decided to institute a 6% cut. The cut is not being distributed as an "across the board" reduction. A Budget Task Force with student and faculty representation has been meeting to help chart a University strategy for absorbing the cuts. The President has directed that Academic Affairs make cuts that cohere with our strategic plan, but continue with planned hiring for next year. We will be the only, or one of the few universities, to continue with an ambitious faculty hiring plan for next year. While this year's impact can be minimized by the efficient utilization of revenues, the next several years will pose a larger challenge. I have every confidence that we can manage through this period of austerity, which has, at one time or another, hit every state in the union.

I thank you all for your work on behalf of FIU. I look forward to an exciting year moving forward with new ways to improve teaching, learning, and research.

Sincerely yours,

Ronald Berkman