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As we look toward our future, we aspire to be an even greater force for good. We invite you to join us as we elevate our commitment to excellence, ignite progress, and advance the pursuit of truth.
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As we approach our centennial, we are aiming higher than ever before, embarking on an ambitious journey we call Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century. This is our moment to take bold action, to be an even greater force for good. We invite you to join us.

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Fall Semester Kicks Off with Energy and Optimism

More than 3,000 new students learn what it means to be a ‘Cane

The three University campuses pulsed with vitality as thousands of students, with a bounce to their step, smiled at the ready, and their academic aspirations sharpening into focus, bursted to a first day of Fall 2021 classes on Aug. 23. The 3,189 new arrivals—including first-year and transfer students—comprise one of the largest, most selective, and most diverse student bodies in University history. This newest class joined the corps of returning students to form a 19,000-strong community of bold learners who collectively took 3,760 classes this semester.

“The first day back has been fantastic. I love to see the campus so lively again—it’s so refreshing and much needed,” says Hugo Mijares-Pracho, a junior from Miami studying health sciences and theater. “I’m looking forward to making new friends. The first day hasn’t been too stressful; everything’s easy to find,” she says. “Coming here [from Boston] is a new experience and a new vibe.”

In his welcome message to the University community, President Julio Frenk recognized that the pandemic and some of the precautions necessary for safety were lingering longer than anyone had imagined—a scenario outside our control.

“So right now is the time to focus on the changes we can affect,” Frenk says. “There are many choices before us, and the three most important are: work with tenacity, care for each other by getting vaccinated and following public health guidance, and show respect for each other even when we have our differences.”

The new semester launched unofficially with move-in beginning Aug. 16. University partners, including the Department of Orientation and Commuter Student Involvement, Housing and Residential Life, and Parking and Transportation, provided for the safe and near seamless transition through the week of more than 3,000 new students—some from blocks away, others from across the globe—into residential colleges.

The new arrivals were treated to a potpourri of festive events provided by the Division of Student Affairs and University partners to help them acclimate with their campus, peers, and faculty and staff members.

Two separate sessions of ‘Canes Take Flight were held at the Watsco Center to maintain distance protocols. For both, Frenk, together with First Lady Felicia Marie Knaut, director of the Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas; faculty members; and student leaders offered an inspiring and informative welcome to ‘Canes culture—from University history to “throwing the U.”

At ‘Canefest, new students learned about opportunities to participate in the more than 350 student organizations, representing interests ranging from performing arts to multicultural and identity-based groups. Planet Kreyol, the Haitian student organization, and the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs hosted a vigil on Thursday of the first week of classes to honor the victims of the devastating earthquake that occurred in Haiti on Aug. 14. “This event means a lot to me because it lets me know that I’m not invisible on this campus and I can show support in this tragedy,” says Maydeleen Guiteau Pierre-Noel, who was one of many who attended the memorial.

College of Engineering Adds Innovative Department

Department of Chemical, Environmental, and Materials Engineering fulfills important need

With an expansion that salutes the expertise and vision of its new dean, the College of Engineering has created a Department of Chemical, Environmental, and Materials Engineering, which will house aerosol science and technology, water quality, synthetic biology, and materials synthesis programs. “Likewise, it creates an opportunity for students to partake in research and education and assist the technology innovation happening in South Florida,” says University President Julio Frenk.

Anchored in the College of Engineering, the department will collaborate with the Frost Institute for Chemistry and Molecular Science, Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, College of Arts and Sciences, and Miller School of Medicine.

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“The new department fills a need at the University, and its faculty will play a leading role in advancing both the college’s strategic initiatives as well as the University’s Roadmap to Our New Century,” says Dean Pratim Biswas.

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We come from different places and perspectives, yet we have a common denominator—we care,” Frenk told the community. “No matter what lies ahead, the single most important thing any ‘Cane can do is care for fellow ‘Canes and the communities of which we are a part.”

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Celebrations Honor Freedom Day
Black alumni and University scholars recognize Juneteenth Independence Day

In recognition of Juneteenth, or Freedom Day, the newly designated holiday commemorating the date that effectively ended slavery in the United States, the University of Miami Black Alumni Society (UMBAS) hosted its third annual—and second virtual—event marking the momentous day. Several dozen ‘Canes from around the country gathered online for a moderated discussion with esteemed author, scholar, and documentarian Marvin Dunn; a libation ceremony; a performance by the Hammond-Butler Gospel Choir; and interactive cooking and mixology demonstrations. The event also introduced its new executive board for 2021-23.

“Today celebrates our collective strength, our resilience, and our truth,” Patricia Dunac Morgan, B.S. ’06, president of UMBAS, said in her welcoming remarks. “As an educator, I know our story can be hard. It can be sad, it can be difficult, especially, to package in a way that is developmentally appropriate for our kids. [Yet] it is only through recognition of our truth that we’re able to make meaningful progress.”

“Juneteenth has emotional meaning—it’s a feeling holiday in the sense that the people who experienced this horror during the period of slavery and all of us who’ve come after them carrying the memories and the hurt forward have reason to be appreciative that [slavery] stopped,” Dunn said. “It should be celebrated for what it accomplished, but let us not overstate what has been accomplished.”

In mid-June, both the U.S. Senate and House voted to make Juneteenth an official federal holiday, and President Joe Biden signed the legislation into law on June 17. A news article the University published that day detailed the newly designated holiday through the eyes of Jomillis Henry Braddock, professor of sociology, and Donald Spivey, distinguished professor of history. Cooper Fellow of the College of Arts and Sciences, and special advisor to President Julio Frenk on racial justice.

“Celebrate is not the right word for Juneteenth,” insists Spivey. “The date is commemorated in infamy as enslaved Africans in Texas only found out in 1865, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, that they were no longer supposed to be in bond-age. Juneteenth can serve as a date to reflect on the institution of slavery in the making of America,” he adds.

“Across the U.S., African Americans continue to celebrate the occasion, in diverse ways. Unfortunately, important aspects of U.S. history have not been widely taught in schools, contributing to what might be labeled a mass public ‘miseducation’ regarding the role of race in shaping much of the nation’s history,” Braddock says.

“In the context of the ongoing ‘racial reckoning’ following the murder of George Floyd, Americans of all races are becoming increasingly attuned to the ways in which the history and lived experiences of African Americans are a central part of American history, not just Black history,” he points out.

The School of Education and Human Development and the School of Law spearheaded the academy’s launch at the University in 2017, welcoming this first group of students—ninth graders at the time. For a month each summer, the term’s live in residence halls and attend daily academic and life-skills classes guided by University faculty members and students.

Kayla Mason, B.S. ’21, is one of several students who have served as mentors since the program’s inception. Mentors teach entrepreneurial skills, tutor academics, and provide life coaching.

“My father’s experience was with T-ROC Global and One Laptop Per Child to provide 25 laptops to the students attending the session on campus.

Restoring a River in Panama
A unique collaboration aims to use solar and hydropower to clean the Juan Diaz River

Many of the residents who live in the informal settlements near Panama’s Juan Diaz River can recall a tributary so clean that they could swim in it and use its waters for cooking and washing. But years of neglect in the form of household trash and other debris have turned parts of the river into floating landfills that not only harm the ecosystems of nearby mangroves but also the marine life in Panama Bay—into which the river flows. The bay is also where 1,000 humpback whales visit each year to nurse their young.

Now, an ambitious environmental cleanup project, which employs a massive solar- and hydro-powered device, promises to help restore the Juan Diaz to its former glory.

Docha Rueda, or Ms. Wheel, is a semi-autonomous trash interceptor that will be installed near the mouth of the stream, where it will pull hundreds of tons of trash out of the water each year. The device, a sort of living garbage grabber featuring two giant googly eyes at its top, will be similar to four collection devices that have removed more than 1,600 tons of trash from the harbor area of Baltimore, Maryland.

“The trash interceptor on Panama’s Juan Diaz River will be similar to this one in Baltimore’s harbor.

“Today, almost no one uses the water from the Juan Diaz for any purpose whatsoever because it’s so polluted,” says Daniel Suman, a professor of environmental science and policy at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science who is working with the Panama City-based environmental group Marea Verde on the project.

“...So, this project,” he says, “offers much hope.”

A First for First Star Academy
College prep program for foster care youth celebrates first graduates

Members of the initial cohort of the First Star Academy, a national program hosted by the University that prepares at-risk teens for college, received their diplomas and shared their insights and appreciation at a small off-campus ceremony during the summer.

A contingent of students, alumni, and faculty members—many of whom served as mentors, lead teachers, and program staff for the past four years—were on hand to cheer on the 17 new graduates.

“We have believed in you from the start, but what’s important is that you have come to believe in yourself,” Kele Stewart, law professor and advocate for the program, told the students.

For a month each summer, the first group of students—ninth graders at the time—were on hand to cheer on the 17 new graduates.

“The school is a safe haven,” says Mason, who was the winner of the “All-Star Mentor” award whose family at one point slipped into homelessness and had to rely on support from relatives.

This summer, First Star Academy partnered with T-ROC Global and One Laptop Per Child to provide 25 laptops to the students attending the session on campus.

A unique collaboration aims to use solar and hydropower to clean the Juan Diaz River.

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Council for Advancement and Support of Education awards for the 2020 Juneteenth virtual celebration.

Junior KiAnna Dorsey, executive producer of UMTV’s ‘The Culture,’ moderated the conversation with Dunn, who shared insights from his books and reflected on the meaning of the historic day.

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Miami School of Law’s Innocence Clinic, which represents Florida inmates who have been convicted of criminal offenses but have compelling claims of innocence, won a resounding victory in mid-July when Florida’s First District Court of Appeal ruled unanimously to overturn the armed robbery conviction of Dustin Duty, sentenced in 2013 to 20 years in prison. Three months later, the state attorney’s office for the Fourth Judicial Circuit dropped the armed robbery charge, setting Duty free.

Based on information affirming his innocence, the clinic started working on Duty’s case in 2016. Over five years, 18 student lawyers have labored for his release. Clinic director Craig Trocino and Seth Miller, executive director of the Innocence Project of Florida (IPF), a nonprofit consortium, led the effort.

“The Innocence Clinic offers a unique learning experience for students while strenuously fighting for the wrongfully convicted,” says Neil Jessup Newton, interim dean and visiting professor. “While the students benefit from this experience in immeasurable ways, no one benefited more than Dustin Duty, who is a free man today because of the Innocence Clinic’s work and dedication.”

Duty’s case is emblematic of the cases the clinic handles. Launched in 2011, the clinic operates as a bona fide law firm. Second- and third-year law students work as the firm’s associates. Each week, students open dozens of letters from inmates, reviewing each in detail to see if a case meets the clinic’s initial criteria for representation. If it does, the students request more information, and the investigation starts.

“Virtually every person who has been wrongfully convicted and incarcerated is indigent, and the vast majority of them—70 percent—are people of color,” says Trocino. “The Miami Law Innocence Clinic and the other network members are truly the lawyers of last resort for the wrongfully convicted.”

Mapping Microbes Across Miami

As part of a global effort to collect microbial samples—where an analysis might lead to new diagnostic, industrial, or therapeutically applications—a team of 15 University students and employees spent a day this summer swabbing escalator guardrails, elevator buttons, benches, ATMs, and other surfaces at each of the 23 Metrorail stops. Students from all three University campuses participated in Global City Sampling Day 2023 and added their findings to those of researchers and citizen scientists in 54 cities across five continents. Overall, some 6,000 samples were shipped to Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City to be analyzed by researchers at the international consortium MetaSUB (short for Metagenomics and Metadirectory of Subways and Urban Biomes), a microbial census launched in 2015.

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Gauging Keys’ Water Quality

Biology professor Kathleen Sullivan Sealey is heading a team of graduate students who are researching the degree to which the waters that hug the Florida Keys—and the wildlife that blossoms there—have been transformed by the development of residential canals. Sealey’s team, led by Ph.D. candidate Jacob Patus, B.S. ’13, recently finished a two-year project funded by Monroe County and the Florida Department of Medicine, which commits on the Metrorail each day. “We know, of course, that COVID-19 is a virus. But that doesn’t make it any less important that we take into account what people interact with every single day as they’re going through their methods of transit.”

“Global City Sampling Day was an opportunity for our students to see public health in action and to learn how team science can translate into greater scientific impact and innovation,” comments Natasha Schaefer Solle, Ph.D. ’15, research assistant professor of medicine and public health sciences, who organized the event in Miami.

Adapting to Extreme Heat

With extreme heat events becoming more frequent and intense, a warming global climate, Lynée Turek-Hanks, a doctoral student in the Abess Center for Ecosystem Science and Policy, and a team of more than a dozen researchers have completed a new study that explores how people, communities, and governments are adapting. Published in the inaugural issue of the journal Oxford Open Climate Change, the study examines where, why, and how adaptation to extreme heat is unfolding globally.

The investigation analyzed 301 peer-reviewed articles spanning 98 countries documenting the countries and regions in which implemented extreme heat adaptation has occurred, then studying the diverse heat impacts to which people are responding, the types of adaptations implemented, and the actors involved. Mentored by Katharine Mach, associate professor at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, Turek-Hanks is also investigating federal policies aimed at adapting people’s homes to withstand the effects of climate change.
Mario Cristobal Is Coming Home

Mario Cristobal, B.B.A. ’93, M.A.I.S. ’99, who helped lead the University of Miami to two national championships in 1989 and 1991 as a standout offensive lineman, has been named the University’s 26th football head coach.

One of college football’s most highly regarded coaches, Cristobal returns to his alma mater after leading the University of Oregon to three straight Pac-12 Conference championships game appearances and two Pac-12 titles. He is the only coach in the nation whose team has played in a Power Five conference championship game in each of the past three seasons.

“We are incredibly excited to welcome Mario, his wife, Jessica, and their sons, Mario Mateo and Rocco, home to Miami,” says President Julio Frenk. “Mario’s legacy as a student-athlete at the U is well established. And the standard for competitive excellence that he and his teammates helped establish is one to which we continue to aspire. Our selection, however, was not one based in nostalgia for a proud past, but rather in a bold vision for a promising future.”

Cristobal brings more than 20 years of FBS coaching experience to Coral Gables, including 10 as a head coach. He compiled a 35-13 record at Oregon, including a 2019 Rose Bowl victory that capped a 12-win season and clinched a No. 5 ranking in the final Associated Press and AFCA Coaches polls. Cristobal was named the Associated Press Pac-12 Coach of the Year for his efforts that season.

Cristobal served as Oregon’s co-offensive coordinator, running game coordinator, and offensive line coach during the 2017 season before being elevated to head coach. Prior to his time in Oregon, he spent four years in Tuscaloosa, where he served as assistant head coach, offensive line coach, and recruiting coordinator for the University of Alabama. Considered one of the country’s elite recruiters and evaluators of talent, Cristobal, during his tenures at both Alabama and Oregon, helped assemble national top-15 recruiting classes eight straight years, with seven of those classes rated in the top 10.

A son of South Florida who played prep football at Christopher Columbus High School, Cristobal launched his coaching career as a graduate assistant coach at Miami from 1998 to 2000 under head coach Butch Davis. He served as an assistant coach at Rutgers from 2001 to 2003 and then returned to Miami as an assistant coach from 2004 to 2006 under head coach Larry Coker. From 2007 to 2012 Cristobal was head coach at Florida International University, becoming the first Cuban American head coach in FBS history and earning the Sun Belt Conference Coach of the Year honor in 2010.

“My family and I are excited to return home to the University of Miami, which has been so instrumental in shaping me as a person, player, and coach,” says Cristobal, who played his Hurricanes career under coaches Jimmy Johnson and Dennis Erickson. “This program has an unparalleled tradition and an exciting future ahead of it. I can’t wait to compete for championships and help mold our student-athletes into leaders on and off the field who will make our University, our community, and our loyal fan base proud.”

New Athletics Director Brings a Track Record of Success

Dan Radakovich, M.B.A. ’82, one of the most respected athletics administrators in the country, has returned to the University of Miami as vice president and director of athletics—joining the institution where nearly three decades ago he launched his career.

“Among the most impressive and inspiring leaders in college athletics during this period was Dan Radakovich,” says Frenk. “We are confidence that Radakovich will make our University, our community, and our student-athletes into leaders on and off the field who will make our University, our community, and our loyal fan base proud.”

Radakovich’s distinguished career in athletics leadership spans more than 30 years. His tenure at Clemson was marked by student-athlete academic achievement; comprehensive competitive success, including two national championships in football; significant facility construction and enhancements; and notable increases in revenue and fundraising. He was named Athletic Director of the Year by Sports Business Daily in 2017 and served as a member of the College Football Playoff Selection Committee from 2014 to 2017.

A native of Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, Radakovich earned a bachelor’s degree in finance from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1980, where he was a football letterman and student coach, and an MBA from the University of Miami in 1982. He served as athletics business manager at Miami from 1983 to 1985, which launched his impressive career. After Miami, Radakovich was associate athletics director at Long Beach State University and at the University of South Carolina; director of athletics at American University; senior associate athletics director at Louisiana State University; and director of athletics at Georgia Tech from 2006 to 2012, before joining Clemson.

During his tenure at Clemson, the school won 15 Atlantic Coast Conference team titles. The Tigers football program won two national championships, made six College Football Playoff appearances, and captured six ACC titles. In the classroom, Clemson student-athletes recorded nine semesters with a 3.0 GPA or higher. The athletics department attained the school’s highest-ever NCAA Graduation Success Rate at 93 percent in 2020 and scored 91 percent or better for seven consecutive years.

“Dan Radakovich is a leader from the top to the bottom of our department,” says Frenk.

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Surf's Up in New History Class

Ordinarily, history professor Martin Nesvig concentrates on Latin American history, particularly 16th and 17th century Mexico, and the Spanish conquest and inquisition. He has written five books on Mexico’s religious history alone.

So, Nesvig says, developing a course on surfing to teach Hawaiian history really pushed him out of his comfort zone. “To understand surfing is to understand the history of Hawaii,” he says. “Which was not an area that was familiar to me. It’s a fascinating subject, but it took a lot of work.”

Yet, in many ways, the class first offered last spring, “Hawaii and the Pacific World: Or, How Surfing Colonized California and the World,” was right up Nesvig’s ever-expanding scholarly alley. As a bisexual man who grew up in San Diego near the Mexican border, he says he has “always been someone who has been kind of in between. So, I relate to other peoples and cultures that are in between and transitional.”

Though their histories differ, Mexico and Hawaii remain forever in between their own ancient cultures and those imposed by European explorers, who not only brought new languages and religions but the diseases that decimated the majority of the native populations in both places. “In terms of colonialism, there are a lot of similarities between Hawaii and Mexico,” says Nesvig, who found his affinity for Mexico, and Mexican humor, by hanging with the Mexican kitchen staff at the many San Diego restaurants where he waited tables as a young man.

“In that sense, there are definite parallels between these critical encounters with people who were so radically different.”

Introducing students to a radically different culture was one of Nesvig’s main goals in offering the surfing class. In it, he traces how the 50th U.S. state went from being a kingdom with a complex culture to a missionary outpost to a U.S. territory that disenfranchised the remaining native Hawaiians—and tried to suppress the ancient sport that legendary surfer Duke Kahanamoku helped revive and introduce to the world in the 1920s.

But the class actually evolved from another unique course on a subject that Nesvig, a lifelong beach denizen who joined the faculty in 2005 after earning his doctorate in Mexican history from Yale, also made his own—the social history of beaches. Offered periodically, that popular class covers a wide range of topics, including the Jim Crow-era practices that, until 1965, barred Black people from Florida’s beaches.

Similar attitudes, Nesvig always told his students during the segment on Hawaiian beaches, barred Kahanamoku, a five-time Olympic medalist in swimming, from staying in beachfront hotels when he traveled the world to demonstrate his homeland’s ancient sport. His dark skin also kept him from playing Tarzan in Hollywood, a role that instead went to his friend and swimming rival Johnny Weissmuller.

“Every time I taught the beach class, everyone, including me, was kind of sad when the Hawaii segment ended,” recalls Nesvig, who in addition to his fluent Spanish has a “decent” Hawaiian vocabulary. “So, the more I taught about Hawaiian history, the more I thought this material is just too good to pass up.” Before offering the surfing class again, he’ll have to update it a tad to reflect the realization of Kahanamoku’s century-old dream of seeing surfing in the Olympics. In July, when surfing debuted at the summer games in Japan, Hawaii native Carissa Moore brought home the first-ever women’s gold for surfing, which Nesvig finds very fitting. “In so many ways, surfing belongs to Hawaii,” he says.

But the update can wait because, along with his upper-level seminar on Mexico, Nesvig was, for the third time, teaching a course on the very long history of gay and bisexual men this fall. “I do have some competence in the subject,” he says. “My master’s thesis at San Diego State was on the history of homosexuality. And, of course, I’m still in between.”—Maya Bell
Former Health Secretary Joins Faculty
Alex Azar’s varied experience is a boon for students

The former pharmaceutical executive, seasoned government executive, and practicing attorney joins former University president Donna Shalala as the second former U.S. secretary of health and human services to teach in the school’s Department of Health Management and Policy.

“Adding a second former health secretary to our faculty and especially someone with Alex’s vast expertise in other areas of the industry offers a tremendous opportunity to our students to learn from top leaders in the health care field,” says Dean John Quelch. In the position of adjunct professor and senior executive in residence—a designation reserved for professionals whose expertise extends far beyond teaching experience—Azar co-taught two graduate courses and one undergraduate course this fall semester with Steven Ullmann, professor and director of the Center for Health Management and Policy.

Department chair Michael French echoes the opportunity that adding a second former health secretary affords and highlights their mutually supportive relationship.

“The two bring a wealth of experience to our students in the classroom, and they complement each other very well,” French says.

“Alex’s appointment directly reflects the University’s balanced, apolitical approach—that one former secretary was appointed by a Democratic president and the other by a Republican—and the fact that they get along so well makes their affiliation with our department even more exciting,” he adds.

Esports Enters the Academic Arena
Certificate program explores the world of competitive video games

The online Global Esports Management Certificate Key offers a flexible pathway for students interested in the rapidly evolving and profitable industry built around multiplayer video game competitions. Offered through the University’s School of Education and Human Development, in collaboration with the Division of Continuing and International Education.

The flourishing esports industry is generating revenues in excess of $1 billion, attracting corporate sponsors like Coca-Cola, Red Bull, and Louis Vuitton. It also is making professional sports leagues like the NBA take notice. “Esports are a viable niche within the sports industry, so this program is for anyone interested in esports or in learning more about the business side of esports,” says Warren Whisenant, sport administration professor and chair of the Department of Kinesiology and Sport Sciences. “It’s a very different business model, and this gives participants the opportunity to learn more about the industry.”

Additionally, he was a guest lecturer in other courses and is collaborating on policy research projects with Shalala and other faculty members.

Hannah Ditzler took her first backpacking trip when she was 6 months old. One of her favorite early memories is the cool California water lapping her legs while she sat atop a surfboard that her dad—surfer, sailor, and Olympic trial swimmer—paddled along. She spent hours as a child collecting frogs, bugs, and salamanders in her backyard.

“For as long as I can remember, I’ve been a nature nerd,” jokes Ditzler, a student in the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science’s master of professional science program.

Ditzler’s fascination with the natural world has led her from California to Miami and then to Loggerhead Key, an uninhabited tropical island 70 miles off the coast of Key West.

As part of an internship funded by The Alliance for Florida’s National Parks, Ditzler spent six months starting in May researching the nesting and mating habits of loggerhead and green sea turtles to understand how to safeguard these two endangered species.

Like many students, Ditzler followed a schedule of 10 days on and four days off, and her working days started at 5:45 a.m. from the rustic lighthouse—built in 1866—where she slept. Because the island is fully self-sustaining, she was tasked with ensuring everything—from the solar panels that generate energy to the reverse-osmosis machine that produces drinking water—was operable.

Most of her day was spent on patrol. Ditzler walked the 1.7-mile perimeter of the island several times daily with an eye peeled for any sea turtle tracks leading to new nests or changes to existing ones. The internship advanced her own research. In late July, she submitted her thesis proposal that applies a two-fold observation process to explore the factors—beach elevation, distance from seaward vegetation, tides, etc.—that impact the turtles’ nesting preferences and how those patterns affect their reproduction success.

“These sea turtles need our help in order to flourish and to continue to exist,” she explains. “Researching their ideal nesting conditions is super important for beach management. If we can figure out the habitats they look for and the conditions they need, we can afford those areas greater protection.”

Florida, she points out, is one of two main nesting areas in the world for the loggerhead turtle. Many green sea turtles nest around the state as well.

Three years ago, Ditzler spent two months researching Olive Ridley turtles on Costa Rica’s Ostional Beach, where three or four consecutive nights each month, tens of thousands of females swarm the beach to lay their eggs.

“Sea turtles are extremely beautiful and super graceful,” she says, referring to the turtles as “charismatic megafauna,” the term reserved for whales, elephants, and other large animals that elicit special affection—and more financial support for their protection—than other species.

Ditzler has long been interested in sea turtles but says she never planned on doing sea turtle research. She was working as a research scuba diver and pursuing kelp forest ecology and fisheries as a course of study.

“Somehow sea turtles seem to be what’s happening in my life,” she says. “But I don’t complain one bit.”

The island is beautiful, and the stars at night are the most marvelous thing I’ve ever seen,” Ditzler says. Ditzler was not alone during the day on the island. Private boats would anchor and come ashore, generally from 15 to 20 daily, to chat and ask about her research. She rotated duty with a co-worker who was also completing an internship.

Still, as a nature nerd, she came to appreciate the island’s serenity and believes that the experience taught her a lot about sea turtles—and about herself.

“This opportunity has definitely taught me a lot of life skills in terms of being handy, how to troubleshoot things, and how to just figure stuff out on my own,” Ditzler says. “And this field work experience is going to be super helpful for my research and for building a career in conservation.” –Ashley A. Williams

A Nerd for Nature
Rosenstiel School graduate student tracks sea turtles on an island outpost

Hannah Ditzler, who is studying sport administration in the School of Education and Human Development and is captain of the University’s sports team, is thrilled the University has entered this space. “The fact that UM is offering a program and trying to forge its own way in esports is really inspiring,” Tallman says.

Avery Tallman, who is studying sport administration in the School of Education and Human Development and is captain of the University’s sports team, is thrilled the University has entered this space. “The fact that UM is offering a program and trying to forge its own way in esports is really inspiring,” Tallman says.
For almost a century, the University of Miami has been a beacon of hope and opportunity for South Florida, the nation, and the world.

Our dynamic research, academic, athletic, and arts programs have long been a hallmark of this institution. Our health system excels at delivering high-quality care and advancing transformative, life-changing discoveries. Our alumni go on to lead distinguished lives in every field.

Having emerged as one of the great success stories in American higher education, we are poised to take our accomplishments into a new dimension of visibility and impact.

Doing so will require unprecedented support from our alumni and friends, as well as the collective strength and passion of Hurricanes everywhere.

Are we up for the challenge?
Absolutely.
The University of Miami community has always been linked by a shared commitment to shape a brighter future for our students—and boldly transform our world for the better.

"Canes have been pursuing—and achieving—this ambitious goal since our founding in 1925. Two themes lie at the heart of the University’s history: resilience and renewal. Shortly after our founding, our city was hit by one of the century’s most powerful hurricanes. During those early years, we dealt with the impact of the stock market crash, the ensuing Great Depression, and the devastating global impact of World War II. Today, we are reimagining higher education in the wake of COVID-19. Its financial consequences, a social justice reckoning, and a world changing at light speed.

As we approach our centennial, we benefit immensely from the global standing that the University has earned. At the same time, we are as energetic, innovative, and pioneering as ever. We are an experienced yet youthful university—one that remains committed to enduring as a force for good and a source of light in service to humanity.

Ever Brighter is the embodiment of all that we have accomplished—and all that we can achieve. The U occupies a unique position in the world. We have always been proud of our stature as a truly hemispheric institution. Our proximity to Latin America and the Caribbean is part of what makes our region one of the most culturally vibrant in the nation—and our campus so dynamic. Yet our city also faces east, toward Europe, Africa, and Asia—a vivid reminder of our expanding global impact.

Our location at the crossroads of two hemispheres provides us with exceptional diversity. It also strengthens our interdisciplinary emphasis, our innovative approach to teaching and learning, and our ascent as a leading research institution. Ever Brighter honors our history while ensuring a strong future through philanthropic investments that span our entire enterprise and align with our long-term strategic vision.

The University of Miami not only links the world’s two hemispheres; it also thrives by integrating the hemispheres of the human brain. Our students, faculty, and staff connect analysis and synthesis to achieve breakthroughs across the spectrum of knowledge. Ever Brighter reflects this emphasis on pan-hemispheric excellence by embracing the emotional and the rational, combining quantitative and qualitative knowledge with creative expression, and placing equal value on the head and the heart. It honors our community’s collective wisdom by providing a blueprint for securing the resources we need to achieve preeminence across multiple areas of our institution.

Medicine and the humanities. Science and the arts. Athletics and scholarship. Technology and democracy. Over the past century, we have strived to advance our understanding of these complex intersections. Ever Brighter will raise our profile—and our collective sense of pride and purpose—even higher by sparking innovation with real-world impact.

Philanthropy is not just about the amount you give; it is about the act of giving. Many alumni and community members do not realize that gifts of every size have a tangible impact on the University’s reputation. Contributing to Ever Brighter at any level not only increases the value of a University of Miami degree; it is also a show of support for all the Canes—students, faculty, staff, alumni, grateful patients, and friends—who work to make the world brighter each day.

Thank you for all you do to improve, empower, and support the U. We invite you to join us as we build on our record of excellence to realize ever-greater accomplishments.

With gratitude,
Julio Frenk
President
Visionary leaders, exceptional impact

Transformative gifts from exceptionally generous donors have ignited the light that is Ever Brighter. Three landmark gifts are illuminating the way toward achieving our historic $2.5 billion goal.

An anonymous donor contributed $126 million to the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center to accelerate breakthroughs in finding cures for cancer and to expand innovative treatment options for patients. The gift, the largest in the University’s history, was made in honor of Dr. Stephen Nimer, director of Sylvester and the Oscar de la Renta Endowed Chair in Cancer Research.

A landmark $100 million gift by Dr. Phillip and Patricia Frost established the Frost Institutes for Science and Engineering. This gift elevates the University’s work in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, which focuses on solving some of the world’s most vexing problems.

What began as a love story between two undergraduates—Patti Herbert, B.B.A. ’57, and Allan Herbert, B.B.A. ’55, M.B.A. ’58—culminated in a transformational gift to support the University’s trajectory as a global leader in business education. In honor of their $100 million in lifetime giving to their alma mater and the largest gift ever to the business school, the school was named the University of Miami Patti and Allan Herbert Business School.

“Our family is ever prouder to be part of the U. We have long believed that in order for Miami to be a great city, it must be home to an ever greater University and an ever stronger medical center. That is why we’ve been so committed over the years and that is one of my greatest hopes for our Ever Brighter campaign—that others will be ever more inspired to get involved and lend their support, at all levels, to help propel the University of Miami to ever greater heights.”

Stuart A. Miller, J.D. ’82
Campaign Chair of Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century
Brilliant minds: Brighter world
Scholars. Doctors. Scientists. Conductors. Curators. Innovators. The University of Miami encompasses a vibrant, varied community of dreamers and doers. They are the people who make the U ever stronger, ever bolder, and ever brighter.

Donor generosity has a profound impact on the students and change-makers who honor our ideals and shape our University’s future.

Areas of focus
The stories featured here showcase just a few of the remarkable people at the University of Miami who are leading change and inspiring hope across seven key areas of focus.

- Brighter health
- Brighter science
- Brighter planet
- Brighter education
- Brighter champions
- Brighter arts
- Brighter opportunities
UHealth – University of Miami Health System and the Miller School of Medicine are tasked with educating the next generation of compassionate health care providers and visionary researchers, enhancing the well-being of every patient we serve, and promoting health equity throughout South Florida and beyond. We’re up to the challenge. Our health teams at our No.1-ranked Bascom Palmer Eye Institute are working toward the completion of the first human eye transplant in history. At Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center—the only National Cancer Institute-designated center in South Florida—breakthrough cancer treatments are in development. Established in 1948 as South Florida’s first collegiate nursing program, the School of Nursing and Health Studies has built a stellar reputation through its programs in nursing, the health sciences, and public health, as well as through a fully equipped simulation hospital that practices and prepares students, health care professionals, and first responders for real-life medical situations.

NEVER GIVE UP

“I hope to be the kind of doctor who never forgets what it’s like to be a patient,” says Antonio Fontanella, B.S. ’20. At the age of 3, Fontanella was diagnosed with nephrotic syndrome, which eventually progressed to focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS) and kidney failure. It was during his kidney transplant that he was introduced to the University for the first time—an experience he’ll never forget. “Despite the complications I experienced during the transplant, I had a fantastic medical team that refused to give up on me,” he says. “Thanks to their hard work and dedication, I was finally able to leave the hospital after 40 days.”

When Fontanella eventually returned to the University of Miami, it was for his undergraduate studies. He is now pursuing a medical degree at the Miller School of Medicine, where he studies the condition that nearly cost him his life. “No matter how long it takes, I want to cure FSGS,” he says. “I want to look into the eyes of a patient suffering from the disease I had as a kid and tell them, ‘It’s going to be OK’—and mean it.”

Brighter health

Every day, our researchers work to pursue treatments for the world’s most complex diseases, increase our knowledge of the oceans, and develop new technologies to make our world greener and safer. The University has earned prominence as a visionary research institution; each year we receive more than $380 million in research and sponsored program expenditures to support revolutionary discoveries across a range of disciplines. At the College of Engineering, we’re building on our strengths in materials engineering and expanding our reach in chemical engineering and aerosol sciences to improve the human condition. The College of Arts and Sciences’ Institute of the Mathematical Sciences of the Americas facilitates and disseminates research in mathematics and its applications across the hemisphere and beyond. The Miller School of Medicine receives more National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding than any other medical center in Florida—grants that enable our researchers to continue to push the boundaries of science.

Brighter science

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BRINGING A CURE FOR BLINDNESS WITHIN SIGHT

A stem cell biologist and biomedical engineer at the University, Daniel Pelaez, M.S.B.E. ’07, Ph.D. ’11, is nothing if not an optimist. As part of the eye transplantation team led by Dr. David T. Tse at Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, Pelaez is confident of the eventual outcome of the team’s visionary research. “I wake up each day knowing we’re closer to regenerating or restoring eyesight for those who can’t see,” he says. “Regeneration is all around us in nature; I firmly believe that kind of healing power can help cure blindness.”

For Pelaez, teaching is as strong a passion as research. “I encourage students to explore new boundaries, be creative, stay on top of new technologies, and keep an open mind,” he says. “I’m proud to be associated with a place that’s producing excellent clinicians and passionate scientists who are committed to improving the eyesight of people around the world.”

“Regeneration is all around us in nature; I firmly believe that kind of healing power can help cure blindness.”

ANTONIO FONTANELLA

DANIEL PELAEZ
Climate change represents the greatest challenge of our time—one that hits exceptionally close to home, as our University is situated in one of the world’s coastal cities most vulnerable to extreme weather events and sea level rise. Dedicated researchers at the University of Miami are applying their expertise and front-line knowledge to help mitigate the impacts of climate change and forge a more sustainable future. The Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science has built the world’s only hurricane simulator capable of generating Category 5 force winds and waves over water, which will increase our understanding of the science of hurricanes and their regional impact. The School of Architecture is envisioning the future for urban environments, designing more resilient communities that improve the health, safety, and well-being of all residents. The Miami Herbert Business School is the first to offer a STEM-certified master’s-degree program in sustainable business, preparing a generation of environmentally responsible, tech-savvy leaders well versed in green business and its positive impacts on the world.

Unprecedented challenges, ranging from COVID-19 to online learning, have changed the paradigm of higher education forever. That’s why we’re reimagining the academic experience to help students thrive in a changing world. The University is committed to creating an environment that embraces personalized and differentiated learning styles and platforms, elevates educational technology, supports the success of every student, and advances global human endeavor. The School of Education and Human Development is advancing the science of teaching and learning in ways that will spark innovation in our classrooms and improve learning outcomes across diverse communities. We’re also investing in hands-on experiences—from clinics offered through the School of Law that provide legal services for low-income clients to the in-house advertising agency at our School of Communication—that prepare graduates for rewarding, fulfilling careers.

“Growing up biracial made me realize the importance of culture, representation, and community building,” explains Miles Pendleton, B.S. ’21, who credits his hometown of Eugene, Oregon, with his drive to enter public service. When he arrived on campus, Pendleton immediately began engaging with our vibrant community through activities that included co-founding the University’s NAACP chapter and mentoring high school students through the Inspire U program. After graduating summa cum laude with a quadruple bachelor’s degree in Africana studies, political science, sociology, and criminology, he’s returning home to serve as the recently appointed president of the Eugene/Springfield NAACP branch. “The U believed in me—it brought forth a version of myself that even I couldn’t see,” he says. “Going forward, I hope do the same for others.”

Ben Kirtman’s interest in the variability of the Earth’s climate began as a child, when his father tasked him with pumping water out of their family’s Catskill basement each time it flooded from El Niño rainfall. He has now come full circle. As a professor at the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, he has led efforts to improve the federal government’s operative forecasts of El Niño’s impact in North America since 2016. Kirtman credits his exceptional students and colleagues for the University’s leadership in climate models. “The U has the people and the infrastructure needed to develop and fine-tune sophisticated predictive systems,” he notes. “Together, we’re trying to address climate-related problems—and produce viable solutions—so that the next generation can look forward to a better, healthier environment. That’s our responsibility: to leave the planet better than we found it.”

“That’s our responsibility: to leave the planet better than we found it.”

Ben Kirtman

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Brighter education

Brighter planet

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

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Ben Kirtman

BUILDING COMMUNITY

MILES PENDLETON
Brighter champions

The Hurricanes have garnered exceptional competitive achievements, winning 21 national team championships—including five football national championships—and more than 80 individual national titles. We’re equally successful at preparing student-athletes for success after college. Our student-athletes achieve graduation rates above the average of their Division 1 peers and continue to earn distinction on the Atlantic Coast Conference honor roll. Thanks to their dedication to athletics and impressive classroom achievements, ‘Canes succeed everywhere—from stadiums to boardrooms—winning both on the field and in their field of choice.

GAME-DAY GRATITUDE

Women’s basketball head coach Katie Meier never takes game day for granted. “Part of my pre-game routine is to show how thankful I am for this opportunity,” she says. “It’s incredible to watch my players do what they love and do it with excellence.” Off the court, Meier encourages her players to exemplify that same spirit of appreciation in their studies and community engagement. “The U has classrooms full of wonderful professors,” she says. “Much learning also happens in the interactions between classmates who come from diverse backgrounds and are eager to make new discoveries.” Meier is confident that her players will shine as leaders in whatever career they choose. “If they’ve received an education here and played for me and my staff, then they’ve been challenged at the highest level,” she notes. “I truly believe they represent the very top of their peer group. And I can’t wait to see where they go next.”

“It’s incredible to watch my players do what they love and do it with excellence.”

KATIE MEIER

Brighter arts

The University of Miami plays a pivotal role in nurturing and celebrating our region’s eclectic culture and boundless creativity. We embrace excellence across all facets of the arts and humanities, as exemplified by the Frost School of Music’s track record of innovation as one of the top-ranked schools in the country and a model for music education in the 21st century. Our nearly 20,000 works of fine art in the Lowe Art Museum and our Cuban Heritage Collection at the University Libraries—home to the most comprehensive repository of materials on Cuba outside of the island—are shining examples of our depth in this field.

LEARNING BY LISTENING

When Gerard Schwarz, the Schwarz-Benaroya Chair in Conducting and Orchestral Activities at the Frost School of Music and director of the Frost Symphony Orchestra, walks across campus, he often bumps into students practicing outside. He’ll usually stop to listen and offer impromptu instruction. “I tell them, ‘Play me something difficult you’ve been working on,’” he says with a grin.

This open, encouraging atmosphere reflects a deep sense of community and illustrates the wide-ranging diversity of a school where students and faculty members come together from a variety of backgrounds to create beautiful music. “What we do here is about making an important cultural contribution to society—and we need to fight for the things we consider important,” says Schwarz. “If we don’t, we’ll lose them. There’s always a brighter future, but we have to care deeply—and listen carefully—to create it.”

GERARD SCHWARZ
A professor of law and co-director of the Children and Youth Law Clinic, Kele Stewart represents children in the foster care system. She takes pride in equipping her students with the skills they need to succeed in the courtroom, producing empathetic graduates who provide top-tier advocacy for vulnerable populations. Stewart’s clinic recently participated in a class action lawsuit on behalf of children who weren’t receiving appropriate placements or mental health services—and won a favorable settlement. “Our students were front and center in helping to secure that victory,” she says.

“One thing I admire about the current generation is how they don’t rely on traditional answers when it comes to solving problems,” she notes. “They figure out what needs to be done—and they do it.”

We’re committed to building a culture of belonging, where every member of our community is valued and has the opportunity to add value, and every student—regardless of where they begin in life—has equal access to opportunity. Many of our programs focus on promoting equity and addressing disparities in areas ranging from educational access to health care. For example, the Miami Herbert Business School’s undergraduate entrepreneurship program inspires students to take ownership of their financial destiny and pursue their entrepreneurial passion. Programming and mentorship opportunities offered through the Division of Student Affairs for veteran, LGBTQIA+, multicultural, and other student populations provide for a rich and inclusive learning experience to help pave a path to success while in college and beyond.

“As the only academic medical center in the region, our extraordinary bench-to-bedside patient care at UHealth is powered by the research of the Miller School of Medicine, which gives us the expertise to offer the most cutting-edge discoveries. That’s something no other hospital in South Florida can offer.”

Dr. Dipen Parekh, Chief Operating Officer, University of Miami Health System, and Executive Dean for Clinical Affairs and Victor A. Pollianos, M.D. Endowed Chair in Urology, Miller School of Medicine
Shaping the Future of Medicine

Gifts to UHealth and the Miller School, which comprise $1.5 billion of the Ever Brighter campaign’s $2.5 billion goal, will catapult our medical enterprise into a new dimension of leadership, achievement, and prestige. Our top philanthropic priorities include the following.

**BASCOM PALMER EYE INSTITUTE**
It has been ranked the No.1 eye hospital in the nation for the 20th time. Its health teams and support staff are visionary innovators who further the boundaries of discovery and clinical care, including working toward the completion of the first human eye transplant.

**SYLVESTER COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER**
As the only National Cancer Institute-designated center in South Florida, Sylvester’s investigators are combatting cancer through a broad range of revolutionary advancements and discoveries. Among them is the development of targeted therapies to destroy cancer cells while reducing the side effects of conventional treatments such as chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation therapy.

**HEALTH EQUITY**
We serve one of the most unique populations in the world. Our emphasis on community health equity positions us to treat patients across different cultures and ethnicities, provide exceptional treatment to those who need it most, and train our medical students to care for patients from diverse demographics.

Support will further strengthen our deep community connections and provide crucial insight into treating and containing novel diseases such as the Zika virus and COVID-19.

**NEUROSCIENCE**
Our outstanding neuroscientists are at the leading edge of discoveries and treatments with the potential to transform our understanding of brain diseases and disorders. Donor support will build on our record of game-changing advancements—from the use of therapeutic hypothermia for treating spinal cord injury to the first auditory brainstem implant in Florida.

**DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS**
Extraordinary physicians and researchers within the department—one of the nation’s leaders in NIH funding—are unlocking mysteries behind some of the world’s most complex diseases. Examples include the identification of the major susceptibility gene for Alzheimer’s disease and efforts to slow the progression of ALS by identifying the biomarkers that can lead to early approaches for treatment.

**NEXTGEN MEDICAL EDUCATION/SCHOLARSHIPS**
The Miller School educates aspiring physicians who will shape the future of medicine. As part of our efforts to attract and retain the best and brightest prospective students—including those from underrepresented communities—Ever Brighter will fund a substantial increase in scholarships and ongoing enhancements to NextGenMD, our innovative medical education curriculum, which will position our graduates to excel as caregivers and health care leaders.

HOPE AND HEALING

On Oct. 22, 2015, Gisenia Reyes was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia, a deadly blood cancer. That day also marked the beginning of her journey to healing, thanks to the experts at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. “I wouldn’t be alive without the care and treatment I received from the doctors and nurses at Sylvester,” Reyes says. “I could have died at 33 years old, full of life—but I’m still here.”

“I’m grateful to my oncologist, my transplant doctor, and everyone who has donated to Sylvester to fund innovative research and treatments,” she adds. “With continued support, Sylvester’s physician-researchers could be the first to find a cure for cancer.”

**GISENIA REYES** right, with her sister and bone marrow donor, Lucy

“The Miller School of Medicine is at an inflection point. It is a moment to elevate our work—to support and train the next generation of physicians, accelerate the future of personalized medicine, uncover cures for vexing diseases, and ensure health equity for all our communities.”
Dr. Henri R. Ford, Dean, Miller School of Medicine
Strengthening our schools and colleges through philanthropy

Each of the University of Miami’s schools and colleges supports our mission—and our commitment to excellence—in unique and dynamic ways. Ever Brighter will advance an impressive breadth of programs and initiatives across our learning enterprise.

"Our University’s emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and discovery is outstanding. Ever Brighter will amplify our efforts to promote collaboration across diverse fields of study and leverage emerging technologies to solve the challenges of our time and create a better world for generations to come.”

Jeffrey Duerk, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE
With the support of private philanthropy, the school is committed to meeting the challenge of climate change through educational experiences focused on urban resilience, transformative technology, and problem-based, design-centered learning.

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Gifts to the college will accelerate major discoveries in science and mathematics, elevate and amplify the arts, advance our work in autism, and reimagine the Lowe Art Museum as the modern academic museum of tomorrow.
“Across the University, humanists, artists, biomedical researchers, and engineers are collaborating to advance research and discoveries that could change our world.”

Erin Kobetz
Vice Provost for Research and Scholarship and the John K. and Judy H. Schulte Senior Endowed Chair in Cancer Research
Fueling our vision

The University of Miami’s commitment to solidify our stature as a global education leader is stronger than ever. The ambitious goal we have set for Ever Brighter encompasses a core group of top-level funding priorities that will power the work of our learning community.

MAXIMIZING STUDENT POTENTIAL
Donor support will further our mission to attract diverse, talented applicants who will raise the caliber of our academic profile even higher. We will increase the amount of financial assistance awarded through a combination of endowed and current-use scholarships. These funds will make a University of Miami education more accessible and affordable and help students reduce their debt burden.

We will invest in programs that improve the student experience and strengthen our position in a competitive market by making the University more attractive to prospective students and families. Support for Ever Brighter will also fund improvements to our campus and residential community that promote inclusion, encourage cross-disciplinary learning, and enhance student life.

ELEVATING FACULTY TALENT
Our faculty members are one of the University’s greatest strengths; they play a pivotal role in our pursuit of excellence. Donor support will enhance their interdisciplinary research and scholarly activities. We will add 100 endowed positions to create greater fiscal strength for the University, help us achieve critical mass in key research disciplines, and provide a framework for securing additional funding. Private support will provide seed funding so faculty members can secure the facilities and staff members needed to launch new initiatives. Adding $500 million to our endowment will also strengthen our competitive position as we continue to recruit world-class academic talent.

“The pandemic has taught us that resiliency matters. That’s why it’s so important for the University to have a strong, stable, predictable source of funding—such as an endowment that funds research, faculty chairs, and student support.”
Jacqueline A. Travisano, Executive Vice President for Business and Finance/Chief Operating Officer

ADVANCING RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY
Philanthropy will enable us to create a comprehensive, University-wide endowment that will power our research enterprise and spark breakthroughs around complex challenges in areas ranging from climate change and cancer to urban resilience. These funds will enable us to establish research centers, institutes, laboratories, and collaborative working spaces that reflect our world-class stature and to develop treatments and cures that address pressing global health care challenges.

Donor support will fund state-of-the-art equipment that students, clinicians, faculty members, and staff need to innovate and excel and to take their innovations developed at the U into the global marketplace. We will also expand our health care research portfolio to advance translational projects that have a positive impact on the lives of our patients, and increase our institutional focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

TRANSFORMING PATIENT CARE
We will strengthen our position as a globally recognized academic medical center at the forefront of medicine through investments that drive our leadership in patient-centric care, supply new diagnostic tools, and offer treatments that ensure improved health outcomes. Donor support will allow us to include new community-facing clinical care centers, establish institutes focused on cardiovascular medicine and neuroscience, and provide ongoing investments in our world-class centers of excellence—which include Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

INSPIRING COMMUNITY ACTION
The University of Miami is not only one of the nation’s leading academic institutions, we are a valued resource for the South Florida community we call home. We deliver critical service to the people of our region and beyond through a wide range of activities that rely on philanthropic support. These include programs that bring state-of-the-art health care to underserved populations, partnerships focused on sharing our ideas and intellectual capital with scholars around the world, and research efforts focused on promoting sustainable economic development.

CHAMPIONING OUR ‘CANES
As the name on their uniform suggests, the ‘Canes are a whirlwind of activity. Their achievements unite the U and foster school spirit. Beyond the field of play, they excel in their studies and log thousands of community service hours annually in support of vital organizations.

Through the campaign, we will continue to invest in our student-athletes to ensure they have the resources they need to compete at the highest level—and provide them with an academic experience that enables their accomplishments to reverberate far beyond the arena of competition. Philanthropic support will enable us to recruit gifted young people through generous scholarships, attract and retain top coaching talent, and expand and upgrade our facilities to optimize performance.

“Since our founding, the University of Miami has been and continues to be an ever more important driver for student success, breakthrough research and discovery, and service to our community. Through our Ever Brighter campaign, we will continue to grow and deepen the engagement of alumni and donors who believe in our University and are committed to moving the U’s mission forward.”
Stuart A. Miller, J.D. ’82, Campaign Chair of Ever Brighter:
The Campaign for Our Next Century
ABOUT 30 HOURS AFTER THE SHOCKING COLLAPSE OF THE 12-STORY CHAMPLAIN TOWERS SOUTH CONDOMINIUM IN SURFSIDE, DR. ALBERTO CABAN-MARTINEZ DROVE HIS PACKED SUV TO THE DISASTER SITE. Escorted through the chaos by an ambulance, the deputy director of Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Firefighter Cancer Initiative (FCI) was on a mission to deliver thousands of baby wipes and a dozen decontamination kits embossed with the lifesaving motto now found in hundreds of fire stations across Florida.

Researchers with Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center’s Firefighter Cancer Initiative helped establish an environmental and exposure monitoring program to keep first responders safe at the Surfside condo collapse and help inform mitigation guidelines for future disasters.

BY MAYA BELL

PROTECTING THOSE WHO PROTECT US
“Clean is the new badge of honor,” the large, green buckets say. Each contained the dish soap, scrub brushes, wipes, spray bottles, and hoses that Caban-Martinez, B.S., Ph.D., ’01, hoped search-and-rescue workers would use to eliminate microscopic toxins he knew would cling to their skin and gear after 12 hours of sifting through the rubble that entombed nearly 100 people.

“Prevention is key,” explains Caban-Martinez, an associate professor of public health sciences at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. “You do not want to be marinating in these compounds that are circulating in the air.”

Soon after, FCI’s director Butch Smith, who died at age 54 nearly nine years after his 2008 diagnosis, and his comrades knew too many other front-line firefighters in Florida who had been stricken with a variety of cancers at a young age. But since none of them had taken part in New York’s post-9/11 recovery, they reached out to Sylvester, the state’s only academic cancer center, to provide the evidence-based data that would legitimize—and hopefully the outcome will be that we won’t see a lot of long-term health impacts like we did after 9/11.”

Instead, it was, ironically, the growing awareness of those health impacts that inspired the creation of the FCI, which the Florida Legislature has continuously funded since its 2015 inception. During the 20 years since terrorists crashed planes into the World Trade Center’s twin towers, at least 200 New York City firefighters have died from illnesses tied to the toxic mist that enveloped Manhattan in the ensuing months. Hundreds more have been diagnosed with a variety of cancers, including multiple myeloma—the same blood cancer that killed the Palm Beach County Fire Rescue captain who first asked Kobot to connect the dots between firefighting and cancer.

Butch Smith, who died at age 54 nearly nine years after his 2008 diagnosis, and his comrades knew too many other front-line firefighters in Florida who had been stricken with a variety of cancers at a young age. But since none of them had taken part in New York’s post-9/11 recovery, they reached out to Sylvester, the state’s only academic cancer center, to provide the evidence-based data that would legitimize—and hopefully one day prevent—what they knew to be true: Their jobs put them at a high risk for cancer.

Urwin, a former Miami-Dade firefighter who has been with the Los Angeles County Fire Department for 15 years, also knew who to enlist when he realized it would fall to MDFR and the IAFF to initiate exposure monitoring in Surfside. “Given the aftermath of 9/11, we all assumed that when this type of major incident takes place, some sort of government environmental monitoring program would automatically go into play,” he says. “But, after a couple of days, it became clear that was not the case, so knowing this was Miami, Alberto and Erin were my first two phone calls.”

In short order, Urwin flew from L.A. to Miami, where

—continued on page 43

HYDROCARBONS
POLYARMATIC
S
MIAMI
The only researcher with early access to the disaster zone, Urwin was also instrumental in organizing the PAH study that Caban-Martinez presented in September. For that study, graduate student Unser Bakali, B.S. ’18, processed and analyzed the data collected from 29 silicone wristbands that Urwin placed around the collapse site before the controlled demolition of the remaining tower structure and another 48 wristbands worn by rescue workers who continued the grueling search of the debris pile afterward.

It was almost the very same kind of simple wristbands that originally helped Kobetz, Caban-Martinez, and other FBI investigators begin linking firefighting to cancer. Firefighters who wore similar wristbands in earlier studies eventually learned that the soot-covered fire gear they proudly stowed in their trucks, their sleeping quarters, or their homes’ jackets—or even the air in their vehicles—was deluged with dangerous carcinogens. They were never told the reason and were never sure of the risks.

“I’m always thinking about firefighters—like what they were doing after Hurricane Ida hit the Gulf coast, what we could do to protect them from things like water contamination and infection,” Caban-Martinez says. “Because we know they will do whatever it takes to do their job, which is saving lives without considering the repercussions. But it’s our job to make sure they know how to protect themselves from hazards and reduce their risks.”

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researchers from across the University eagerly stepped up to help. They offered their expertise, equipment, and a handful of “remarkable” students, who Urwin said provided essential assistance at the collapse site or in the lab.

Naresh Kumar, professor of environmental health in the Department of Public Health Sciences who specializes in the health effects of air pollution, facilitated the air-monitoring efforts and employed multiple instruments and real-time pollutant sensors to monitor particles and gases circulating on and adjacent to the debris pile—and as far as six blocks away.

“Within a block of the site, I removed my respirator and had a burning sensation in my throat and eyes,” recalls Kumar, who was assisted by graduate students Johnathan Penso, B.S. ‘21, and Samantha Abelson, B.S. M.A.S. ‘21. “Using readings from our real-time sensor and my own symptoms, I told Derek: ‘Tell all these folks not to remove their respirators unless they are in the tent or a protected area.’”

Cassandra Gaston, an assistant professor in the Department of Atmospheric Sciences—who studies the composition and size of aerosols—lent handheld, battery-operated air samplers, and her detail-oriented research assistant, Michael Sheridan, B.A. ‘21. He provided Urwin and Kumar vital in-the-field support. And Helena Solo-Gabriele, B.S. ’97, M.S. ’86, professor in the Department of Chemical, Environmental and Materials Engineering, supplied an X-ray fluorescence analyzer that, resembling a big gun, almost instantly detects high levels of metals in any material. Soon after, her graduate student, Adeefa Abdool-Ghany, began analyzing dust samples and metal readings collected at the site.

The Gordon Center for Simulation and Innovation in Medical Education has taught advanced practice interventions to firefighters and paramedics in the Department of Trauma and Surgical Critical Care at the Miller School of Medicine, who was deployed to the site as the medical manager of Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Urban Search and Rescue Team/Florida Task Force 1. In his role, Lieberman served to treat the injured and to oversee the medical well-being of team members who navigated the precarious piles of rubble and debris in search of survivors.

Another University physician, Brandon Parker, an assistant professor of surgery in the Division of Trauma and Surgical Critical Care, worked at the site as a medical team manager of the City of Miami’s South Florida Urban Search and Rescue Team/Florida Task Force 2.

Pediatric critical care physician G. Patricia Carroll joined Parker in Surfside, contributing what he described as “tremendous experience and insight” to the effort. A longtime veteran of Task Force 2, Carroll has been deployed to disaster areas both at home and abroad, including Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and in New Orleans, La., after the devastating 2005 earthquake.

On the medical campus, Vincent J. Torres, director of emergency management for the University of Miami Health System, and his Hospital Incident Command Team sprung into action as soon as they got word of the disaster, ordering additional liters of blood and ensuring that adequate medicines were in place in UHealth Towers’ emergency department. Elizabeth Estrada, manager of emergency preparedness for UHealth, volunteered at the site of the collapse, supporting Miami-Dade County’s Office of Emergency Management.

Using high-tech sensors, Naresh Kumar, an associate professor of environmental health in the Department of Public Health Sciences, assisted first responders in monitoring levels of particulate matter—a mixture of solid particles and liquid droplets—produced by the collapsed building.

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University Provides Multifaceted Support for Surfside

The University of Miami has provided an extensive array of services, resources, and academic expertise to support the Surfside recovery operation, the community, and affected families.

Obed Fonseca, a lieutenant with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue Task Force 1 who gathers and packages vital debris data, was among the first responders on scene following the building collapse.

“BRANDON PARKER, A UNIVERSITY PHYSICIAN, ALSO WORKED AT THE SITE AS A MEDICAL TEAM MANAGER.”

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“The tradition of resilience that has been with us from our founding has been the cornerstone of our response to an unprecedented convergence of crises on the health, economic, and social fronts," Frenk said. “We have not shied away from tough choices, and we have stepped boldly into our mission.”

The University’s president spoke to a live audience of about 125 people inside the Shalala Student Center Ballroom—attendance was limited because of adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols—and to thousands more watching virtually.

Frenk, the former minister of health of Mexico, recognized the “heroic efforts” of the University of Miami Health System during the pandemic, noting that once the government lifted restrictions on elective procedures, UHealth physicians resumed seeing non-COVID-19 patients—a decision, he said, that helped save lives. “The impact of COVID-19 on health outcomes is much broader than the official case and death counts,” Frenk pointed out.

He honored members of the University community who played pivotal roles in helping the institution navigate the COVID-19 crisis. Through video vignettes, town hall participants listened to workers on the front lines describe their experiences during the pandemic. One of them was Doreen Ashley, D.N.P. ’11, executive director of nursing at UHealth, who has been with the health system for more than 30 years. “We did a lot of planning prior to getting our first patient,” Ashley said in her video. “Getting that first patient then became real. Daily, literally, we were making changes. As we learned more, we did more. As the CDC guidelines changed, we changed.”

Frenk told the audience that while the world has changed, time has not stood still, and the University continues to move forward. As such, he revealed the ambitious plans the University has in the works.

At homecoming in early November, the University officially unveiled its new fundraising effort, Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century is chaired by longtime University benefactor and trustee Stuart Miller, J.D. ’82, former chair of the Board of Trustees and current chair of the UHealth Board of Directors, whose family in 2004 made a landmark $100 million naming gift to the medical school in memory of his late father, Leonard M. Miller.

Reaffirming the University’s commitment to racial diversity and inclusion, mentioning the 15-point action plan to advance racial justice he unveiled last summer, Frenk informed listeners that the University hired 14 new Black faculty members this academic year. The new Center for Global Black Studies has launched, and plans are underway to renovate nearly 13,000 square feet on the second floor of the Whitten University Center to meet the needs of several student groups.

**RAMPING UP UHEALTH**

Frenk described the University of Miami Health System as being on a “trajectory to preeminence,” even though it sits at the intersection of the two sectors most impacted by the pandemic: education and health care. He announced ambitious expansion plans that include a new research building for the National Cancer Institute-designated Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and new outpatient facilities in Palm Beach, Aventura, and Doral in the years to come.

The new Miller Center for Medical Education is scheduled for a spring 2024 completion, a project that “reflects what we know across the University—we cannot have 21st century learning in 19th century classrooms,” Frenk acknowledged.

On the residential housing front, Frenk announced the resumption of planning for Centennial Village, the second phase of a multiphase plan to modernize campus housing. Lakeside Village opened last fall. He said that the new ‘Cane Commitment approach of helping students to become critical thinkers, effective communicators, problem-solvers, and world citizens will be integrated into the first-year experience starting next fall. And he revealed a new partnership with the educational technology company 2U for a fully online MBA that builds on successful platforms for remote learning.

Frenk also announced the creation of the New Century College, an initiative to experiment with and evaluate novel approaches to teaching and learning.

**STATE OF THE U TOWN HALL HIGHLIGHTS RESILIENCE, FUTURE INITIATIVES**

IN WHAT HAD ALREADY BEEN A SPRING SEMESTER LIKE NO OTHER, WITH COVID-19 CASES SPIKING ACROSS MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI STUDENTS WERE TOLD IN MARCH 2020 THAT CLASSES FOR THE REST OF THE ACADEMIC TERM WOULD BE MIGRATED ONLINE.

Then, as the start of the Fall 2020 semester grew closer, University officials had a daunting decision to make: whether to follow the national trend of continuing to teach virtually or to offer students the choice of returning to campus for in-person instruction.

The University chose the latter, taking precautions that were so meticulous in their nature that no cases of in-classroom transmission of the virus were recorded throughout the full academic year.

That decision was just one of many actions, taken during the past two years, that have allowed the University to not only effectively deal with the pandemic but also demonstrate its longtime ability to endure and remain resilient in the face of adversity, President Julio Frenk said during his third University Town Hall, held Sept. 28.

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**OTHER DEVELOPMENTS PRESIDENT FRENK UNVEILED AT THE TOWN HALL INCLUDED:**

- An inaugural cohort of Academic Innovation Fellows convenes members of the faculty who are immersed in designing the delivery of content based on matching effective pedagogy to student learning needs.
- The new Climate Resilience Academy will deliver solutions to climate change impacts and related stressors in partnership with industry, government, universities, and other stakeholders.
- The University is continuing its partnership with the Knight Foundation and in the fall began hosting a series of conversations about Miami at the intersection of tech and democracy.
- Earlier this year, a $4.3 million grant from the Knight Foundation unlocked $6 million in matching funds from Phillip and Patricia Frost, whose $100 million gift in 2017 launched the University’s Frost Institutes for Science and Engineering. The gift is enabling the University to recruit six Knight endowed chairs at its new Institute for Data Science and Computing (IDSC), including Yelena Yesha, the first Knight Chair of IDSC, who participated in a panel that immediately followed the president’s remarks. It addressed strategies on how the University can make innovation a priority.
As he welcomed the Class of 2021 to the University of Miami Alumni Association (UMAA) at spring commencement, Devang Desai, B.A. ‘97, J.D. ’03, reminded these newly minted alumni that “a great University experience does not end at graduation” and that they were “about to start a whole new relationship with the U.” Desai, a partner in the South Florida law firm of Gaebe, Mullen, Antonelli & DiMatteo, has also stepped into a new role as president of the Alumni Board of Directors. As an alumnus, he has rendered continued exemplary service to the University. He is a member of the President’s Council and the University’s Board of Trustees, and he has served as a past president of the School of Law Alumni Association. As president of the Alumni Board of Directors, Desai plans to continue engaging and connecting alumni across the globe. “This is a tremendous honor,” he says. “I look forward to strengthening the University of Miami network and ensuring that our alumni feel valued and continue their engagement at all levels of our alumni network to champion an even brighter U.”

Desai and his 38 fellow members of the alumni board play critical roles as ambassadors for the University. They encourage alumni engagement, philanthropic giving, and volunteerism; offer strategic insight; foster ‘Canes pride and spirit; and work diligently to advance the UMAA’s mission.

Young alumni are represented on the alumni board by MacKenzie Green, B.S.C. ‘10. She is also the new president of the Young Alumni Leadership Council, which relaunched this year and represents alumni who earned their undergraduate degrees in the past 10 years. The council supports the needs of recent graduates with tailored communications and events that foster relationships, facilitate networking activities, and create a strong culture of giving.

Beyond the national boards, alumni around the country can stay in touch with their alma mater through one of nearly 40 ‘Canes Communities or one of a variety of special interest groups. These regional and affinity groups (including several international chapters) provide alumni, parents, students, and friends of the University of Miami with connections to the University through educational events; community service; and social gatherings, such as game watch parties, professional networking, mentoring, and other programming. These groups are the best, easiest way for alumni to tap into the worldwide University of Miami network.

‘Canes Communities are led by alumni volunteers, with the president and president-elect of each community also serving on the Alumni Council, along with leaders of special interest and school/college alumni groups. ‘Canes Community and affinity group leaders serve as ambassadors and promoters of the University in their home regions, deliver robust engagement programming, hire ‘Canes, mentor students, and solicit financial support for the University. As an example of the latter, the top ‘Canes Communities—by alumni population in their home region—have established regional student scholarships and have developed programming dedicated to raising funds for these scholarships. As a result, 17 scholarships were awarded this year.

In preparation for Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century, the UMAA revamped the ‘Canes Community structure, including the rebirth of the Miami ‘Canes Community, a critical component of the UMAA’s representation in its hometown, and the strengthening of volunteer leadership in the top markets.

These leaders—whether at the national, regional, or affinity level—help the UMAA identify new individuals to engage with the University, develop strong leadership boards that can continue their work once they complete their term of service, encourage philanthropic support, and promote the University in their own circles of influence. They are our ambassadors, our biggest advocates, and our most passionate supporters, who are critical to advancing the University’s mission and most important initiatives.

See page 59 to find your local ‘Canes Community.

“Great University experience does not end at graduation.”
—Devang Desai

Over 18 months of engaging alumni virtually, the University of Miami Alumni Association (UMAA) is resuming select in-person events as permitted by evolving health and safety guidelines. The UMAA will continue to host virtual events and programs, such as the interactive UM Experience and the most recent edition of Women of the U, held in August. In-person offerings, like the pregame tailgate held in Atlanta for the Chick-fil-A Kickoff against Alabama in early September, feature robust safety protocols including physical distancing, indoor masking, and strict guidelines for food service.

Programming in both modes—a hybrid engagement model—will help alumni stay connected to the University and other ‘Canes. “In these uncertain times, it’s important that the alumni association remains flexible in our programming,” says Erica Arroyo, B.S.C. ’03, M.A.L.S. ’08, associate vice president for engagement. “Employing a hybrid model will allow us to adapt quickly as circumstances evolve.”

Hybrid programming allows participants to enjoy the advantages of virtual events (for example, being able to attend events hosted outside one’s area) and attend events in person when feasible. A third model being explored is that of true hybrid events, in which guests have the option of either attending in person or joining online. The Alumni Board of Directors kicked off this fall with a fully hybrid meeting for volunteers during the Alabama vs. Miami football weekend.

To better plan its response to the changing rules for public gatherings and the ongoing challenges of physical distancing, the UMAA also surveyed alumni on their engagement preferences and incorporated feedback into strategies. All efforts are being made to ensure that safety for events is paramount while creating a comfortable setting for ‘Canes and friends of the U to gather. Striving to offer something for everyone, the UMAA presents alumni with a wide range of events, community service projects, courses, and other programming, spanning categories as diverse as the arts, education, professional development, sports, health and wellness, business, social networking, and affinity-based events.

Review the schedule of upcoming events at alumni.miami.edu/events
Swimming Is Their Passion, Water Safety Their Mission

Alumni Robert and Jennie Strauss own Swim Gym, one of 800 'Cane-owned businesses

As a child in Mexico City, Robert Strauss, B.A. ’74, M.S.Ed. ’77, discovered a passion for swimming that became his life’s work and connected him to his life partner—his wife, Jennie Strauss, B.M. ’81, M.M. ’86. Over the years, the Strausses have made water safety their central mission. “It has always been my mission to educate people about drowning, which is so preventable.”

Over the years, the Strausses have made water safety their central mission. “It has always been my mission to educate people about drowning, which is so preventable,” Strauss says. “The biggest challenge is that people think that in five or 10 lessons, the teacher teaches the children to float on their backs, and it’s not about that. [It’s about] not letting the child be ignorant of the consequences, about teaching the child what it means to have an exit plan before they go into the water.”

Strauss draws on the principles of psychomotricity, the relationship between mental processes and physical activities, to help children develop the skills to enter and exit a body of water safely.

“If it’s a pool, where are the steps? If it’s the ocean or a bay or a lake, where is the rock you are going to use to climb out? They [become] aware of the consequences and know they won’t drown in the first 10 seconds. They turn and grab a wall. They learn what they have to do if I weren’t there in that moment.”

Beyond water safety, there is the fun factor. “We don’t want to teach people to swim for their life. We want people to learn to swim for their whole life, whether they use swimming as exercise or recreation,” Strauss notes. “Once you know how to swim, the world opens up with scuba diving, kite surfing, boating, jet skis, you name it. And you have such a good time.”

—Pamela Eduard
A Novel Track to an Academic Presidency

Terrence Cheng, M.F.A. ’97, newly appointed president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, attributes one phone call that took place 26 years ago for changing the trajectory of his life.

“I wouldn’t quite call it serendipity, but the stars certainly had a way of aligning,” says Cheng, who was previously the director of the University of Connecticut’s Stamford campus and was approved by the Board of Regents to serve in that position. A recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts literature fellowship, is the author of two novels, “Sons of Heaven” and “Deep in the Mountains,” as well as numerous published short stories and essays. He was awarded the James Michener Fellowship and Teaching Assistantship in the College of Arts and Sciences, which included a full tuition waiver and an annual stipend.

“When I look back, that opportunity really put me on the track that allowed me to make the progress that I’ve made through my career,” says Cheng, who was born in Taiwan and grew up on Long Island in New York. “Having that terminal degree allowed me to actually pursue teaching positions and to then move up through the ranks in academia and so forth.”

Cheng, a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts literature fellowship, is the author of two novels, “Sons of Heaven” and “Deep in the Mountains,” as well as numerous published short stories and essays. He was with a unanimous vote that Cheng was approved by the Board of Regents for Higher Education to oversee the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, which includes 17 campuses and serves more than 72,000 students.

“It’s surreal to think,” notes Cheng. “I still remember—palpably—what it was like growing up as a first-generation student and as an immigrant child. And then to be able to have a career in higher education, to be able to write, and to be honored with the responsibility of now running a university, feels crazy.”

University of Miami President Julio Frenk congratulated Cheng on his new appointment via an email, which Cheng described as a “real treat.”

“When I was approved to be Miami’s Master of Fine Arts program director there, I was unprepared. Unbeknownst to him, Baltimore would be his home for the next two years. Unbeknownst to him, he was appointed president of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system, which includes 17 campuses and serves more than 72,000 students.

“I was overwhelmingly surprised to be chosen as the new president of an institution that is such a significant part of the State Colleges and Universities system, which includes 17 campuses and serves more than 72,000 students,” says Cheng. “It’s surreal to think that this is the reality of my life.”

When he was sworn in as a member of the Florida Bar, Cheng became the first openly autistic lawyer in the state.

She uses the legal and policy knowledge she acquired at the University to advocate for ways to improve the lives of those living with a disability. “Law school gave me the tools to be more conscious of different issues and to be able to advocate for myself and for others far better than I could have otherwise,” she notes.

Much of Moss’s impact comes from her willingness to share her experiences as a young woman with autism, navigating a world that is not always designed for people like her. Some of those stories are told in two books that are part memoir and part guide for other autistic people as they navigate adolescence and adulthood. In her third and most recent book, “Great Minds Think Differently: Neurodiversity for Lawyers and Other Professionals,” she provides the tools for more inclusion and understanding within the legal and other professions.

“In many ways, you do have to develop social skills and know how to interact with people,” she says, “but it’s okay to interact with people on your terms. It doesn’t mean you have a deficit. It just means you have a different set of social and communication skills and a different way to approach the world.”

—Nastasia Boulos

Lawyer Promotes Awareness of Neurodiversity

When Haley Moss, J.D. ’18, was 9 years old, her parents told her she was like Harry Potter—different, but a hero, nonetheless. It was their way of explaining to their young daughter that she had autism spectrum disorder while never making her feel like there was something wrong with her. “My mom told me different is neither better nor worse,” Moss says. “It’s just different, and different could be extraordinary.”

That’s the message Moss wants to share. As an educator, speaker, artist, and author, she advocates for individuals with disabilities and promotes awareness and acceptance of neurodiversity—the idea that cognitive differences, like those seen in people with autism spectrum disorder, should be recognized and respected like any other human variation.

Moss was 3 years old when she was diagnosed with autism. Her parents had expected to learn that she was gifted. Though she couldn’t speak, socialize with her peers, or even drink from a cup, she could finish large jigsaw puzzles and read anything that was placed in front of her. Instead, doctors told them she would be lucky to graduate high school or even make a friend.

With the support of the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of Miami, Moss began therapies and interventions to help her learn how to speak, interact with others, and develop some of the skills that children on the autism spectrum may find more challenging than others.

After graduating high school, Moss earned undergraduate degrees in criminology and law and psychology from the University of Florida before attending the University of Miami School of Law. When she was sworn in as a member of the Florida Bar, Moss became the first openly autistic lawyer in the state.

She uses the legal and policy knowledge she acquired at the University to advocate for ways to improve the lives of those living with a disability. “Law school gave me the tools to be more conscious of different issues and to be able to advocate for myself and for others far better than I could have otherwise,” she notes.

“It’s okay to interact with people on your terms. It doesn’t mean you have a deficit.” —Haley Moss

“The world of professional sports is a melting pot in many ways. It’s not like a, you know, club where you go on and off the pitch or, you know, court or whatever, and so forth.” —Haley Moss

“I still remember—palpably—what it was like growing up as a first-generation student and as an immigrant child. And then to be able to have a career in higher education, to be able to write, and to be honored with the responsibility of now running a university, feels crazy.” —Terrence Cheng

“I was overwhelmingly surprised to be chosen as the new president of an institution that is such a significant part of the State Colleges and Universities system, which includes 17 campuses and serves more than 72,000 students.” —Haley Moss

“Great Minds Think Differently: Neurodiversity for Lawyers and Other Professionals.” —Haley Moss
Surfside Mayor Navigates Challenges, Chaos

Charles Burkett, B.B.A. ’84, was not looking for notoriety when he became mayor of Surfside. He simply wanted to improve the town where he has lived for 25 years. But Burkett’s devotion to the seaside town of 6,000 has magnified considerably since the Champlain Towers South condominium collapsed on June 24, taking the lives of 98 people and leaving many others without a home. Since then, the man known to friends as a level-headed real estate developer—has become a household name, fielding local and national reporters’ questions about the search, rescue, and recovery efforts.

With Surfside thrust into the spotlight, Burkett worked diligently to help his town heal and to answer the question on everyone’s mind: How did the unimaginable happen? “If you had not done one bit of maintenance for 40 years, it still should not have fallen down,” says Burkett. “And I was doing what I would hope anyone would do. It was full speed, nonstop effort until everybody was out of the rubble.”

For a month after the tragedy, Surfside became the epicenter of a heartbreaking tragedy. Fire rescue and police trailers formed a compound near the collapse site, where journalists lined the perimeter. Burkett comforted the families of victims lost in the collapse, hosted a visit from President Joe Biden, and formed close bonds with Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. He also appeared on countless news programs.

Long after the collapse, Burkett’s phone still chimes incessantly. He toggles between meetings with the town commission, the town manager, and the police chief—along with calls from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which is investigating the cause of the collapse.

Still, the mayor, who has managed several building renovations, wrangles with the same disbelief as others. How could a condominium just fall down? “If you had not done one bit of maintenance for 40 years, it still should not have fallen down,” Burkett exclaims. Once he has some answers, Burkett notes, “we will rewrite the book on how not to do this.”

With the苩eral’s support, Burkett’s office will continue its work with the town’s other leaders to ensure that the perimeter is lined. Burkett comforted the families of victims lost in the collapse, hosted a visit from President Joe Biden, and formed close bonds with Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis. He also appeared on countless news programs.

Monetith, an associate professor of clinical neurology at the Miller School of Medicine and chief of the UHealth Headache Division, began her journey at the University as a medical student. The opportunity to pursue medicine while living near her family, she says, landed her in the Miller School. She recognizes that her time at the medical school helped pave the way for her future, including finding her calling as a specialist to help patients suffering from debilitating headaches. Among the most common disorders in the world, headaches are treatable, Monetith says. She notes that taking a holistic approach combined with cutting-edge science to treat patients suffering from headaches is significant work.

“Growing up, I always knew I just wanted to help. I liked service-oriented fields,” she recalls, noting that she had always been interested in many different things like science, psychology, and humanity. “Medicine seemed like the best fit for all of those.”

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“I always say that whatever you do, believe that it’s important, that you can make a difference, and that putting in the work and effort to achieve that is a cumulative process. When you do that, it comes easily, and doors open very rapidly,” she says.

After graduating, that cumulative process helped Monetith secure two medical fellowships in headache medicine in different cities before she was presented with the opportunity to return to the city and school she calls home.

Alumna’s Hard Work Paves Path to Success

For Teshamae Monetith, M.D. ’04, her goal in life has always been simple—she wants to help people. Whether it was her large Jamaican family while growing up in Miami or the patients she now treats at the University of Miami’s Headache Clinic, Monetith knew from a young age that she wanted to serve people.

“When you show up and put in the effort to continue on a certain path, the leaves along the path get raked before you even get there,” she adds.

Upon her return to the University, Monetith received a grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke to work with her mentor—Ralph Sacco, professor and Olemberg Family Chair of Neurology and the executive director of the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute at the Miller School—on the Northern Manhattan Study, which looked at migraine and the risk of stroke in older adults. In addition, Monetith has been the principal investigator for studies to evaluate treatments for people with chronic migraines and for those who overuse headache medications.

Though her hard work paved the way, Monetith often wonders where she would be today without the support of her family and mentors who continue to believe and invest in her success. Now, Monetith’s weeks vary as she continues her mission to serve. Whether recording a podcast for the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), collaborating with her fellow program directors on the American Headache Society, or working alongside her editorial board colleagues for the AAN’s Brain & Life magazine, she unremittingly shows up and lives out her purpose to help those around her. —Jenny Hudak

Financial aid from Miami University has played a significant role in my life, paying for my education and allowing me to focus on my studies. I am grateful for the opportunity to receive financial assistance and the support it has provided me. —Janette Neuwahl Tannen

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Equally skilled in business and technology, he has served on the boards of directors of several companies, including a Fortune 500 company. In addition to his entrepreneurial endeavors, he is a frequent public speaker and has written extensively on topics such as leadership, innovation, and the future of work.

He is a member of several professional organizations, including the Massachusetts Conference for Women in Business, the Boston Young Professionals Network, and the Harvard Business School Alumni Association. He is also a mentor to a number of early-stage entrepreneurs, providing guidance and support as they navigate the challenges of starting and growing their businesses.

In his personal life, he enjoys spending time with his family, playing tennis, and exploring new cities and cultures through travel. He is an avid reader and a lifelong learner, always seeking to expand his knowledge and understanding of the world around him.
Joshua R. Levenson, B.B.A. '19, was named a 40 Under 40 Honoree, Class of 2021, by the South Florida Business Journal. The 40 Under 40 award recognizes outstanding professionals younger than the age of 40 based in Miami Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties for their leadership, success in business, and contributions to their communities.

Marguerite D. Cook, B.A. '81, was promoted to partner at 1 North Wealth Services. Cook will focus primarily on clients who reside in the Chesapeake region of Maryland, Washington, D.C., Virginia, and Florida. Cook lives with her husband, Lee, near their two children's Maryland eastern shore.

Michael F. Marinello, B.A. '16, is the public address announcer for the Major League Soccer club Inter Miami CF at DRVNTD Park.

Cesar A. Santalo, M.F.A. '18, dean of the School of Communication and Design at Lynn University, brings 20 years of experience from Univision and Telemundo, where he directed, created, and implemented revenue-generating projects. As the leader for the school at Lynn University, he builds upon achievements in enrollment, graduation, innovation, and community engagement.

Samuel Fasold, M.M. '09, opened the New City School of Music in 2014 and was nominated as a National Music School of the Year finalist for 2021.

Faraci co-authored “The Definitive Guide to Music Lessons,” which is a book for music students and parents of music lessons. He is the owner of New City School of Music in 2014 and was nominated as a National Music School of the Year finalist for 2021. He is a native of Naples, Florida, the author also is a screenwriter and contributes to the science and policy behind how sharks are saved from extinction.

Stephanie J. Thomas, M.F.A. '18, graduated from Virginia Medical School with a Doctor of Health Science degree.

Angelo Massagli, J.D. '16, who played security guard Frankie in the movie “School of Rock,” and Caitlin Hale, who played singer Maria, are dating—18 years after the original film.
In Memoriam

The University of Miami Alumni Association notes the passing of the following graduates.

William Arthur “Art” Roberts

The University of Miami lost a distinguished alumnus, dedicated leader, and loyal friend with the passing of August 2021. “Art” Roberts, B.B.A. ’84, at the age of 70. Born in Coral Gables in 1941, he grew up an avid Hurricanes fanatic. He followed in his mother’s footsteps and attended the University, where he met his wife, Roselee Nichols, while both were student leaders. The couple both worked in the government and private sectors, and in 2004 they founded The Advocate Company, a government consulting firm. Roberts was a founding member of the University of Miami President’s Council. He will be remembered for his leadership, commitment, and generosity to his alma mater, which bears his legacy in the William A. Roberts, B.B.A. ’84, and Roselee N. Roberts, B.A. ’94, Endowed Scholarship.

Evelyn Lorton

A trailblazer who was one of the first educators in the 1970s to employ video to provide immediate feedback to student teachers, Evelyn Lorton had a distinguished career at the School of Education and Human Development that spanned four decades. A professor emerita of the Department of Teaching and Learning and founding director of the Glazer-Lorton Writing Institute, she passed away on Oct. 11. Lorton grew up in Tampa and earned her bachelor’s degree at Mount Union College. While in college, she met her future husband, Roselee Nichols, while both were student leaders. The couple both worked in the government and private sectors, and in 2004 they founded The Advocate Company, a government consulting firm. Roberts was a founding member of the University of Miami President’s Council. He will be remembered for his leadership, commitment, and generosity to his alma mater, which bears his legacy in the William A. Roberts, B.B.A. ’84, and Roselee N. Roberts, B.A. ’94, Endowed Scholarship.

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Connect ‘Canes near and far

Learn more about alumni.miami.edu and show off your ‘Cane pride!
For the first time since 2019, Alumni Weekend and Homecoming 2021 featured fully in-person events with a theme to “Bring the Beat Back” to campus. On Nov. 5, the University kicked off Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century and illuminated the night with the Hurricane Howl boat burning and fireworks traditions.

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At UHealth - University of Miami Health System, powered by the Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine, our commitment to your health is unwavering as we continue to deliver world-class, compassionate health care. As South Florida’s only academic-based health system, UHealth is leading the next generation of medicine.

UHealth’s 1,300 physicians and scientists are highly trained experts who work in teams to deliver care designed to meet the individual needs of each patient.

The health system includes the NCI-designated Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, Bascom Palmer Eye Institute, UHealth Tower, and more than 31 outpatient locations across South Florida. Our facilities are open and safe as we continue to take all necessary precautions to keep our community healthy.

Dancing to a Brighter Beat
Every gift
makes our
future
brighter