

MIAMI HERALD EDITORIAL

FIU makes the right choice for a tough job

OUR OPINION: Rosenberg selection can help FIU remain on path of excellence

In selecting Mark Rosenberg to become the next president of Florida International University, FIU trustees made the unerringly right choice for one of South Florida's landmark institutions. An administrator and a scholar, Mr. Rosenberg has compiled a strong record of leadership and achievement that will help the university stay on the path of excellence carved out by Modesto "Mitch" Maidique, who steps down after 23 years as president.

FIU's next leader was chosen from a strong field that included experienced administrators from prominent universities across the country. Ultimately, Mr. Rosenberg offered a unique package: experience as a former FIU provost and former chancellor of the State University System, and decades of familiarity with this community and Latin America, his field of study. Now comes the hard part.

Mr. Rosenberg will need all his drive and imagination to steer the university through a period of unprecedented challenge. Rarely has Florida's higher-education picture seemed so gloomy, with budget cuts following budget cuts. At the moment, the question in Tallahassee is whether to reduce the outlay to the state's 11 public universities by \$250 million (Senate) or \$500 million (House). Either way, it means reducing operations and narrowing the options for students.

The challenge is to maintain an affordable quality education within these limits. Mr. Rosenberg made it clear in a meeting with The Miami Herald Editorial Board that his priorities will be finance and budget. He is under no illusions that Tallahassee will cough up more resources anytime soon. State money has never been tighter. Mr. Rosenberg, however, proposed a funding strategy that combines state and federal dollars with greater community involvement and outreach to local business and education partners as a way to keep FIU strong.

He deserves the support of the entire community in this fight. FIU is Miami-Dade County's first public four-year university and the 25th largest university in the nation on the basis of enrollment. It has one of the largest minority student bodies in the country among major public universities and a unique connection to Latin America and the Caribbean.

Mr. Rosenberg foresees the university working with other public universities and research institutions in Southeast Florida to create an educational hub that can someday transform the region into a learning and intelligence center. Ideally, it would attract like-minded businesses and high-paying jobs. In today's troubled environment, that may sound like a dream, but it will never happen if someone doesn't dream the dream and lead the way.