

Highlights of John Kelly's Presidency at FAU 2014-2019

Performance Funding Metrics

Dr. John Kelly took the helm as Florida Atlantic University's seventh president in 2014, just as the Florida Board of Governors introduced the new performance-based funding model. FAU did not fare well that first year, scoring low overall because of poor performance in two areas: freshman retention rate and six-year first-time-in-college graduation rate.

Dr. Kelly immediately implemented strategies for improvement of these metrics, including hiring 26 academic advisers, making advising services more accessible to commuter students by offering advising sessions in parking garages (which made national higher ed and local news), introducing a summer program to help incoming freshmen get off on the right foot, and launching a campaign that encouraged students to declare majors early, thus giving them a specific academic focus.

Within just one year, FAU's metrics had improved so dramatically that the \$7 million we were at risk of losing was restored and the university qualified for an additional \$11.3 million in funding. By 2016, FAU improved so significantly that we were the top-ranked university in the state! Highlights of the report card included:

- FAU ranked first in the state in percent of bachelor's graduates employed full-time or continuing their education one year from graduation.
- Over the last two years, FAU's six-year graduation rate increased by 8 percent.
- FAU increased its academic progress rate by 6 percent.
- FAU consistently ranked in the top two for median average full-time wages of undergraduates employed in Florida one year after graduation.

Our success continues. FAU's 2017 six-year graduation rate was 50 percent, up from 40 percent five years ago.

Admission Standards

As part of our effort to improve academic performance, Dr. Kelly proposed raising FAU's admission requirements in 2016. Surprisingly, the number of applications increased, and the caliber of students admitted continues to rise each year.

FAU received more than 20,000 applications for our fall 2018 freshman class – which spiked following a successful 2017 football season – of which we admitted around 3,200 freshmen. Their average GPA is 3.95. We firmly believe that as the university's reputation continues to improve on the national stage – both academically and athletically – we will attract more impressive students to FAU, who want to be part of the overall culture of success.

Strategic Plan, Pillars and Platforms

Shortly after Dr. Kelly's arrival, he set a goal of making FAU "America's fastest improving university," an aspiration that is printed in bold on the first page of the university's strategic plan. The plan is titled "The Race to Excellence," and it truly is a working document. It is referred to nearly every day – and not just by the administration or trustees. The buy-in we've received from the faculty, and their contributions, have been crucial to achieving the goals outlined in the plan.

At the heart of the strategic plan are four pillars, or areas of focus that guide our goals and strategic actions; and nine platforms, or activities that support the pillars. The pillars are Healthy Aging, Neuroscience, Ocean Science and Engineering/Environmental Science, and Sensing and Smart Systems. We hired world-class researchers to lead each pillar and take FAU into a new era of discovery and innovation.

One of the key platforms in the strategic plan is Undergraduate Research and Inquiry. FAU's commitment to providing quality research opportunities for undergraduates paid off in fall 2017, when the Council on Undergraduate Research named FAU one of three recipients of the Award for Undergraduate Research Accomplishments. This national award recognizes institutions that have developed exemplary programs that provide high-quality research, scholarship and creative experiences for undergraduate students.

World-Class Partnerships

Shortly after Dr. Kelly's arrival, he reached out to some of the world's most accomplished biomedical research organizations to strengthen existing partnerships and create new ones. The most exciting of these initiatives was a renewed relationship linking FAU with Scripps Florida and the Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience, both of which built major research facilities on FAU's Jupiter campus a few years before his arrival.

In March 2015, principals of the organizations announced a new focus: to work cooperatively to establish a one-of-a-kind education program that would allow FAU students to work side by side in state-of-the-art laboratories with some of the world's leading scientific researchers, including Nobel Laureates. The goal was to work together to solve real-world problems and improve human health, while providing students with unique scientific research programs that would be the envy of the world.

In December 2017, FAU and the Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience announced the FAU Max Planck Honors Program – an undergraduate honors program in neuroscience – that would offer exclusive electives, research opportunities and cutting-edge neuroscience training courses for high-achieving students. The program is now offered on the Jupiter campus.

In November 2018, together with our partners at the Max Planck Florida Institute for Neuroscience and Max Planck Germany, we announced the creation of the FAU Max Planck Academy, which will give local high school students an experience that no other child in the world will have. Select high school students will have the opportunity to

study and work alongside Ph.D.s from Max Planck, the preeminent neuroscience research institute in the world. The FAU Max Planck Academy will be a stand-alone extension of FAU High in Boca Raton, on our John D. MacArthur Campus in Jupiter.

A.D. Henderson and FAU High

Dr. Kelly has placed renewed emphasis on the importance of FAU's Lab Schools. A.D. Henderson University School recently was named the #2 Best Public Elementary School in the country and #8 Best Public Middle School in the country by *Niche*, the largest website for researching public and private K-12 schools. FAU High was ranked #2 for Best Public High School in Florida. FAU High's early college model gives students the opportunity to graduate from high school while simultaneously earning a bachelor's degree, without financial burden.

In early 2018, FAU Schools was awarded the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program grant from the U.S. Department of Education to study, enhance and replicate our highly successful early college model. FAU will receive \$2.24 million over five years and will serve 1,700 students in grades 7-12 during this time. By helping to eliminate traditional boundaries, FAU High's model has the potential to change secondary education nationwide. We hope that our example will open the door to affordable higher education for more talented students from underrepresented groups.

Also in 2018, A.D. Henderson was named a National Blue Ribbon School by the U.S. Department of Education. The National Blue Ribbon Schools program recognizes primary and secondary schools for academic excellence or for making strides toward closing the achievement gap among students. A.D. Henderson is one of 349 National Blue Ribbon Schools in the U.S., and one of only 12 in Florida.

In May 2017, FAU celebrated a new kind of signing day – for academics rather than athletics – as four of the nation's brightest teens were officially accepted into an innovative new medical school pipeline program. The FAU High School M.D. Direct program places gifted high school students directly in line to earn their medical degrees and is the first of its kind to be launched in the United States. They will complete their B.S. degree within one year and complete a graduate program at FAU or approved research program, among other requirements, prior to entering medical school.

Athletic Excellence

At the end of 2014, we announced the largest donation in Florida Atlantic University's history – a \$16 million gift from the Schmidt Family Foundation that would be used to build a world-class student resource center on the Boca Raton campus. The Schmidt Family Complex for Academic and Athletic Excellence will house a student-athlete academic and leadership center, state-of-the-art training equipment and other health and wellness features. It will be open to all FAU students and will blend three essential ingredients: academics, athletics, and excellence. The \$72 million Complex will be completed in fall 2019.

In 2016, we made the exciting announcement that Lane Kiffin would be FAU's new head football coach. Kiffin coached at the highest level and brought to Boca Raton a winning mentality. In 2017, he led the Owls to a historic season, winning their first-ever Conference USA championship and the Boca Raton Bowl. The team finished the season on an impressive nine-game win streak, with an overall record of 11-3. The Owls were only the second team in C-USA history to finish with a 9-0 conference record.

Under Dr. Kelly's presidency, the baseball, softball and soccer teams also won conference titles.

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