

Academic Convocation

August 26, 2020

University Provost Gillian Small: Good Afternoon and welcome to Fairleigh Dickinson University's Virtual 2020 Academic Convocation. I am Gillian Small, the University Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs. I would like to ask at this time that you please rise for the singing of our national anthem, which will be sung by FDU student Jasmine Lattimore.

Jasmine sings the national anthem.

Provost Small: Thank you Jasmine. This year has presented us with unprecedented challenges, and so we are doing many things differently, including this year's annual convocation. Nevertheless we are moving forward, united in our mission to serve our students, and we are ready for the challenges ahead. I would like to thank the entire FDU community, and especially our faculty, for everything you have done and will do in the coming year. I am confident that we will emerge from this stronger than ever.

I am delighted to welcome all of you, faculty, staff, administrators, student leaders and trustees, to the Convocation of Fairleigh Dickinson University for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Introduction of Key Officials

Provost Small: I would like to first acknowledge officers of the University,

First our President
Christopher Capuano

Hania Ferrara
Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration

Richard P. Reiss
Senior Vice President for University Advancement

Luke Schultheis
Vice President for Enrollment, Planning and Effectiveness

Rose D'Ambrosio
Vice President for Human Resources

Richard Frick
Vice President for Facilities & Auxiliary Services

Neal Sturm
Vice President and Chief Information Officer

Edward Silver
University General Counsel

Mark Farag
President of the Faculty Senate

Patrick J. Zenner
Chair, Board of Trustees

and
Robert J. Zatta
Vice Chair, Board of Trustees

Introduction of New Faculty

Provost Small: We start this academic year with a new academic structure across the two New Jersey campuses. This includes a newly structured Becton College of Arts and Sciences with faculty from both New Jersey campuses in each of the departments and, for the most part, with the same undergraduate curriculum. Becton College now also houses the Latino Promise, Puerta al Futuro and Avanza and Hacer programs and will soon be establishing a Hispanic Center within the college. The restructuring also results in the University now having seven independent professional schools.

I would like to now present our new faculty and welcome them to the University.

Becton College of Arts and Sciences:

Christian Traba
Associate Professor of Chemistry

School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences:

Ivelisse Lazzarini

Associate Professor and Director of the Occupational Therapy Program

Elissa Dikun

Clinical Assistant Professor in the Physician Assistant Program

Nicole Pirozzi

Clinical Assistant Professor in the Physician Assistant Program

Justin Bucchio

Associate Professor and Director of the Master of Social Work Program

Zakia Clay

Assistant Professor, Master of Social Work Program

Ana Guerra

Assistant Professor, Master of Social Work Program.

I would also like to welcome the new dean of Silberman College of Business, Pierre Balthazard.

President's Remarks

Provost Small: And now, it is my pleasure to introduce the University's eighth President Christopher Capuano.

President Capuano: Good afternoon, and welcome everyone to the start of FDU's 79th academic year and perhaps the most unique and challenging year we've ever faced. Last year certainly offered a dose of the unexpected, and I can't tell you how proud I am of everyone at the University, especially our faculty, for adjusting so quickly and being there for our students. What the faculty did to continue their classes and the learning experience for our students was extraordinary.

I've often said FDU is a special place because of our faculty and the magic they create in the classroom. The truth is that last year the faculty created virtual magic and we all are very grateful for their efforts.

Now, we are ready to take on a new academic year. And this year might be more challenging than even the last one, but our students need us and especially the faculty, now more than ever, and I have no doubt the faculty will continue to create a magical learning experience for all of our students,.

There are unknowns not just within the classroom but throughout higher education as universities adapt to new realities and make tough decisions about what exactly they wish to focus on. FDU as you know has made some decisions already with our internal reorganization to

make our university more efficient. But we know more work still needs to be done and the input of the faculty will be critical in helping us stay ahead of the curve as higher education continues to change.

Regardless of what has happened with the pandemic and regardless of what comes next, I know we are ready for the challenges that lie ahead. And I know we will come out stronger and more united than ever. And when people ask how I can be so confident about this, I say it's because I know the people at FDU, our faculty and our staff. I know your commitment, your ingenuity and most of all your resilience. You are at the heart of what we do and that heart is beating strongly. I know you will continue to inspire students from all walks of life.

We must always remember that what we do matters. And in times like these, you can see how important education is. Education doesn't just help one fulfill a plan, it provides one with the skills to adjust when life doesn't go as planned. All throughout the pandemic, those who have helped us to fight back have been those who have relied on their education and training to make a difference.

And that, of course, includes you. So thank you for making a difference for our students and for your University. I look forward to seeing you all in person one day soon.

Keynote Address

Provost Small: Thank you President Capuano. I am now pleased to introduce our keynote speaker, Dr. Bojana Beric-Stojsic.

Dr. Beric-Stojsic is Director of the Master in Public Health Program and Associate Professor of Public Health in the School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. She has been teaching in areas of health promotion and public health at universities in New Jersey, New York and her native Serbia for the past 25 years. As a Doctor of Medicine (MD) with Master of Arts (MA) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Health Education, Dr. Beric's research interests include pedagogy in health promotion, focused on flipped classroom pedagogy and interprofessional education.

Bojana's professional focus is on preparation of health workforce and global international health issues, with particular interest in social justice and the rights of children. She has been active in professional associations at the state, national, and international levels, serving two terms as President of the New Jersey Society for Public Health Education, serving as Regional Vice President of the International Union for Health Promotion and Education/North American Regional Office, and representing both these organizations at the United Nations since 2010. Please welcome Dr. Beric-Stojsic.

Dr. Bojana Beric-Stojisic:

Distinguished Members of the Board of Trustees, President Capuano, Provost Small, Faculty Members, Students, Guests, Friends, ...

Standing before you today at the Convocation of the new academic year, I am humbled and honored at the same time at this great opportunity to address the new beginning... a new beginning in many respects. Some may say – a beginning of the unknown - and they may be right... We recently began measuring time as: pre-COVID era, COVID pandemic, and the yet to come post-COVID era. Looking at the future through the lance of history...

History teaches us that this is not the first world-wide outbreak of infectious disease; pandemics have occurred in the past, some with devastating outcomes. In between the Bubonic Plague-Black Death with 200 million lives lost in four years in the 1300s and SARS pandemic in 2002 with the least number of casualties (770), there were several pandemics that certainly altered the lives of people world-wide and at the same time redirected scientific interest and inquiry. To mention some, the Smallpox pandemic in 1520 took 56 million lives, Spanish Flu claimed almost 50 million lives, more recently, since 1981 to present day the HIV/AIDS has claimed close to 35 million lives, and Ebola in 2014 seized 11.3 million lives. The current count for the COVID-19 pandemic is 530,000 deaths and it is still growing. From each of these past pandemics, the science has gained new knowledge about health, disease and about the intriguing and inseparable interaction between humans and their environment, including plants and animals.

Humankind has always been fascinated with disease in general, infectious disease in particular, trying to explain its origin, spread and how to control it. Epidemiology, the scientific branch, emerged as a method of investigation during one such outbreak – that of Cholera in London in the 1800s. For his achievements in meticulously investigating the outbreak and for providing a solution for controlling the spread, John Snow is famously called *the father of epidemiology*. His systematic and thorough investigation led him to the source of the infection (Broad Street water pump) and by removing the handle – the source of infection was disabled. The CDC defines *Epidemiology as the study of the distribution and determinants of health-related states or events in specified populations, and the application of this study to the control of health problems.* (CDC, 2020)

The World Health Organization reports on the path to success in surveillance and control of deadly infectious diseases and we can learn from those examples how to go through, despite significant loss of life. Some specific examples include:

Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as **Ebola haemorrhagic fever**, is a severe, often fatal illness affecting humans and other primates; fatality rate is about 50%, varying from 25% to 90% in past outbreaks.

- From the EVD outbreak we are learning that of the utmost importance is a *laboratory capacity for the detection of the infectious agent*.

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is an infection that attacks the body's immune system, specifically destroying the CD4 white blood cells, weakening a person's resistance against many infections and some cancers.

- From the HIV/AIDS outbreak we are learning that of the utmost importance is *testing and initiation of antiretroviral therapy as soon as possible*. A consistent treatment prevents HIV transmission.

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease that largely affects children under 5 years of age. The virus is transmitted by person-to-person spread mainly through the fecal-oral route or, less frequently, by a common vehicle (e.g. contaminated water or food) and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system and cause paralysis.

- From the Polio outbreak we are learning that of the utmost importance is *a world-wide vaccination*; poliovirus cases decreased by over 99% from 1988 to 2019, from an estimated 350,000 cases to 175 reported in more than 125 endemic countries.

Smallpox: Officially eradicated *on December 9, 1979* and in May of 1980 announced that 'the world and all its peoples have won freedom from smallpox'.

- From the Smallpox outbreak we are learning that of the utmost importance is *disease surveillance, the ring vaccination and the importance of health promotion* in fighting viral diseases.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. The current COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, but the global response draws on the lessons learned from pandemics over the past several decades, including SARS, MERS, and others.

- For the COVID-19 pandemic of the utmost importance is *a coordinated and accelerated response to COVID-19, including an unprecedented program to develop a vaccine, research into potential pharmaceutical treatments and strengthened channels for information sharing between countries*.

The lessons learned from a history of pandemics provide direction into the future. It will take some time, possibly years to be able to say that COVID-19 is under control. It is well understood what is needed in order to control this pandemic, but so many pieces are still missing in the COVID-19 puzzle. The transmission mode is the key unknown and new information is collected

and reported almost daily; an effective treatment is not available; and the vaccine development is in trials: *21 clinical trials and 139 pre-clinical trials in progress at the moment*. Much more work is ahead for science and scientists in terms of surveillance and reporting and much more compliance is needed with *currently available preventive measures: wearing masks, keeping distance, and avoiding large gatherings*.

Challenging times are often inspirational — generating hope and strength, generating *resilience = the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness*. Recently, when the pandemic, like a hurricane, stormed upon us, we regrouped swiftly and collectively demonstrated our *capacity to quickly respond to difficulties*, demonstrating *toughness and resilience of our FDU community!*

Certainly, we are beginning a new academic year overwhelmed with questions: How the year will unfold and how are we going to overcome this turmoil in our lives? How vulnerable will we still be when we enter the post-COVID era on our path to a future normal?

I firmly believe that our *resilient FDU community* is ready to answer those questions by addressing the challenges that will come our way this academic year. Because we know what our strengths are and we are aware of our shortcomings. Our students know them well, too. I am certain that experiences during the upcoming academic year more than any other “ordinary” academic year at FDU will produce many resilient, caring, and optimistic individuals.

Thank you sincerely for the privilege to address with *optimism* in spite of challenges, the beginning of new academic year 2020–2021!

Presentation of University Distinguished Faculty Awards

Provost Small: Thank you Bojana. It is now time to present the recipients of the 2020 **Distinguished Faculty Awards**, who are being honored for their outstanding contributions to the University.

The recipient of this year’s **Distinguished Faculty Award for Service** is Ernest “Bub” Kovacs.

A colleague calls Ernest — or Bub, as we know him best — associate professor of administrative science, “a tireless ambassador for lifelong learning and an advocate for adult students at FDU.”

Perhaps his greatest contribution to FDU is the development of the Master of Arts in Student Services Administration, a program for which he has been a final project reviewer from 2010–2018.

He advises students in the MAS program and has facilitated study-abroad experiences in Spain, England and Canada.

Other ways in which he's served the University include: the School of Administrative Science Self-Study Alumni Study (2014 and 2019), the Master of Sports Administration Design Team and as a cowriter of the Certified Public Manager Grant Proposal to the State of New Jersey.

As a representative for FDU, Bub has been instrumental in developing partnerships with the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Planning and the New Jersey Chiefs of Police, Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Transportation, Department of Banking and Insurance and other local and regional law-enforcement agencies.

He also co-chaired the Middle States Reaccreditation Working Group.

He has most recently served on the Provost's Reorganization Advisory Committee (from 2017 to 2019), the Provost's Handbook Revision Committee (from 2018 to 2020), the Metro Athletics Strategic Planning Committee (2019–2020) and the Vancouver Master of Administrative Science/BAIS Design Team.

His influence, as expressed through his service to FDU, will have an enduring impact upon his colleagues and students for years to come. So today, we honor Bub Kovacs with the Distinguished Faculty Award for Service.

Bub Kovacs: Thank you Provost Small.

I've asked several of my colleagues who have been honored by this award if they had any advice and my remarks. They uniformly suggested that, knowing me well, that I keep my remarks short and once I prepare them to cut them in half. So here's my brief remarks.

Winston Churchill once said: You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give."

I want to thank my colleague Dr. Paulette Laubsch, a previous recipient of this award for my nomination. We have been professional colleagues for some 35 years and have developed a great partnership over that time. I also want to thank my fellow faculty members in Vancouver, who had previously nominated me for this award.

I have been in and around higher education for over 50 years, most of those as an administrator and now as a faculty member. I consider working at a University a tremendous gift. This is my

fourth institution that I have worked at and it has taken me a while to appreciate the complexities of FDU's three country, four campus University.

Becoming a good civic actor and university citizen has been a journey for me. However, by teaching each semester at Florham, Metro and at Vancouver twice a year, I have come to appreciate the breadth and depth of our complex student body at the undergrad, graduate, part time, full time, on-line, remote sites leading to my belief that we are a true University in every sense.

I want to send a thank you to colleagues on the Academic Policy and Research Committee where I have served for some 10 years. I will be the fifth member of that committee to receive this award in that time frame. My suggestion to junior faculty is to consider running for a seat on this committee. It is a vibrant and hard-working group of your peers.

During our Middle States self-study I became fast friends with Marjorie Hall, the director of the Education Opportunity Fund Program. Through her and her staff I have developed an appreciation for the tremendous service Fairleigh Dickinson has done for these students whose future paths are made possible by the University and the EOF's staff and programming. Thank you Marjorie for a job well done.

I want to recognize my wife, Emma Davis, who has been a great support and exhibited understanding as I volunteer or get volunteered for another task force or committee at the University, or serve as an officer on another national organization or spend another weekend as an athletic official.

I also want to congratulate my son who has accepted a position at Weil Cornell as a tenure track assistant professor of ophthalmology and my daughter in-law who is doing the same at Vassar in science technology and society. Good luck on your academic careers...what were you thinking?

Finally, our University is going through a good deal of change, some planned and some accelerated by the virus. Change can be difficult. My suggestion as we navigate these changes and challenges is to get your head up and out of your own departments and look for opportunities to build relationships across departments and campus locations.

One of my favorite authors, sociologist turned business professor Rosabeth Moss Kantor wrote:

Organizational structures that allow divisions and departments to own their turf and people with long tenure to take root creates the same hardened group distinctions all of which makes it harder to resist change and easier to resist compromise, let alone collaboration. When asked to serve, say 'Yes.'

Thank you for this award. Consider enjoying the fruits of our very diverse enterprise.

Provost Small: Thank you Bub.

Provost Small: The recipient of this year's **Distinguished Faculty Award for Research and Scholarship is Peter Burkholder.**

Peter Burkholder's research interests are as vast as the roster of courses he teaches.

"Pete does not shy away from research questions that offer an abrupt departure from work he did in the past," say his colleagues. His commitment to the spirit of inquiry, to asking big questions in many different research areas, "demonstrates his curiosity and empirical dexterity."

Trained as a medievalist, and often completing painstaking archival research, Peter pivoted to research and understanding of pre-modern mathematics, the Middle Ages as represented in cinema and the ways in which college students learn.

Peter received the William & Edwyna Gilbert Award, bestowed by the American Historical Association, for the best article on teaching history in 2015. The award recognizes "outstanding contributions through the publication of articles in journals and magazines."

Since 2017, Peter has authored or co-authored six peer-reviewed journal articles, and contributed to numerous edited collections and other publications.

In 2019, in concert with the American Historical Association, he received a \$200,000 grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities to fund a survey project, which will "assess public perceptions of and engagement with history."

Peter has lots of questions, and isn't afraid to do the work of seeking his own answers. That's a trait faculty, staff and students can all aspire to.

For nurturing his curiosity and devoting energy to the continued pursuit of knowledge, today we honor Peter with the Distinguished Faculty Award for Research and Scholarship.

Peter Burkholder: Thanks for that introduction Provost Small, thank you to the awards selection committee, to all those who wrote letters of support on my behalf

Multiple studies have asked what the most important factor is in college students' learning. So, what is it? Is it the amazing out-of-classroom experiences? Nope. Is it the wonderful faculty?

Well we do play a role, but we're not the key. Is it the climbing wall at the gym? No such luck there either! The answer is : THE PEER GROUP. So the takeaway is, for students who want to learn in college, they need to : CHOOSE THEIR FRIENDS WISELY.

As faculty, we have very limited control choosing peers. That is, we are hired into a department of more senior faculty, so that being the case... I am so lucky my department peers are so accomplished and supportive of my research endeavors. I'm now the sixth person currently in my department to win the distinguished research award, so I'm here to tell you, the peer influence is real! I've co-published with Krista Jenkins, David Rosen, John Schiemann, and beyond my department with Chris Caldiero. I also benefit from conversations with my fellow historians. All of these people opened my eyes to things I never would've seen as solo researcher, so none of us does this alone.

I'd also like to give a big shout-out to FDU library staff. They miraculously procure just about anything I ask of them and they get it to me quickly. Simply put, I couldn't do it without them.

Finally, lest I forget: a note of gratitude to my parents, Jim & Joyce. My wife, Martha, without them, all this work would be pretty hollow, if not impossible.

So thank you again for this honor, I'll try to pay it forward to my colleagues and students.

Provost Small: Thank you Peter.

Provost Small: The recipient of this year's Distinguished **Faculty Award for Teaching is Stacie Lents.**

Fast-paced, real-time, performance peppered with directorial input — that's what Stacie Lents brings to her acting students.

Since arriving at FDU in 2009, she has received such recognitions as the 2011 Student Government Association's Maddy Award for Outstanding Teacher and the 2015 Becton College Teacher of the Year Award.

Her résumé of professional playwriting has grown to include an adaptation of Margaret Atwood's novel *Hag-Seed* (itself an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) for Missouri-based Prison Performing Arts.

When classes were moved online in mid-March in response to the coronavirus, she explored Zoom videoconferencing to teach her courses, including using virtual breakout rooms to isolate scene partners for rehearsal and inventing exercises to make students feel like they are in the

same physical space.

For her Basic Acting class, she had students invent their own scenarios and props — turning the isolation they found so constraining into a boon.

She also developed a video audition process for new applicants to the theater program and several Zoom experiences for Discover Your Major Day for Theater.

Department Chair Howard Libov writes that Stacie “can attract young playwrights on a national basis, and offer both our students, and the artist, a chance to stage premieres of important, contemporary works.”

For caring for her students, bringing them professional experiences and teaching them to be true to themselves, today we present Stacie Lents with the Distinguished Faculty Award for Teaching.

Stacie Lents: Thank you, Provost Small. This is an honor. I often think that the great thing about theater is that it allows people—audience and artists alike—to feel seen and understood, if only for a moment. I have a number of people to thank who have mentored and supported me—made me feel seen, if you will—including President Chris Capuano, Provost Gillian Small, Dean Geoff Weinman, School of the Arts Chair Howard Libov and Director Todd Rosen and of course my colleagues in the School of the Arts as well as my husband, Matthieu Boyd.

But my deepest thanks go to my students. One of the things that’s hard about studying theater is that on top of the rigor and technique, you’re asked to bring a great deal of yourself—your sensitivity, your imagination, your empathy, your inner life to your work. This requires real strength of purpose and dedication. At FDU, I see a lot of this strength of purpose and dedication. Not only do our artists inspire and challenge me, but they teach me to do and be better—never more so than right now in a time of great challenge, but also great hope and innovation in the arts and arts education. It is their passion, their talent, their strong voices and points of view, which shape my curricular ideas and work at FDU. They also inspire my work *outside* of FDU. I will be forever grateful. And I will work hard to honor my students’ diverse perspectives and to highlight the brilliant work they do at FDU both on and off the stage. I really believe that if our students are in charge, the future is in great hands. Thank you.

Provost Small: Thank you Stacie.

Closing Remarks

Provost Small: And thank you all for joining us today for our annual Academic Convocation.

This concludes this year's Convocation. We know we live in challenging times, but together we can overcome these challenges, and we will continue to help our students transform their lives. I wish you all a successful and healthy academic year!

Special Messages from Student Leaders

Maame Mensa: My name is Maame Mensa and I am president of Student Government Association, president of Black Student Union and a proud Knights cheerleader. On behalf of the student body, I just want to extend a huge thank you for allowing us to be able to be back on campus and all the hard work that you are putting in to making sure that it is a possibility. We appreciate your diligence in making sure that our environment will be safe for us, but yet effective in all our learning areas. We hope that, as a community, as a campus and as a family, we will stand united through these tough times. We understand there have been major changes, and have been major losses, but we know as a community that we will continue to stand strong in the face of adversity.

Shalin Mehta: Hello, my name is Shalin Mehta, a junior computer science major at the Florham Campus, and the president of the Student Government Association, a second-year residence assistant as well as an orientation leader. The Coronavirus has put a major wrench in all of our lives, especially those working hard toward their education and future aspirations. This past spring semester, we were all thrown into a world of learning the unexpected. And all of us — faculty and students included — tried our best to navigate our way through the difficult times. We may face some difficulties in the upcoming semester. But with the guidance and support of the amazing FDU faculty, I know that this community is strong together. All the departments play such a big role in students' lives, I mean I can proudly say that they have made a big impact on my college experience. I have been able to receive a tremendous amount of support and resources that I have \ needed at FDU. We will find the solutions and work hard together to continue the best college experience that we all love and we dearly miss. We succeeded last semester and we will do it again. I look forward to coming back to campus and seeing the FDU community stronger than ever for fall 2020. Thank you.

Mia Michaelides: Hi everyone. My name is Mia Michaelides and I'll be a senior this fall. I want to thank all of the faculty members and professors for doing their best to create an engaging classroom environment during our virtual learning experience. It was a challenging experience for all of us, but it shows how adaptable the FDU community is to any challenge we might face. Thank you to my Silberman advisers and professors for going above and beyond during this unprecedented time. I can't wait to see you all soon and I thank you for all that you have done for your students over these past few months. I'm very much looking forward to being back on campus and in the classroom with you all again.

Gabby Segin: My name is Gabby Segin, and I am a proud senior on the Metropolitan Campus. I am currently president of the Epsilon Theta chapter of Alpha Sigma Tau sorority, and I am also an employee of the Student Union Building. Aside from resources and opportunities that FDU faculty and staff have truly given myself and my peers — an immense amount of support through these trying times — it is extremely comforting to know that we have a strong support system behind us, guiding us to success. I am very excited to be able to return to campus so that I am able to see my peers, my mentors, my advisers and the rest of the FDU community. Something that I have learned throughout this time is that social distance does not equate to social disconnection. And that is something that FDU has truly proven to be correct. Here's to another great year!