



Dear University Community,

As many of you have seen, the University recently announced a major gift that will support student mental health needs. FDU graduate student Andrea Melchiorre and her husband, Anthony, have pledged a major commitment to help fund the new FDU program called “Transforming College Campuses” (TCC), an initiative to support student psychological well-being. Specifically, their gift will provide fellowship opportunities to FDU graduate and undergraduate students.

As I have said before, I am so proud of our institutional commitment to student support and mental health at FDU. We have had an outstanding track record with well-developed efforts through the years. Our student counseling and health services have long been among the very best anywhere. The Regional Center for Learning Disabilities is one of the nation’s leaders in providing critical support for students. COMPASS is an acclaimed, comprehensive support program for college students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

And we have built on these types of programs recently with excellent new initiatives. The School of Psychology and Counseling created the Center for Empathy Research and Training (CERT), which is offering training programs to increase the capacity for empathy, promote mutual understanding and enhance a supportive environment. We also recently launched a pilot student mentoring program with demonstrated first-semester success. In another new initiative, 150 of our faculty and staff will undergo mental health first aid training this semester, enabling them to better assist students experiencing mental health challenges.

The need has never been greater than today. Increasingly, our students need greater support. Mental health issues in particular are preventing students from achieving their goals and reaching their potential. We need to help them cope, navigate the challenges of college life and continue pursuing their dreams. With the help and inspiration of this recent gift, FDU’s powerful new program will have a significant impact on student well-being and success.

The creation of TCC — led by co-directors Tiffany Walker (University Director of Student Health Services) and Stefanie Ulrich (Director of FDU’s Center for Psychological Services) — has two primary aims: 1) to support the mental health needs of Fairleigh Dickinson University’s undergraduate students; and 2) to foster two pipelines: a) one for undergraduate students to pursue professions key to student well-being and success (e.g., clinicians, student affairs staff), and b) one for graduate students to develop expertise in the needs of this unique population.

The project will embed graduate students in a mandatory course for first-year students, Transition to University Life. The graduate student will then remain paired with the students in this course for their first two years at the University. This relationship and mentorship will provide important benefits for all

our students as the undergraduates will receive guidance and support, and the graduate students will develop new levels of expertise. Together our community will grow stronger. Over five years, TCC is expected to support 26 graduate and 48 undergraduate student positions.

We are so thankful for the gift and the vote of confidence shown in FDU by the Melchiorres, and we are confident that, like the other programs I mentioned above, this will be a model program for colleges and campuses everywhere. We believe that it is a key step in continuing to build the supportive, transformational learning environment that defines our institution. It's truly wonderful to see how such programs can create meaningful opportunities for our students and to see how our supporters connect to these programs and become passionately engaged with the University!

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