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President's Newsletter

An Update from FDU President Michael J. Avaltroni

My name is Michael Avaltroni and I have the great fortune of serving as the president of Fairleigh Dickinson University, an institution founded to help students seize their moment and change their world. For more than 80 years, FDU has provided an education that is personal, global and transformational. I should know. I walked these halls as a student and the FDU experience changed my life forever. Now, today, we are embarking on a new chapter and a renewed commitment to Students First! We are more determined than ever to meet students where they are, define our priorities around their changing needs and provide them a place where they belong and where they can forge an identity and make a powerful impact. In this newsletter, you will learn more about our priorities and recent highlights that have us very excited about the direction of FDU and the future possibilities for our extraordinary students.



Presidential Inauguration

I resisted the formality of a presidential inauguration but eventually agreed recognizing that the day is more about our institution than me, and so we celebrated as an institution on September 27 during the annual Academic Convocation, which also featured the presentation of faculty and staff awards. It was incredible to see so many devoted and talented community members on hand and recognized. I am humbled by the great people and rich history that precede me and the dedicated people that today surround me. Since becoming president, I have only gained a greater

appreciation for the rich talent, strong resolve and tremendous commitment of the entire community. Our people are our greatest strength and will help us make important changes in response to the changing needs of students and provide greater opportunities for a greater variety of learners. My [inaugural address](#) discusses more about the needs of today's students and how we must adapt to better support them. As an institution we have defined our North Star. The path forward means focusing people and resources on programs and priorities that best serve and support students.



Best Value and Top 50

No ranking tells the complete story about an institution, but we are proud that recent rankings have again recognized our impact and our value. In the 2024 *U.S. News & World Report's* collegiate rankings, [FDU resumed its place in the top 50](#) regional universities in the north, but even more importantly, the University was ranked **number 14** in “Best Value Schools” and **number 13** in “Top Performers on Social Mobility.” In addition, the University did very well in a new category created by the organization, ranking number 17 in “Undergraduate Teaching Programs.” We have long prided ourselves on the value we offer and the opportunities we provide our students to move upwards, so to see those hallmarks recognized in these rankings is especially gratifying.



FDU Health

We are excited this fall to announce the establishment of [FDU Health](#), a comprehensive and innovative new division that combines new initiatives along with existing programs from multiple colleges and schools within the University. This hub for interdisciplinary healthcare education and training will open doors of opportunity for students and address the growing needs of the healthcare sector. For decades, FDU has been at the forefront of health education, research and service with bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs. FDU Health builds on this legacy, providing integrated, world-class training for students pursuing opportunities in the growing healthcare field. Already, a number of exciting initiatives have formed under this new division (see below).



Transforming College Campuses (TCC)

Building on the creation of FDU Health, a number of exciting new health initiatives are under way. FDU recently created the Transforming College Campuses (TCC) program, spearheaded by the School of Psychology and Counseling, in collaboration with the Office of Student Affairs. Funded through a generous donation, the TCC program will support the mental health needs of FDU's undergraduate students and foster opportunities for undergraduates and graduate students to pursue careers in mental health-related fields. The project embeds graduate students with first-year students taking a mandatory course, A Transition to University Life. The students remain paired with the graduate students for their first two years at the University to foster support and mentorship. The TCC program also provides physical spaces on our campuses where students can go for support and resources.

Key Grants Earned

FDU has received a number of outstanding grants for critical program and support needs. These include:

A \$2.6-million, four-year federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Advanced Nursing Education Workforce (ANEW) grant was awarded to the Henry P. Becton School of Nursing and Allied Health. Approximately \$500,000 per year will provide scholarships for graduate nursing students.

A two-year Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training program grant for more than \$1 million will further help our schools provide interdisciplinary education and support graduate students and professionals providing behavioral health services.

The University received \$13 million in capital funding from the New Jersey Office of the Secretary of Higher Education to support technology infrastructure and library improvements.

A five-year grant totaling over \$925,000 to the School of Psychology and Counseling was awarded by the New Jersey Department of Education - School Based Mental Health Grant Program in collaboration with the Bogota School District. This grant will provide full funding (tuition and fees) for 8 students to earn their MA/Certification in School Psychology at FDU.

The School of Public and Global Affairs was awarded \$250,000 by the state to support civic programs in Newark.



Moon Shot

The University also received \$200,000 in special appropriation from the state to support FDU's Moon Shot for Equity Initiative. FDU recently became the first private college in New Jersey to join the [Moon Shot for Equity](#), a national network of colleges and universities committed to eliminating equity gaps in higher education. Each participating school has committed to implementing more than a dozen research-based best practices proven to remove systemic barriers to student success. These commitments range from updating academic policies, to working together to establish common academic pathways, to providing equity-mindedness training to university leaders. FDU has a rich history and strong legacy of providing access and opportunity for students to transform their lives and this is yet another milestone in our institutional development. Our current position as a leader in serving students as an

HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution), alongside our commitment to and legacy of creating access to education by meeting learners where they are, positions us to effectively lead this charge for the state of New Jersey and the region beyond.



Students First!

In June we held our annual Charter Day to support student scholarships and we raised more than \$700,000. During the event we also announced our new fund-raising campaign, “Students First,” which will be dedicated entirely to supporting students throughout their academic journeys. Funding will support scholarships and fellowships to ensure that FDU students can pursue and complete their education. FDU has taken great strides in recent years to make an FDU education affordable, including a major tuition reduction in 2021, and this campaign will further help provide the resources our students need to overcome hurdles and open doors. The campaign is off to a great start, and you can learn more about it by visiting the [Students First website](#).

College Students are Struggling

Those of us working closely with college students have noticed an alarming rise in mental health concerns and that is the subject of a [recent op-ed](#) I wrote for *The Star-Ledger*. It’s not enough anymore for us to share academic lessons and provide professional skills. We need to offer support and resources to foster emotional development and mental well-being. If we don’t address their emotional and social needs, they cannot prosper in our environment and reach their potential. It’s as simple as that and our role needs to be expanded to provide such nurturing and support. It’s why we have created such programs as TCC (see above) and why we have provided

mental health first-aid training and empathy training throughout our community. We are making strides but so much more needs to be done.

Keep in Touch

I invite everyone to stay informed about new University highlights by regularly checking our website (www.fdu.edu) and social media channels (links available below).

You can also stay connected with me on social media! Follow me at [@FDUPresident](#) on Instagram and [Michael Avaltroni](#) on LinkedIn.



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