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President's Newsletter

An Update from FDU President Michael J. Avaltroni

My name is Michael Avaltroni and I am honored to be serving as the president of Fairleigh Dickinson University. I am also a proud graduate of the University and I know first-hand the impact that an FDU education can have. Our University has provided transformative experiences for students from all walks of life. Over the years, though, student needs have grown greater and today they face more difficult challenges than ever before. In response, we must adapt and provide more flexible, more affordable and more immersive learning experiences that are aligned with career opportunities and real-world demands. In an age when many are questioning the value of a college degree, we must do more to demonstrate that value and fulfill our promise of equity, access and economic mobility. Toward that end, we are in the process of reimagining FDU to better meet learners where they are and provide them the tools they need to seize their moment and change their world. In this edition of our newsletter, you will learn more about our recent highlights and the projects and priorities that have us poised for an exciting future!



Honoring Greg Olsen

In late November, the University dedicated one of its most important spaces on the

Metropolitan Campus in honor of FDU's largest benefactor, the Greg Olsen Student Union. Olsen, an alumnus who has three degrees from FDU and who is a current member of the Board of Trustees, embodies the FDU story as he was transformed by the institution and found his path and gained the direction and inspiration needed for extraordinary success. Olsen has been a scientist, inventor, venture capitalist and entrepreneur – as well as just the third civilian to visit the International Space Station. "I was not a particularly good high school student; in fact, I had failed trigonometry during my senior year," he recalled. "So how does a guy who failed trig in high school wind up with a Ph.D. in materials science? And the short answer is FDU." I can think of no greater example of FDU's legacy than Greg.



Helping Students Cope

Unfortunately, mental health issues continue to plague students across the nation. According to one study, 44 percent of college students struggle with depression, 37 percent suffer from anxiety and 15 percent have considered suicide. FDU is meeting this problem head on, with enhanced support from Student Wellness Services and the Office of Mental and Emotional Wellbeing, along with a new mental health first aid program and the creation of the Transforming College Campuses program and the Center for Empathy Training and Research. Read more about this critical issue and FDU's initiatives in our latest edition of [FDU Magazine](#).



Expanding Corporate Partnerships

To fulfill our goal to meet students where they are, it's critical that we connect with corporations to offer programs that accelerate and advance careers. For example, our Silberman College of Business this spring expanded its corporate partnership program to include Merck in Rahway, N.J., Novartis in East Hanover, N.J., and, most recently, Bell Works in Holmdel, N.J. At each of these locations, the MBA program is offered on-site and offers working professionals a convenient and flexible way to study while aligning the academic work with real-world corporate projects.

We're also proud to announce a new partnership with Liberty Science ARC HealthSpace2030, based in Jersey City's [SciTech Scity](#). FDU will become a gold member for the health innovation hub. We are looking forward to collaborating together on the future of health education.



Building Collegiate Connections

FDU is also focused intensely on building collaborations with other collegiate institutions to help support students. We have several agreements in place with community colleges to help those students better transition to and afford a four-year degree. Then there's a number of dual degree programs we are working on. For example, we recently announced a partnership with Kean University in which Kean students can earn a Bachelor of Arts in chemistry from Kean and a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) degree from FDU in just seven years. This trims a full year off the traditional time required to earn these credentials. This provides a much faster pathway for aspiring pharmacists to earn their doctoral degrees close to home.

Faculty in the News

FDU's outstanding faculty continue to distinguish themselves in and out of the classroom. Just to mention a few recent highlights:

Kara Alaimo, deputy chair and associate professor of communication, developed a new concentration in social media and in March had published her latest book, *Over the Influence: Why Social Media Is Toxic for Women and Girls and How We Can Take It Back*. A widely sought after expert, she also recently had published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* on this critical topic titled [“Social media can be toxic for women. Here’s how to change that.”](#)

Matthieu Boyd, professor of literature and chair of the School of the Humanities, and K. Sarah-Jane Murray from Baylor University, have just published [the first translation](#) into any modern language of one of the longest and most influential French poems of the Middle Ages, the *Ovide Moralisé* (Moralized Ovid). The two collaborated for more than a decade to translate nearly 72,000 lines of verse in this anonymous fourteenth-century work that retells Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Initially funded by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, this work provides an immense contribution to our cultural knowledge and will inspire significant new levels of scholarship.

Professor of Psychology **Robert E. McGrath** has been recognized in a recent *New York Times* article. Titled [“6 Self-Help Books That Therapists Read Themselves,”](#) the article highlights insightful recommendations from mental health professionals and identifies his 2019 book with Ryan M. Niemiec, *The Power of Character Strengths: Appreciate and Ignite Your Positive Personality*, as one of the very best.



Lifelong Learning at FDU

Fairleigh Dickinson University recently announced the official launch of Lifelong Learning at FDU, which will provide diverse educational programs for learners at every stage of their educational journey. FDU traditionally has been a leader in providing lifelong learning programs and this initiative restores these programs to their rightful priority in the educational landscape. Lifelong Learning at FDU features a wide range of offerings for high school students, community college students, degree completion programs within the School of Professional Studies, and the Petrocelli Center for Continuing Studies focusing on workforce development and certificate programs. Lifelong Learning at FDU will enable us to provide targeted support and robust programming for students of all ages and backgrounds.



The Crisis in Higher Education

Higher education is under fire and not all of the attacks are undeserved. In fact, for many students, higher education has failed to deliver on its promise. While I still believe firmly in the value of a college education, the fact remains that changes are desperately needed to better support students and their families and to better provide a roadmap to career opportunities and lifelong success. I share more of my concerns and some suggestions for adaptation in an opinion piece published in *University Business*. And for more of my thoughts on the challenges facing higher education and the opportunities ahead, see my [webpage](#).

Keep in Touch

I invite everyone to stay informed about the latest University news and highlights by regularly checking our website (www.fdu.edu) and social media channels (links available on our home page). 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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