

Interviewee: Ricky Sant
Interviewer: Delver Retana
Date: March 17, 2022

DR: Good afternoon, everyone. Today I have here with me Mr. Ricky Sant, who is participating in the oral history project of what International means to you, as the project is entitled *Internationals in Our Middle Name*. Mr. Ricky Sant attended FIU as an undergraduate from [19]97 to [19]99, and then progressed to get his graduate degree a few years later — I think, from 2002 right 2003, right? RS: 2003 to 2005 — So from [20]03 to [20]05 and now, actually, he has been working at FIU. pretty much since, right?

RS: Yes. —

DR: Which is awesome. So that's a little bit of an introduction to Mr. Ricky. Let's get right into it, so Ricky, Can you please tell us a little more? Can you expand on that introduction for us and tell us a little bit of about who you were in [19]97 — RS: [laughs] — as a student FIU and then start bouncing off from there.

RS: Sure. So, my older brother kind of paved the way for me to come to FIU because a few years before me — Obviously he's older — he had come up as an international student, and I followed him in his footsteps as well. He came from Trinidad he went to Miami-Dade, got his AA, and then transferred to FIU, and got his bachelor's degree. So, FIU, even before moving to Miami, to go to school, FIU was always part of like our family, because my brother went to FIU and obviously, we heard him talk about it. And you know we got to know more about the school and Miami. We would come to Miami to vacation a lot. So, Miami was like my second home, and then, with my brother going to Miami-Dade and FIU, that obviously increased the knowledge and the family about what life is like here in the U.S. and attending school, etcetera. So, seeing him here, going to school, and hearing him talk about opportunities and things like that got me interested. So, when the time came for me, when I was done with high school, I actually took a gap year, and then cause you know, at that point I wasn't exactly sure what I wanted to do — like so many people you know at that age. — DR: yeah, who knows — like early teens, early 20s, yeah, so . . . that the year off definitely helped, and then with some urging from my parents. They were like, you gotta decide what you want to do. So, I picked — I decided to — come to Miami and followed really the same path he took. So I did. Miami day from [19]95 to [19]97, got my associates, and then transferred to FIU . . . and so from fall of [19]97 was my first time on campus at FIU and I graduated in December of [19]99, with my bachelor's in business, and a concentration and information systems

DR: Awesome! So, there's a little bit of family legacy then — RS: yeah — in choosing the exact same pathway as far as going to Dade and then FIU — out of curiosity, now that you bought that up — is there like what specific influence maybe did your brother have in choosing FIU? Did he have any, like unique experiences or stories that maybe he had that he shared with you, that maybe, you took choosing the same path?

RS: That's a good question. Prior to him, no one in our family had attended FIU, so he was the first, and yeah, that's something I need to ask him because I'm not really sure why he picked FIU. The only thing I could think of is we would vacation in Miami like during

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the summer, most years. So we got to know Miami, and obviously, FIU is a big part of Miami, so I don't know if, just by being here a few weeks out of the year . . . he heard, saw FIU and maybe he looked into it, but so I don't really know the ultimate reason why maybe he picked FIU, but I'm glad he did, and okay, the one key difference is what we studied. So he was a mass communication major, basically journalism. and obviously, I did business so other than that the pathway was pretty much the same.

DR: That's awesome, that's awesome. So was by the time you got to FIU. Did you know you wanted to be in business and I don't know if the college of business had any prestige now like then like it has now? What do you think that that ended up playing a role in that as well, or –

RS: Yeah, it certainly did. So, there's a lot of my dad, and mom owned a business in Trinidad, and there was a lot of business owners within my extended family so I guess business was kind of like in my blood. I grew surrounded by the business and business people. So when I first came to Miami-Dade and I had to pick a major, I initially picked computer science, because, you know, computers were starting to really emerge, like the first desktops were a few years old. But then I really thought about it, and I didn't really want to do like computer programming or hardcore computers. So I switched to business, but I still had some. I was still fond of computers, so I decided at Miami-Dade I just did an associate's – I think, in business – but at FIU I continued, and I did a bachelor's. But then I had the opportunity to do, to specialize, so I pick information systems which was really good for me, because I still got to do some aspect of something related to IT, and computers, so that was really my. . . my passion was between business and IT and I got to do both.

DR: Awesome, so let's bring it back, to kind of like who Ricky Sant was then, and you kind of mentioned already that your family was already used to traveling to Miami and you know, you guys felt you're already, you yourself already, comfortable maybe in Miami as a city. Can you maybe channel back that experience to be a student in the U.S. and specifically at FIU, like, How did that shape your experience as an international student?

RS: So it was really interesting, because obviously, when I first came and started Miami-Dade, it was the first time I was on my own, ever, like so many other international students, right? That leave home. Leave the comfort to phone that they're away from family, and then they're in a new place new country. The culture may or may not be vastly different. The languages, the food, everything, right? You name it. So, I think before I got to FIU in 97. Obviously, I had 2 years under my belt of Miami day, so by then, by the time I got to FIU I was pretty much acclimatized to Miami and life and living here, so when I got to FIU, the main adjustment was really just getting things, getting used to things at FIU right? The uniqueness of the university, the culture of the university, how things worked because every institution is different. Obviously, my first semester at FIU. I was used to Miami-Dade and how things work there. I knew where all the buildings were, I know I knew who to speak to. When you're new to FIU. I had to figure those things out and learn like every first-timer. And, you know, being international, I think, was not a hindrance in

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any way. I definitely enjoyed that aspect of it and I'm sure we'll talk more about what international means.

DR: That's awesome. so I, you know it's interesting because I'm sure a lot of students that come straight to FIU I imagine don't have that advantage of being already acclimated to the Miami culture because it's so ambiguous Miami culture, and especially for someone from the Caribbean I'm sure it must have its challenges. So, let's so tell me a little more I believe in our leading up to this. You mentioned that maybe you were student worker, at FIU you as well, as an international student. Can you tell me a little bit more about that experience from your perspective?

RS: Sure. So that was a great opportunity. obviously. you know as well as I do very well that international students can only work on campus. So, in terms of opportunities are limited to what's available on campus, and I at that time in 97. When I started FIU, my neighbor, who is still my neighbor up to this day. She was a professor, and back then I was a college of education. I was interested in working on campus, and I asked her if she knew of any opportunities. Obviously, I didn't know the right channels or where to look where to start, so I just asked her because I knew she was working there, and she suggested I speak to another professor because that professor was managing one of the computer labs at the College of Education Building. So, I spoke to him, and he hired me pretty much on the spot like I remember distinctly starting at 10 hours per week because the semester had already started so he's like that's the only amount ticket offer, and that could not afford to be picky. So, I was like "I'll take it" and so I worked in a computer lab in the ZEB building, part-time as a student. I eventually was able to get 20 hours, which is the Max, and I really enjoyed it because I got to meet different people every day, and I love to help and serve. So working in the lab, you get to help people out with whatever trouble or issue they may be having but to meet a lot of people, a lot of other instructors, students along the way, and it was just a great opportunity, not to mention the convenience of working on campus and just shuttling back and forth between your class and work that's very, you know, it's valuable to just have that convenience, and not having to drive anywhere. So, I was really thankful and grateful for those that help me get in there and continue to support me. I worked there pretty much till my last day on campus when I graduated.

DR: Wow! As the undergrad Right?

RS: Yes, as undergrad.

DR: Wow, awesome! That's really great, you know, I'm always curious to know the experiences right, of like an international student trying to get a job here because everybody has to earn some, some form of living and that there is an added barrier for international populations so it's so cool that you were able to ask a professor, granted they were your neighbor. But yeah, it led to something that was an overall positive experience, or at least that it sounds like it was, right?

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RS: Yeah, absolutely. You know it's what we always say, or in terms of like employment. The easiest way to land a job, or one of the easiest, is networking. So, I mean I didn't really know it back then but that's what I did. I just asked and I'm pretty sure I had to go through the right channels and fill out paperwork. But at the beginning, when you're new and it's like they say you don't know what you don't know. So, when you're new, so that you're new to the campus or to the country, or just so any environment, you just kind of reach out to whoever you could think of or that might be able to help and then and then you hope for the best, and in my case, it turned out well.

DR: Yeah. and I mean this might be going without having asked. But, like, do you think that that influenced your experience at FIU, from an international lens? Do you think that shaped it, maybe?

RS: 14:18:44 Yeah, I think so. So, you know, having gone through that experience when you go through something, you can then help others. Also, I was on campus more because I know a lot of students don't get involved with things on campus as much because they go to class. then they may work, but they may work off-campus, so they leave campus and go to work, and then they go home etcetera. But my being on campus so much between it was pretty much a full day between classes and working part-time. So, I really got to absorb more of the campus culture. I really got to learn more about it. So, there were, there were 2 aspects, right, being a student, which obviously was my full-time job, and then working part-time on campus. So, I got that obviously work experience and got to meet people from a work perspective and learned how things work from a human resources perspective, and payroll and all of those things. And it definitely helped because throughout the years I have come across other international students. My nephew is one now, so I feel like my experience has help others, and hopefully will continue to help others, and I'm willing and happy to share what I know.

DR: Right, and that's great by the way, I really like that. Okay, so to start bringing it more to the theme of international is our middle name, right, for FIU. Do you feel like you were, in 1997, and maybe even later on, do you feel like you were represented as a student here? As an international student here? And that if it changed, did it change over time? What do you, how do you feel about that?

RS: So, can you explain a little bit more about what you mean by represented?

DR: Sure, so you're an international student, you're from the Caribbean. Maybe you weren't a Spanish native speaker like most of the culture is at FIU, especially probably in that time it was still developing already. Do you feel like you were represented by that, by like being an international student here? Do you feel like you were received well as an international student on campus?

RS: So, I think, obviously from Trinidad, English is our native language. So, we're not really Spanish speakers I mean we did study some Spanish in high school, so that was probably my biggest obstacle. Some people say I look Hispanic, so a lot of people their first when

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they first approached me, they speak in Spanish. And I don't hold that against anyone maybe, even now I feel like I should do more to learn the language, and I have picked up a lot. But I'm not fluent, by any means sure, but no I did feel welcome and I think I adjusted pretty well starting off at Miami-Dade, and I know even at FIU, both schools have a pretty big international student population, especially from the Caribbean. So, even though I was physically removed from my homeland, being here, whether it was at the Miami-Dade Kendall campus or at FIU, was, I felt surrounded by a lot of other international students, particularly from the Caribbean, but from you know, from all over the world. And there were, there was always lots of lots of activities at Miami-Dade. We had a Caribbean student association – DR: Oh, that's great! – so we had a pretty close group of students, and we would hang out a lot, and you know do things on the weekend. So that was a great experience that helped make me feel less homesick. It helped me, you know, obviously make friends with others, help me get out and adjust more easily. And you know, I think we were a support group from one another, and at the same at FIU you know, just getting to meet other students when you hear someone from your homeland speak in your native tongue it's like, well, what you know it is like, your eyes open big. You're like I need to meet this person because you have something in common. And you kind of latch on to that because there you know when you're away from home there's no better feeling.

DR: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I know how that, I know that feeling very well, you know, when I was away from Miami for a bit, I heard someone speaking Spanish. I was like Whoa! So that was big. Was there a Latin association kind of similar to Dade here at FIU? Do you know, or maybe you didn't get to experience that I don't know.

RS: So I don't remember specifically, but I was not involved, and I don't know if there was one specifically for Caribbean students at FIU, I know there is one now, and there has been one for a while but I didn't get involved. When I did my undergrad at FIU, which took 2 years, I didn't really get involved so much with on-campus stuff. I think, maybe looking back, yeah, I should have gotten involved somewhat. But I guess between working part-time probably didn't have much other time for extracurricular activities. At the graduate level when I did my master's, I was involved with the Graduate Student Association. We did have some international students as well awesome.

DR: Okay. So, you mentioned a little bit of like being on campus the majority of the time, probably in that era. How was your surrounding environment at that time, did you feel, I mean you were probably working when you weren't in class, but I mean, and you kind of hinted at it being a positive experience, was it, did you find maybe foods from your country, or you're already mentioned maybe you would hear someone you were like. Oh, that would excite you, was there a lot of that experience, or was it kind of far between? How's that?

RS: No, I think it was it was pretty common, and not only from being on Campus, but where I live now, and it's the same place I lived when I was at attending FIU, which is basically

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south Dade, south of Kendall, near the zoo, there's a lot of Caribbean people that live around here, so there are Caribbean food and stores that sell stuff right? There's a lot of people from Trinidad that live here that I've gotten to know really well over the years. So, you know, I felt really at home. The climate in Miami is similar to Trinidad. That, obviously we speak English, not Spanish. So, even though maybe the Spanish was a hindrance to me, at least still the people that I got to know they were, you know, English speakers. So, in that case, there was not a barrier to the language. And being on campus, it was very supportive. Well, you know, everyone I worked with or interacted with folks in the academic units, the department just great, was really just a great experience. I'm glad I did it because it really helped me mature being away from home, living on my own figuring out things, you kind of discover who you are, right? I wouldn't change anything really.

DR: That's good I it makes me happy because you know, both of us work here so it's good to see that, you know the student isn't so and I mean I had a different experience but you know that's for another day. So, it sounds like you did have, though a long commute. If you were coming from there, was it? Did you have a challenge with that, or did you feel like fi? You kind of helped with that? Was there anything that helped you get to school, maybe?

RS: So the hardest challenge it wasn't the commute, the hardest challenge was, and this is not gonna be a surprise [laughs], as parking – DR: [laughs] parking – parking was, you know this was, and I'm gonna date myself. But this was before anything, any garages. So, it is all surface lots, and it was bad, it was bad. You had to basically just pull up into a lot and just wait till you saw someone leaving and hopefully, you were lucky enough to grab a spot. That was the challenge, the commute wasn't so bad, I mean even now it's not so bad it's just a turnpike. And I wasn't, really. I never took classes early in the morning, so I would go in like after rush hour, so I never really got traffic per se. But so, I you know I got there on time. It was the hardest thing was parking. And one thing that came as shock to me, and this was in 1995. My first semester at Miami-Dade, so I'm living here now full time. I'm going to school full-time, Miami-Dade Fall of 1995, again, I don't know, I don't know anything, all my classes were in the afternoon, so I would leave my house around noon, maybe to go to Miami-Dade Kendall campus, and it would rain every afternoon, – DR: [laughs] – and I'll be like, Why is it raining every afternoon while I'm like trying to walk to class? And you know? Well, obviously, I started to catch on and I started to have an umbrella with me every day, and sure but I was like, oh, and you know eventually, you realize. Oh, wait That's Miami weather in the summer, right or, and in the summer, and going into fall yeah before. So, I think, and obviously back then too in the late [19]90s FIU wasn't – or yeah – wasn't as big as it is now. Fewer buildings, there are no garages, so I feel like getting around was easier because you had, like half the buildings that we had now, right? So yeah, it was easier to get around. Maybe some of the facilities, obviously now are newer and nicer – but sorry I may be rambling, but anyway, overall it was pretty good.

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DR: No, that that's great, that's great, because actually now I'd like to turn it to, maybe a more challenging question about what was maybe an impactful moment that was, that wasn't so positive at FIU specifically like? Was there anything that you thought "man this is a little", you know I don't know. I don't know but you know what I'm talking about.

RS: Yeah, definitely. And could this be from my bachelor's or master's?

DR: Absolutely! Either one, let's go with it.

RS: So, I finished my bachelors in 1999, and I was fortunate enough to get a job as an international student full-time job, so I was able to stay in Miami and work full-time but in 2002. So, about a year after 9-11. I was laid off from the full-time job that I had. So, I really only had 2 choices. Go back, go back to Trinidad, or find another job that would allow me to stay in the United States legally, right. So, after 9 11, and the circumstances surrounding it. It was hard to get a job as an international student. So, I tried. . . It didn't work out. So, I decided to come back to school and do my master's. So, I went back on a student visa. Yeah. and in the fall of 2003, I started my master's as an international student. So I was, I was out of school for like 2 and a half years. –DR: Wow. – and I remember, and this is leading up now, to you know, you could say it's a negative experience. That first semester I took, so I'm doing my MBA, and I had to take an accounting and economics and a statistics class and, none of those are my strong suits and I struggled, and my grades weren't good that it was, I think I took 9 credits because that's the amount you need as a grad. So, at the end of the full term, when I saw my grades, they were bad, and I was put on – What? What academic was it? –DR: Probation— right, academic probation and I started to freak out. I was like, oh my God, you know! What does this mean? and I didn't really fully realize the, you know, there's probation then warning, then you're dismissed. So, I looked into it and I realized, Okay, if I do well enough in the spring term and get my G.P.A. back up I'll be fine, so I you know I tried not to stress about it. I just focused on the courses I took in the spring of 2004 and I did really well, and my G.P.A. went back up, and I never saw academic probation warning again, thankfully, but it was a little bit of a shock, because I never experienced that as an undergrad and at least in Trinidad where I'm from we don't have, I mean obviously, we get grades but we didn't have anything like an academic warning or probation. So, it was new. It was not a pleasant experience seeing poor grades. That's all my fault I don't, I don't blame anyone for that, but at the end of the day, I bounced back and survived.

DR: Did you get assistance, or did you feel at a disadvantage because you were international?

RS: No, I didn't feel I was at a disadvantage. I probably, you know I struggled 2 out of those 3 courses I really struggled, which was the statistics and the economics. The accounting, I think I got a B or B+ so that's not so bad. I probably should have reached out for help. I didn't so that's on me. And then in the spring term, I think obviously, the classes were different. I enjoyed it more. You know some, some classes, subjects you enjoy more, or you take a liking to more than others. So, in the spring I just really focused and I can't say

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I made any major adjustments. Maybe the material was just easier for me. It certainly was not economics, accounting, or statistics [laughs], right?

DR: [laughs] All at once.

RS: Yeah, all at once, right? So, I just you know, I said look at the end of the day I was shooting for all A's, and I think I got all A's or A's and one A- and sure the G.P.A. bounced back luckily and yeah.

DR: And you're good to go. Okay, so let's bring it back on a, I mean you ended that in a pretty good note, so let's keep going on that high feeling. What can you share with us? Maybe your favorite memory of FIU, like as an undergrad?

RS: Let's see as an undergrad. . . well, I think it's really the culmination which is graduation. I had never experienced anything like it, and fortunately, obviously with my parents and family back in Trinidad, my mom was able to come from my undergraduate graduation and she attended, and I was there, and she was there, and I think we had invited a family friend as well, who was living here. So, you know, I owe a lot to my parents, and I wish my dad was able to come too, but because they ran a business it was nearly impossible for both of them to get away. I was just really happy that my mom was able to come and share in the occasion, because without my parents it would not have happened. I was happy and it's I think it's a proud moment for parents as well. That's what they want to see their kids, they want their kids to succeed and it's a culmination of a couple of years of hard work and a lot of money spent especially as an international student yeah, so that was really the highlight of the 2 years at FIU for undergrad.

DR: And so, do you remember if commencement was the same as it is like today, nowadays?

RS: It's similar. I do remember it's – well I know right now because I'm on the commencement committee.

DR: Oh! that's huge. Do you think that had an impact on that, like, did that lead you to thinking like I should?

RS: Yeah, a little bit because I think it's such a wonderful event and occasion it's nice to be part of, but it was at the arena. So yeah, it was nice. It was a little long obviously because I don't remember exactly how long, and I was among some of my other classmates, so that was great to also share the occasion with them because we were in some of the same classes together. So that was a really good, a good time.

DR: Well, I'm glad it impacted you because that's actually when I first met you was at a commencement.

RS: Oh, yes, that's right.

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DR: Okay, so let's get a more formal number. So, how long have you been affiliated with FIU now?

RS: So, starting in [19]97 as a student. Yeah, so that, Oh! 25 years, actually, this fall will be 25 years. — DR: Hot dog! 25 years! — Well, yeah, 25 years, and actually, last week was my sixteenth year as a full-time employee.

DR: Wow. . . Wow! that's awesome. Congratulations!

RS: Thank you, thank you. — DR: I aspire to get those numbers one day — you will, you will, and pass that, too.

DR: [laughs] Thank you. Okay, and you mentioned that obviously you were an international student, and since your time here, so we got a number right: 25 years. How, and you already hinted at this, how has FIU changed? If at all, I mean, but I know you're really kind of hinted at it.

RS: Well, yeah, it's changed a lot it's grown in every imaginable aspect, right? Not just new buildings, new facilities, obviously a whole lot more students, faculty, and staff. What you can do at the university has changed a lot more opportunities to study different degrees, programs, events, and things to get involved with organizations. So, I always say, FIU is not a perfect place, it never will be. But I think what we have going at the university. I see the value of education, not just in my own life, but in others, and I see how it can transform and open up doors and opportunities for others, and I think I just sense that people that work on campus, you know it it's like being a teacher, right? It's like a passion or a calling. You want to make a difference in up, in the lives of others. It may not be the best paying job, and I feel like a lot of the people on campus. They have the same mindset because they want to serve. They know the value of an education. You want to see people succeed and do well, and just go on and grow and spread their wings, and that's what I was able to experience. That's the opportunity FIU gave me twice as I did 2 degrees, and I see, I see myself and others and you included. All of us giving that opportunity to students that are attending, because that's the mission, right? We're here to just educate provide opportunities and help students achieve their goals, and I think the university we've had ups and downs, obviously, and that's gonna be everywhere. But at the end of the day, you know, the trajectory keeps going upward. Every day we see FIU in different rankings doing what and the testament of the hard work that a lot of people put in. So, I'm just proud to be still associated with the University and affiliate it and to say I'm a graduate.

DR: That's awesome. That's a really, really great grasping of like how it's changed, and it goes more beyond, it goes beyond, I should say the superficial buildings and it sounds like you encapsulated that really well. So, we're gonna come now to the biggest question of them all. What does the I in Florida International University mean to you?

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RS: That's a loaded one. So, umm . . .

DR: It is! [laughs]

RS: For me, it meant that I was just surrounded by people from everywhere right, not just as a student because your classmates are not just from Miami or surrounding communities in South Florida but your professors are diverse. they're from different countries different backgrounds people that work at the university are from you know, same thing, different places. So, the international doesn't just mean. It's not just one perspective. It's not just the students that are international, it's the faculty and staff, and then, if you look at where FIU is situated. We are located in one of the most diverse cosmopolitan cities in the world. So, it's quite appropriate that we have international in the name, and we are in a very diverse international city, and we keep attracting folks from around the world, which is a testament, again, to the university and the quality of the education. So, it really meant to that. you know I got, it's an opportunity to learn and absorb and grow because you meet people from all over. So obviously you talk, and you get to learn maybe like little bits of different languages or what different cultures are like, and I think it's important for us to take advantage of those opportunities because it's a way for us to learn and be more accepting and tolerant of others and also. . . maybe to get a better understanding and appreciation of the journey others had to take. Just like I have my own unique journey. A lot of other folks have a story and a journey to tell, and some are not maybe as easy as you know. I would not say mine was difficult by any means, but others have struggled, and to hear different perspectives and the sacrifices that parents and students have to make to come here, and the name reaches around the world because we, you know, I just like you right. We work in admissions. We see people that are applying from all over the planet. So, it means something and I think that reputation is continually improving and developing.

DR: Yeah, well said! I really appreciate that. That's kind of what we're looking for. I think in this project its hearing more about those stories and I think why it is, believe it or not. I'm not pandering, it is an honor to see someone that has experienced it for 25 years. That's nuts you know, and I know in our group we're gonna have students, I mean other students or faculty that have been longer, you know. So, it'll be, that's the goal of this and that's why we appreciate your time. So, how about you –mentioned a lot there. About it being you know, it's not just about the location, it's a culmination of location, staff, faculty, students, communities, and even like the diverse community within the community. So, do you think that do you think that the international campus aspect has stayed consistent throughout the years? Has it changed in any way do you think?

RS: Well, I think it's improved. you know, numbers-wise I'm sure we have more international students because we have more students overall. So, naturally speaking, we would have more international students probably from countries we didn't have 20, 30 years ago. And I just see a lot more opportunities and events for international students to get involved

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with and to participate in. My nephew is an international student now. This is his first year, the second semester, so I hear, even though I am no longer an international student. I hear his perspective and things happening with him and what he's experiencing, and it sounds great. I think, as a university you want everyone to feel included as if they're part of the family and the community that there is always something available for them to do or participate in. And I see it. I see it, you know, having also still being an instructor. I see students in my classes and then again, they talk about experiences and things happening on campus, and there is no way, I think FIU has such a rich, diverse environment and I tell students to take advantage of it because when you leave, you're not going to find that everywhere. We're catering to students which is there the reason we exist, and I think we're doing it right. Not that there isn't room, for growth but there are improvements, there is but right, I think I've seen a huge growth, or a huge expansion, and what we do for and with international students.

DR: That's great. So, it sounds like goals are being accomplished I would feel, right?

RS: [laughs] I would say so the same.

DR: Yeah, all right. So I think, I think we got a lot of good, good stories out of this interview, and the last thing I want to close it on, and I thought I feel like it's so fitting is that the that you mentioned you have your nephew here, and it's like that legacy of your family coming back seems like it's being impacted by your experiences maybe or even your brother's experiences. Do you, did that at all play a role with your nephew choosing FIU as the university to go to?

RS: It definitely did. He, I think having me here, and he lives with me, by the way. So, I think that had a huge factor in terms of him deciding which school to go to, and he's also been well. . . not just him, but his family have, they've also been, you know, frequent visitors to Miami over the years. So, just like how I would come up on vacation It's the same for him, and he would you know so he's new to FIU, but not to Miami necessarily. Obviously, his dad went to a FIU. Now his uncle works at FIU and also attended, so that definitely played a huge role in his decision. And I hope, I hope we can continue the legacy in the family and I'd love for my kids to go to FIU if it works out that way and you know, we'll keep it going as long as we can but yeah, it's I think FIU is a gem that we have here, and maybe sometimes we take it for granted, or we don't realize, and unless you're part of it you're not really gonna fully know or understand, right? Unless you were a student or faculty or staff you're not necessarily gonna know, and that's okay. But we have a Gem in the community, and we have a lot to be thankful for, and you know I always tell folks that say, oh, i'm considering going to if they say they're considering going to you know another school in Florida, or out of state I'll be like well, did you look into FIU because we have some really great programs right? So, you don't have to leave home. You could or you could leave home and live on campus.

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DR: Yeah, yeah, that's such a cool tradition to have, for now, you know. And it's interesting and if you don't mind sharing. Do you know where your nephew is going to end up majoring in? Is he gonna follow the footsteps of you all?

RS: So, he's not following either my brother or me he's an architecture major, so I'm not sure exactly. You know there are different specializations in architecture. I'm not sure exactly which one he is doing, but architecture as of now.

DR: For now. Excellent! That's funny. So, I think I think we're good. I think we can wrap this up I mean if there's, if you want to share a photo of maybe your graduation time, maybe we could include it in the project as well and I don't know if you have any last words of wisdom to share, as far as like your overall experience at FIU. Do you know? Do you have any last words to say before we wrap this up?

RS: Yeah, thank you. I want to say thank you, Del, for the opportunity to share. I've never had. I've never done anything like this in my 25 years at the university, it's nice to share and talk about FIU in my experience again. I'm not special or unique, I know a lot of other people that have come through and been successful and have done well. So, I appreciate you letting me share just my 2 cents about my journey, and whoever listens to this eventually, I hope it's beneficial to them. The only thing you know, for me, having been a two-time graduate and been working at the university for a few years now. For me, it's just about how can I help make it better today, but also for the future that you know, for our future students that are gonna come and to keep the legacy of FIU going as a stellar institution that folks, send your kids to, or even work at because our workforce is so huge. A lot of people, you know, are happy to come and work at FIU, why not? So sometimes we only look at it as a place where students go, but it's a place where a lot of people come and work, and a lot of faculty want to come and teach and do research and you know, apply for grants and stuff like that. So those 3 pillars, I think of the University are so important, and at least on my end trying to make it better by me, you know, being better every day.

DR: Excellent! Well said, well said, bravo! Thanks so much Ricky. I am going to stop the recording now.

RS: Okay, thank you.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Delver Retana and Ashley Floyd Kuntz, PhD