



September 1, 2018

Board of Trustees, Florida International University
Modesto A. Maidique Campus
Miami, FL 33199

Dear Members of the Board:

It is not necessary to repeat the long list of incredible feats accomplished during President Maidique's 23-year tenure. The University itself is tribute to his work. This is why you chose to honor his achievements, with the extraordinary honor of naming the main campus after him and making it subject to reconsideration only if Dr. Maidique committed any legal impropriety and fully irrevocable upon his death.

Yet, as of today, there are members of this Board who are poised to have the University renege on its commitment by retracting the honor, (or reducing it with a smaller "honor" which would be just as insulting), in retaliation for what it perceives as Dr. Maidique's critical remarks about FIU's current President. Such action would be an unlawful violation of his freedom of speech and would trample the very principles of what a "university" should be: a place for the free exchange of ideas. It will certainly lead to costly litigation which the University cannot win. It is not coincidence that one of the Board's most valuable members, Cesar Alvarez, hailed as one of America's most prestigious lawyers, voted against the recommendation to remove Dr. Maidique's name.

In addition, this arbitrary, unlawful action will have a chilling effect on prospective donors. After all, if it can be done to its most iconic President, then it can be done to anyone.

Adding injury to insult, some have suggested that this attack on Dr. Maidique is also based in part, on an effort to "de-Cubanize FIU". These allegations, which I choose not to believe, have nonetheless entered the minds of our community especially after the recent exit of prominent Cuban Americans from leadership positions and the pro-Regime themes of many of its recent Cuba seminars. Proceeding with this unlawful action will, without a doubt, be used by many, as proof that the aforementioned allegations are true, and will cause everlasting angst and distrust between the University and its largest constituency.

The allegations that some Board members are using their position to settle personal vendettas, combined with the recent tragic events, an inconsistent naming policy, an unnecessary lawsuit (in addition to those coming in the near future from the bridge collapse), and an angered community, may well tip the scales to a justifiable, full-scale reform of the FIU's governance system.

We urge those who advocate for this dishonor to find a different way to resolve your differences with President Maidique. If we can dishonor a person's lifetime achievements, just because he disagrees with someone in power, then we have lost our way, not just as a Board, but as a nation.

Sincerely,

Marcell Felipe, Chairman

Advisory Board

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1001 Brickell Bay Dr, Suite 2700, Miami, FL 33131

T. 305.381.8500

F. 305.381.6225

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