Keynote Address:

“Who We Are, What We Do, Where We Are Headed”

Prof. Manuel J. Carvajal, Ph.D.
The Mission and Aims of The Honors College

The mission of The Honors College is to provide an intellectual community where outstanding students and dedicated teachers and scholars pursue intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and personal and professional enrichment marked by excellence in all engagements. It is guided by the FIU Value Statement, which espouses a commitment to: freedom of thought and expression; excellence in the pursuit, generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; respect for the dignity of the individual; respect for the environment; honesty, integrity, and truth; diversity; and service excellence.

The aims of The Honors College are to:

1. Attract the “best and brightest” students from within and outside FIU and provide them a high quality trans-disciplinary educational experience.

2. Enable students to develop critical, integrative, and creative thinking skills and to make connections among domains of knowledge.

3. Facilitate engagement of students in applied and other research collaboration with the finest research faculty as learners and teachers in the scholarly community.

4. Provide mentoring and internship experiences to complement and enrich the knowledge acquired in the classroom and through research collaboration.

5. Offer scope for service learning engagement as a way to build bridges between domains of knowledge and service activity that enhances civic responsibility.

6. Foster a sense of community among students and faculty as citizens with special talents and responsibilities to self, the scholarly community, and society.

Dean’s Thought for Fall 2004

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

~ Confucius
The Honors College Administration and Faculty

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Manuel J. Carvajal, Ph.D. (University of Florida), Economics
Ricardo Castells, Ph.D. (Duke University), Modern Languages
Charmeine DeFrancesco, Ph.D. (Florida State University), Health, Physical Education and Recreation
Grenville Draper, Ph.D. (University of the West Indies), Earth Sciences
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Fernando Gonzalez-Rejosa, Ph.D. (Florida State University), Psychology
Cary Myers Grof, M.S. (Florida International University), English
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Lesley A. Northup, Ph.D. (Catholic University), Associate Dean & Fellow
Caroline Simpson, Ph.D. (University of Florida), Soil Microbiology
Felice Lifshitz, Ph.D. (Columbia University), History
Peter A. Machonis, Ph.D. (Pennsylvania State University), Modern Languages
Tonislav Mandakov, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh), Decision Sciences
Pete E.C. Markowitz, Ph.D. (College of William and Mary), Physics
Carlos Martini, M.D. (University of Buenos Aires), Medicine
Florentin Maurrasse, Ph.D. (Columbia University), Earth Sciences
Kevin O'Shea, Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles), Chemistry
Joyce Peterson, Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin-Madison), History
Charles Ponscy, J.D. (Cornell Law School), Law
Darden Pyron, Ph.D. (University of Georgia), History
Caroline Simpson, Ph.D. (University of Florida), Physics
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Kimberly Taylor, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania), Marketing
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Elizabeth Williams, Coordinator of College Relations

Honors Convocation Speaker
Manuel J. Carvajal, Ph.D.

Professor of Economics and Fellow of The Honors College at Florida International University. A consultant for the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank, the Library of Congress, and other organizations, he is the author/editor of seven books and numerous journal articles on inter-gender/inter-ethnic comparisons and other areas of human capital.

Professor Carvajal has taught in The Honors College since 1993. A dedicated teacher, he is a man of wide interests. While he is best known as a Professor of Economics, he also has taught French and Latin to high school students and Statistics and Business/Public Administration in other universities. He is as passionate about research as he is about teaching. When he is not busy in the classroom or working on his next publication, he loves to travel, play squash, ski, and spend time with his family. He teaches an interdisciplinary fourth-year seminar in The Honors College focusing on the future.

Over the years Dr. Carvajal has helped develop The Honors College’s Summer Study Program in Spain, for which he serves as Director. Participants in this program travel to Madrid, Santiago de Compostela, and Barcelona, and learn about Spanish culture from a historical perspective in an exciting and broad curriculum. He also directs the Fall Semester Program in Spain. Dr. Carvajal has provided excellent mentoring for students interested in research. He has published with his students in scholarly journals and has developed sessions in various conferences where his students have made scholarly presentations. “Professor Carvajal’s creativity in teaching gives students opportunities to analyze and discover themselves and their goals in innovative ways. I was fortunate to have him as a teacher,” says Honors College alumnus Abbas Salehmohamed.
“Who We Are, What We Do, Where We Are Headed”

PROF. MANUEL J. CARVAJAL, PH.D.

When Dean Griffith invited me to be this year’s Honors College Convocation speaker, I was overtaken with feelings of pride, joy, and apprehension. Why me, I asked myself, if there are so many other, far more capable Honors College fellows? Was this another exercise like Peter Machonis’s city-as-text or Darden Pyron’s text-as-text, a necessary condition for me to be able to retire at the end of this year? Then I realized this was not about me. A good Convocation address is not one that makes the speaker look good, but one that projects the institution at its best. So I decided to reflect about The Honors College: Who we are, what we do, where we are headed.

In my opinion, The Honors College is a microcosm of the University, capturing selectively the best of academia. And what is a university?, one might ask. According to Webster’s New World Dictionary, a university is “a school of higher education made up of a college or colleges.” The Webster’s New School and Office Dictionary defines a university as “an assemblage of colleges... empowered to confer degrees in the several arts and faculties.” And The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language begins its description of a university as “an institution for higher learning with teaching and research facilities...” Notice that all of them stress the institutional aspect, and consequently dwell on things pertaining to institutions—organization, buildings, resources, outputs.

With all due respect to these dictionaries and the great people whose dedication make such compilations possible, I submit to you that none of them begins to capture the essence of a university. A true university is a community of scholars. Period. Scholars committed to pushing the boundaries of knowledge in their disciplines by virtue of not only finding pertinent answers to existing questions, but constantly postulating new questions. Thus, the cornerstone of a university and, of course, its honors college, is the faculty. Without it there can be no university. Take away anything else and the university can survive, at least in principle; but eliminate the faculty and you take away the university’s raison d’être.

Now let us pause for a moment and reflect on some of the qualities, say three of them, that we would like to find in members of the faculty (qualities which, by the way, should expand into a plethora of virtues for Honors College Fellows). The first is probably the pursuit of excellence, a commitment to being the best that one can be (without necessarily joining the Army). In this context, the words of Aristotle—“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit”—go beyond mere external manifestations and acquire a new dimension: We at The Honors College are expected to adopt excellence as a way of life, to transcend doing excellent work into being excellent in nature, in such a way that our excellence shows not only in our accomplishments,
The Benefits of The Honors College:

The Best of Two worlds

The Honors College at Florida International University in Miami offers the best of two worlds. It is a small community of outstanding students, dedicated scholars, and committed teachers who work together in an atmosphere usually associated with small private colleges. Yet, we do so with all the resources of a major state university, which is one of the nation’s top doctoral/research extensive universities. Only 152 universities in the United States hold this superior rank.

The Honors College provides a broad foundation for dedicated students who want to get the most out of their undergraduate education. The undergraduate experience it provides is significantly enhanced by the broad interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum and opportunities to work closely with expert faculty and in the community. The opportunities for graduate or professional study and for employment are greatly expanded because of the range of unique activities and academic experiences made available to students in the College.

The Honors Curriculum

You may pursue almost any major available in the University and at the same time complete the honors curriculum. The curriculum emphasizes the following activities: critical, integrative, and creative thinking; group and independent research; oral presentation; close contact between students and faculty; integration of class work with the broader community.

Outstanding Professors and Researchers

“Knowledgeable, caring, enthusiastic, and approachable”: these are some of the characteristics students use to describe the diverse honors faculty. Carefully selected from the more than fourteen hundred faculty members at the University for their accomplishments as both teachers and scholars, members of the honors faculty take great pride in their close association with their students and are committed to excellence.

Honors Place at Panther Hall

“Honors Place is remarkable. It’s like home and everyone there is family. We work hard and play hard, driven by our friendship and common pursuit of excellence” - Damian Dunn, Honors Place Resident.

The Honors Place at Florida International University is on-campus residence living. As an Honors College student, you will have the opportunity to participate in this special campus housing program.

but in our ideals, our dedication, our passion.

Regardless of the levels of excellence which we may attain individually, however, there can be no community without an even more important quality - namely, collegiality. Collegiality means sharing splendor and challenges alike, responding collectively to common problems, being willing to forego personal recognition for the sake of togetherness. It translates into lending a friendly ear and occasionally a helping hand, never uttering recrimination, furnishing limited advice, expressing solidarity, and providing abundant moral support. Words of encouragement and simply being there in moments of weakness and self-doubt (and we all experience weakness and self-doubt from time to time—when we receive an unfair or unkind evaluation by a supervisor, get an article rejected, and so on) are remembered far more fondly in the long run than anything that one can add to his/her vita.

I also would like to identify a third quality: Compassion. Compassion implies understanding and tolerance vis-à-vis members of the university community who do not endorse the pursuit of excellence with the same fervor that we do. After all, only the elite can be part of The Honors College. But think about it for a moment: If only the birds that sing best were allowed to sing, the forest would be a very boring place.

And where do students fit in this great scheme? In the minds of many, students play the central role. Without their demand for learning, there would be no institution, and consequently no faculty would be hired. Students are critical because they represent the future. They are scholars and practitioners in training, peers further ahead in the road. If they were perceived more frequently by faculty and staff as future colleagues and peers, perhaps they would be treated with more courtesy and respect. Unfortunately, in this utilitarian world of ours, university students often are viewed as clients subject to the laws of supply and demand.

You might argue that in a “successful business” customers should be treated with respect; but notice that such respect logically would be conditioned by the interests of the “business.” The moment some customers no longer contribute to the “desired output,” however defined or measured, automatically they lose value and are subject to being treated with less respect. Let me repeat emphatically the words of Steve Fjellman in his memorable Convocation address three years ago: “...students are not customers. You are not clients.” Students, the respect you deserve in this community as scholars and practitioners in training is of intrinsic nature, not subject to fluctuations in the state of the university. You are here not merely to purchase a degree; your purpose is much more noble than that.

Just as we did with the faculty, let us pause and reflect on three qualities that we would like to find in students. One might be tempted to say that, first of all, we would like our students to be smart. But being smart is not really that important; far more important is being willing to work hard, to compensate with extra effort for whatever deficiency they may have (and make no mistake about it, we all have deficiencies). Students have virtually nothing to say regarding the resource mix with which they are endowed when
they come to school—their genetic composition, even the way they have been raised; they cannot be held responsible for any of it. It is how they apply those resources, their diligence, their determination to continue trying in the face of adversity that ultimately will determine their success or failure. Thomas Edison once said that “genius is 1 percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.” That probably applies to Honors College students as much as anybody else.

A second quality that I appreciate in my students is inquisitiveness, the insatiable thirst for knowledge that propels them to read, search online, meet people. Inquisitive students possess the uncanny ability to dig well below the surface and ask more probing questions. They are not satisfied with preprogrammed answers and continue inquiring even when their professors express mild exasperation. They are creative in their academic pursuits and are not afraid to explore challenging topics or apply unorthodox methodologies.

Third, the better students are genuine. They do not pretend to be anybody else. They are aware of their limitations and refrain from embarking on projects to which they cannot, or do not want to, commit the necessary resources for successful completion. They know that judicious people often avert failure by choosing discrimately the tasks they embrace. Yet they respond positively to the mentoring efforts of their professors, pushing themselves, again and again, and, doing so, pushing the limits of what they are, what they do, and where they are headed, in their resolve, their thoughts, their actions, and their accomplishments.

And they know that learning, fascinating though it may be, is only part of the equation. Students, college is supposed to be fun, a time when you build everlasting friendships and memories that you will cherish forever. If you are not having fun, you are missing out. If you stress out because you have too much work or you must protect a grade, you are not maintaining a proper balance. Genuine students are multifaceted; they enjoy and do well in the different aspects of their lives. Students, let your true self emerge from within and be proud of who you are, what you do, and where you are headed.

And what about the administration? One would expect that great communities of scholars are supported by great administrations, administrations that have vision and an unselfish purpose. Great administrations understand that a university’s true greatness is measured more by the quality of its faculty, the avidity of its student body, and the opportunities for professional development available to both groups than by the size or complexity of its physical infrastructure. Far from perceiving professors as a perennial source of conflict or an ominous threat, they view the interests of their faculty as inextricably linked to their own interests. Great administrators perceive their current position as an opportunity to step forward to serve their colleagues and their institution—mind the origin of the word from Latin ad (to) + minister (serve) —rather than stepping up to glorify themselves. And when they leave their posts to return to the faculty, they do not feel that they are stepping down or being demoted; instead, they embrace such a step as the privilege to continue, after a service interlude, with the great adventure of their professional lives.

Finally, the fourth institutional component identified in this address is the society where the community of scholars functions. Great universities develop a symbiosis with the society that encompasses them. They empathize with its plights, respond to its needs, share their burdens, compensate for its shortcomings, and try to find solutions to its specific problems. Only then do they feel capable of drawing financial and other resources from it. They interpret ethnic diversity as a source of strength, not a challenge to be justified before other entities or an explanation for not meeting their goals. And they never claim higher education to be their exclusive domain. They view the presence of other didactic institutions as a valuable contribution to society’s stock of pedagogical wealth, perhaps a gentle reminder not to take people’s response for granted, but certainly not as a predatory attempt by a hostile force to erode their client population.

As we approach the twilight of this event and prepare to resume the normal course of our lives, in the profound silence of our inner selves we may feel that an evaluation is in order: Do we, as scholars and scholars practitioners in training of The Honors College, meet the criteria mentioned here—excellence, collegiality, compassion, diligence and determination, inquisitiveness, genuineness? Invariably we would rate ourselves better in some aspects than in others. Might as well face it: There is always room for improvement, even in The Honors College. The important thing, however, is that we are headed in the right direction, and that we have a glorious future ahead of us.

Glorious?, you may ask. Isn’t the epithet pretentious, especially for a relatively humble institution like FIU? Let me tell you, every time one of our faculty members comes up with a publication, an invention, a recital, or any other successful expression of creativity, our community rejoices in glory. Every time a student lands a good job, graduates, passes a course, completes a magnificent project, or merely masters a task, glory shines in our midst. Every new insight into the purpose of humankind, every effort toward mentoring young minds, every act of service in the community where we live leads us along a path to glory. For radiance is not the sole property of heavenly stars; it can be found everywhere, even in the deepest caves, in large and small actions alike. And unless we come up with this realization—moreover, until we truly make it a part of our lives—we will not have grasped the true meaning of The Honors College. Let us make sure we know who we are, for that determines what we do and it will drive us where we are headed, experiencing glory along every inch of the way.
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Irim T. de Alonso, Ph.D. (University of York), Economics
Regina C. Bailey, M.F.A. (Pratt Institute), Art
John Bailly, M.F.A. (Pratt Institute), Art
William K. Beeunsting, Ph.D. (Florida State University), English
Christopher Brown, Ph.D. (University of Delaware), Biological Sciences
Manuel J. Carvajal, Ph.D. (University of Florida), Economics
Ricardo Castells, Ph.D. (Duke University), Modern Languages
Charmaine DeFrancesco, Ph.D. (Florida State University), Health, Physical Education and Recreation
Grenville Draper, Ph.D. (University of the West Indies), Earth Sciences
Krisshnamwatty Jayachandran, Ph.D. (Kansas State University), Soil Microbiology
Felice Lifshitz, Ph.D. (Columbia University), History
Peter A. Machonis, Ph.D. (Pennsylvania State University), Modern Languages
Toniysal Mandakovic, Ph.D. (University of Pittsburgh), Decision Sciences
Pete E.C. Markowitz, Ph.D. (College of William and Mary), Physics
Carlos Martini, M.D. (University of Buenos Aires), Medicine
Florestine Maurasse, Ph.D. (Columbia University), Earth Sciences
Kevin O'Shea, Ph.D. (University of California, Los Angeles), Chemistry
Joyce Peterson, Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin-Madison), History
Charles Poznay, J.D. (Cornell Law School), Law
Darden Pyron, Ph.D. (University of Virginia), History
Meri-Jane Rochelson, Ph.D. (University of Chicago), English
Eliberto Roman, J.D. (University of Wisconsin), Law
Caroline Simpson, Ph.D. (University of Florida), Physics
John Stuart, M.Arch. (Columbia University), Architecture
Kimberly Taylor, Ph.D. (University of Pennsylvania), Marketing
M.O. Thirunarayanan, Ph.D. (Arizona State University), Learning Tech., Curriculum & Instruction
Lorna Venali, J.D. (New York School of Law), Journalism & Mass Communications
Christopher Warren, D.A. (Lehigh University), Political Science

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Lourdes Peruizo, Program Assistant
Larissa Ramos, Coordinator of Student Services & External Relations
Elizabeth Williams, Coordinator of College Relations

Honors Convocation Speaker
Manuel J. Carvajal, Ph.D.

Professor of Economics and Fellow of The Honors College at Florida International University. A consultant for the U.S. Agency for International Development, the World Bank, the Library of Congress, and other organizations, he is the author/editor of seven books and numerous journal articles on inter-gender/inter-ethnic comparisons and other areas of human capital.

Professor Carvajal has taught in The Honors College since 1993. A dedicated teacher, he is a man of wide interests. While he is best known as a Professor of Economics, he also has taught French and Latin to high school students and Statistics and Business/Public Administration in other universities. He is as passionate about research as he is about teaching. When he is not busy in the classroom or working on his next publication, he loves to travel, play squash, ski, and spend time with his family. He teaches an interdisciplinary fourth-year seminar in The Honors College focusing on the future.

Over the years Dr. Carvajal has helped develop The Honors College’s Summer Study Program in Spain, for which he serves as Director. Participants in this program travel to Madrid, Santiago de Compostela, and Barcelona, and learn about Spanish culture from a historical perspective in an exciting and broad curriculum. He also directs the Fall Semester Program in Spain. Dr. Carvajal has provided excellent mentoring for students interested in research. He has published with his students in scholarly journals and has developed sessions in various conferences where his students have made scholarly presentations. “Professor Carvajal’s creativity in teaching gives students opportunities to analyze and discover themselves and their goals in innovative ways. I was fortunate to have him as a teacher,” says Honors College alumnus Abbas Salehmohamed.
The Mission and Aims of The Honors College

The mission of The Honors College is to provide an intellectual community where outstanding students and dedicated teachers and scholars pursue intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and personal and professional enrichment marked by excellence in all engagements. It is guided by the FIU Value Statement, which espouses a commitment to: freedom of thought and expression; excellence in the pursuit, generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; respect for the dignity of the individual; respect for the environment; honesty, integrity, and truth; diversity; and service excellence.

The aims of The Honors College are to:

1. Attract the "best and brightest" students from within and outside FIU and provide them a high quality trans-disciplinary educational experience.

2. Enable students to develop critical, integrative, and creative thinking skills and to make connections among domains of knowledge.

3. Facilitate engagement of students in applied and other research collaboration with the finest research faculty as learners and teachers in the scholarly community.

4. Provide mentoring and internship experiences to complement and enrich the knowledge acquired in the classroom and through research collaboration.

5. Offer scope for service learning engagement as a way to build bridges between domains of knowledge and service activity that enhances civic responsibility.

6. Foster a sense of community among students and faculty as citizens with special talents and responsibilities to self, the scholarly community, and society.

Dean’s Thought for Fall 2004

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.”

~ Confucius
FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
FOURTH HONORS COLLEGE CONVOCATION
SEPTEMBER TWENTY-SEVENTH – TWO THOUSAND FOUR
HONORS COLLEGE REFLECTIONS SERIES

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Florida International University
University Park Campus, DM 233
Biscayne Bay Campus, ACI 200
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Keynote Address:

“Who We Are, What We Do, Where We Are Headed”

PROF. MANUEL J. CARVAJAL, PH.D.