



**FIU Embrace**  
**External Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018**

**External Advisory Council Members**

Albert Lopez, CEO of the Americas, BDO USA, LLP  
Andrew Sagona, Founder, Disability Rights Law Association  
Brenda Lampon, Area Director, Vocational Rehabilitation  
Cuong Do, Executive VP and Head of Global Strategy, Samsung Electronics America  
Evelyn Alvarez, Southern Region Manager, Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD)  
Luis Navas, Senior Partner, Global Governance Advisors  
Milton Vescovacci, Shareholder, Gray Robinson, P.A.  
Ora Prilleltensky, Clinical Assistant Professor (Retired), University of Miami  
Yogi Hernandez Suarez (Chair), CMO, Care Delivery Organization of Human

**Attendees**

Alberto Fernandez, Principal, SPED Outreach, Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
Angel Rodriguez, Family Liaison Officer, Miami-Dade County Public Schools  
Christopher Chin, Parent  
Ciara Khan, Program Assistant, FIU Embrace  
Deborah Dietz, Disability Independence Group  
Eddy Maldonado, PLUS Student, FIU Embrace  
Ernie Martinez, Independent Living Advocate  
Howard K. Holness, Faculty Administrator, Provost, and Executive VP Academic Affairs, FIU  
Janelle Espinosa, Parent  
Kelli Hunter-Sheppard, District Director, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Krystal Sutherland, Program Manager LIFE, FIU Embrace  
Lilia Bourzac, Administrative Specialist, FIU Embrace  
Mavara Mirza-Agrawal, Medical Director, FIU Embrace  
Mayte Capo, Program Manager PLUS, FIU Embrace  
Michelle D. Mason, Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Education, Experimental Learning & Engagement, Florida International University  
Nicholas Chin, PLUS Student, FIU Embrace  
Nicholas Espinosa, PLUS Student, FIU Embrace  
Nicole Attong, Director, FIU Embrace  
Raquel Linares, Deputy Director, Jobs, Best Buddies International  
Raul Garcia, Student Assistant, FIU Embrace  
Rozeena Taylor, Program Coordinator, FIU Embrace  
Shanna Burke, Assistant Professor, FIU  
Tonja Moore, VP of Research and Dean of the University Graduate School, FIU  
Val Aubourg, Senior University Counsel, FIU  
Wendy Chin, Parent

### **Call to Order**

The Vice Chair Vescovacci convened the meeting of the FIU Embrace External Advisory Council at 2:00 p.m. on Monday, October 1, 2018, at the Modesto Maidique Campus. Mr. Vescovacci invited the Council and members of the audience to introduce themselves.

### **Review & Acceptance of Minutes**

Minutes from two meetings were presented. April 17, 2018, and January 23, 2018. Corrections were made to the questions and comments section (highlighted in yellow) of the January 23, 2018 minutes.

Vice Chair Vescovacci requested a motion to approve both the January 23, 2018, and April 17, 2018 minutes as presented. Mr. Do put forth a motion to approve both minutes

as presented. Mr. Sagona seconded the motion. Both minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

### **Florida Sunshine Laws Training**

Mr. Aubourg provided a brief introductory training of the Florida Sunshine Law. He. The following is a description of the Training provided.

The Florida Sunshine Statute states that meetings of boards of any county in which official acts are to be taken are declared as public meetings must be open to the public at all times and no formal action shall be considered binding except as such made in the meeting. This is to ensure that boards make decisions in public, that there be reasonable notice given for the meeting, and that the meeting minutes be recorded.

The meeting content must include discussions or deliberations between two or more board members about a matter the board will formally take action on. Board members may not have informal conversations or reach any conclusions about matters that will be voted on. Mr. Aubourg explained that reasonable notice must be provided for each meeting (seven days in advance of the meeting). There are penalties for violations to the Florida Sunshine law. The Florida Sunshine Law is to be considered tools in furtherance of the mission of both FIU and of this board to serve the public. See attached presentation.

Vice Chair Vescovacci asked if two board members can have a conversation regarding an upcoming meeting, if the discussion do not involve voting decisions. Mr. Aubourg explained that the law is very broad and that the purpose of the conversation cannot be such where it affects the members' voting decision.

Chair Hernandez Suarez asked if the Sunshine law is viewed differently for advisory boards, given their roles differ from fiduciary boards. Mr. Aubourg explained that advisory boards are covered under the Florida Sunshine law. However, the applicability of sunshine law to advisory boards is determined on a case-by-case basis.

Mrs. Moore asked if the Sunshine Law apply only to state schools or to any school. Mr. Aubourg explained that any government entity must follow the Florida Sunshine Law.

### **Bylaws Update**

Vice Chair Vescovacci indicated that the conflict of interest policy has been revised and asked Mr. Aubourg to provide more details on the revisions made. Mr. Aubourg explained that the conflict of interest form was revised to align with the Conflict of interest forms of other boards at the University. He also explained board members can state which elements within the form do not apply to them.

Mr. Aubourg also indicated that he was provided with a copy of the bylaws and is working on providing his feedback to accurately reflect the purpose and mission of this

board. Once completed this update will be presented at the upcoming meeting. Vice Chair Vescovacci requested that board members complete the updated conflict of interest form. Chair Hernandez Suarez explained that the purpose of the updated conflict of interest form was so council members disclose potential conflicts so that they may be considered by the Council.

Ms. Attong indicated that the bylaws committee will meet to discuss, updates to the bylaws, the potential addition of Council members, and the stratification of the initial members of Council as outlined in the bylaws. Furthermore, Vice Chair Vescovacci will present potential Council members to the full Council for a review and approval.

### **Law Update**

Dean Mason provided the following update regarding the FIU Embrace Law partnership. Since the partnership initiated in August 2016, 111 families received services. Presently, there are 70 active cases, and 10 pending intakes. The program has 10 students available as a resource, who are working with two fellows, and there are also 2 attorneys working on cases as well.

The program wanted to address the needs of as many families as possible so that families would not have to find the services elsewhere. Therefore, the services provided have been expanded as legal needs of families have changed and expanded.

Mrs. Espinosa asked what type of families are receiving legal services? Dean Mason explained that the legal services are provided to families who have a legal need and qualify financially. The low-bono initiative was launched to provide the legal services to some families with legal needs who did not qualify financially or could not receive legal services at a reduced cost.

Ms. Attong also informed the Council that in the summer FIU Embrace will be working on a research project with the law school.

Chair Hernandez Suarez asked Dean Mason to explain how the experiential learning worked for law students, and what the interaction was like with these high-value families. Dean Mason explained that the FIU Law students were all required to complete a total of 30 pro-bono hours with the community. There is an annual event, which celebrates the students' efforts, and a third of the students completed over 100 hours of pro-bono. Dean Mason invited Mr. Sagona to speak to his experience with pro-bono work. He explained that the experiential learning provided both pro-bono experiences as well as externship experience for the law students, and indicated that it was extremely helpful in providing insight on how to be a successful lawyer.

Chair Hernandez Suarez commented that within the medical profession the physician learns, as much from their patients as the patients learn from them. As is the case with

this partnership, which makes for a long-term sustainable relationship with deep importance to both the university and the community.

Mr. Sagona asked Dean Mason what areas of law does the legal clinic provide services. Dean Mason explained that when the program was launched in August 2016 it initially provided legal services for Guardianship and Wills and Trusts but now there were several others offered as these have been expanding to include family law, landlord tenant, housing, Medicare, Medicaid, and disability claims. Families who do not qualify to receive legal services are referred to attorneys within the alumni network to ensure they have knowledge of resources available to them.

Mr. Do commented that families have an increased need of services and resources when dealing with situations of having been pulled over by the police or being able to take the appropriate action towards bullying. He informed the Council that in New Jersey, they have been trying to acquit someone from a murder charge. Therefore, it is important to be prepared for these scenarios and provided the necessary services to these families. Ms. Attong explained that FIU Embrace provide trainings to law enforcement and first responders. The program is also working with the FIU Police Department to develop role-playing videos of certain scenario such as, traffic stops or domestic disputes. Dr. Agrawal commented that on the medical side they screen for safety to provide the patient support to best cope with anxiety and stress.

#### **FIU Embrace Medical Update:**

Ms. Attong explained that the transition of FIU Embrace Medical to a community partner is continuing as the location has been identified, layout of the physical plant completed, and the lease agreement has been sent to Mr. Aubourg for his review and approval.

Chair Hernandez Suarez asked if anything could be done to provide support to families in regards to the flu season. Dr. Agrawal explained this is a polarizing issue as some patients are concerned about the risks involved with not being vaccinated and others with taking the vaccine. As such she explained that the vaccine is available but the decision is left entirely up to the patient or their families.

Dr. Agrawal informed the Council that under the leadership of Dr. Greer the College of Medicine, educational reform the medical care of the individuals with developmental disabilities is now a part of the medical curriculum and faculty are interested in learning how best to help families by providing support and resources beyond a diagnosis. Medical students are also interested in treating these patients. Therefore, a clinical protocol manual was implemented to provide the best services and techniques for these patients and their families.

Vice Chair Vescovacci asked how much time is being dedicated by the College of Medicine for programs for this, and is this something that helps the University stand

out amongst other community? Dr. Agrawal explained that training is provided to students throughout their years and in different areas of study. Dr. Agrawal also explained she has connected with colleagues nationally, and they have explained that they have very limited opportunity to provide this care for patients within the adult population, as much of the focus is given to the pediatric population with disabilities.

Mr. Do commented that the FIU Embrace Medical program started in a great place and has only continued to grow and improve.

### **FIU Embrace LIFE and PLUS Update**

Ms. Attong provided an overview of the work that has occurred in the LIFE and PLUS programs.

New program managers and a job coach for both LIFE and PLUS have been onboarded. Additionally, there are now seven graduate assistants, two social and eight academic mentors. The academic and social mentor component of the program have been redesigned, there are now two social mentors, eight academic mentor

Dr. Burke was funded for and launched a faculty mentor program. We have had a substantial increase in internships and job shadowing sites. All FIU Embrace PLUS students are placed in an internship site, seven LIFE students are in an internship, and only two LIFE students are still waiting to be placed in an internship site. The two students were not placed due to scheduling conflicts. Some of our external internship partners include Baptist Health South Florida, the Office of Senator Marco Rubio, Sluggers Batting Cages, Special Olympics, Amazon Services, and Vicky Bakery.

Also, during the matching process, we became aware that a number of students are employed part-time outside of the program.

At the beginning of the fall semester FIU Embrace launched its residential program. Seven students were admitted to the program. Five students are from the PLUS program, and two from the Dan Marino Foundation. Throughout the residential program, we have noticed that the students have coalesced and support each other. They also faced issues such as keeping up with laundry, chores, attending class on time, and budgeting.

Dr. Burke provided an overview of the Faculty Mentor program, which was an area of improvement identified when recruiting and training new mentors. The program received a grant to implement the faculty mentor certification program. The program also allows students to be trained as mentees. This program allows the students to understand their role as a mentee, and identify the most productive ways to engage with students, and to become certified as a peer mentor to incoming LIFE and PLUS students. At the faculty mentor orientation, students and faculty were paired and required to produce a measurable goal at the end of the session as well as report on this

goal periodically. There are also be four faculty and four student training. A completion ceremony is also requirement of the program.

Chair Hernandez Suarez asked who is the funder of this program. Dr. Burke explained that the grant is federally funded by DOE. FIU is a subaward from as a subaward of UCF.

Ms. Debbie Dietz asked if there were level II background screenings required as a part of the hiring process? Dr. Burke responded all mentors are required to have a level II background check and complete the Jessica Lunsford Certification.

Dr. Prilleltensky asked if the student mentor were graduates of the program? Dr. Burke explained the student mentors must first go through the mentee certification program then they will have an option to be a part of the peer mentor program, which will not be launched until the Fall 2019 semester. This program has its own curriculum to provide support for the mentors. Dr. Prilleltensky commented on the importance this program has on individuals innate need to feel valued by family members and the community. The program also allows the student to value oneself and others. Beyond being an opportunity that can be included on a resume it conveys a message that they are someone of value.

Ms. Attong indicated that in May 2018 nine students graduated from the LIFE program. Some of the students who graduated and were registered with BestBuddies International for jobs while others have moved to other organizations for their supported employment services. Ms. Attong is in the process of gathering the follow-up data, and will provide employment data at the next council meeting.

Vice Chair Vescovacci asked if there was a formal program that maintains contact with the students once they graduate? Dr. Burke responded that as part of the national study there is a technical assistance component that requires 30 days, 90 days, and annual follow-up reporting to be completed in regards to employment outcomes. She indicated that DOE is interested in learning if programs such as these are resulting in paid employment positions for graduating students as well as if the employment meets the interests of the person.

Raquel Linares, Director for BestBuddies International Miami also shared with the Council that for those students who remain with BestBuddies International and are seeking employment they are followed throughout the life of that employment. BestBuddies International has participants that they have been collecting data on for over 25 years. The information gathered includes: employer name, hours worked, salary, promotions, etc.

With regards to additional program development activities, Ms. Attong indicated that the students are in the process of launching a student organization called the FIU

Embracers. The purpose is to be inclusive, engage typical students within their organization, to raise awareness.

Ciara Khan, Program Assistant to FIU Embrace provided an update on the upcoming Design Thinking event. Ms. Khan explained that event is linked to the UN day to celebrate Persons with Disabilities. FIU Embrace will be hosting a multi-series event engaging students and faculty throughout the university to speak about accessibility on campus. This event will be led as a Design Thinking Session, this is a person-centered approach to solve problems. StartUP FIU will be facilitating the event and several units within the University will be represented such as the DRC, Honors College, Facilities, and Environmental Health and Safety. All of the solutions identified will be aggregated and presented to University leadership.

Ms. Attong thanked Chair Hernandez Suarez for introducing FIU Embrace to the Nelson Mandela Fellows, whom they shared discussions with them about implementing systems of care for individuals with developmental disabilities, mental illness and value-based care. Ms. Attong also thanked Dr. Prilleltensky for introducing FIU Embrace to the Beit Issie Shapiro Organization, whom FIU Embrace signed a memorandum of understanding with. As the NGO to the UN on disability awareness rights, Beit Issie Shapiro will help set-up two snoezelen rooms for the FIU Embrace Day Program. Dr. Prilleltensky suggested that the upcoming design thinking event consider including simulations as a way of demonstrating the struggles faced by students on campus and having others understand their perspective.

### **Questions and Comments:**

Chair Hernandez Suarez welcomed questions and comments from the audience.

Mrs. Espinosa commented on several programmatic components of the post-secondary educational program:

- The planned family debriefings - stating these are important because they allow families to provide a perspective of how the student is doing at home.
- She explained that the transportation issues faced by students were not the case in the past, as Miami-Dade County Public Schools would travel train the students on how to take public transportation.
- She explained the students have received police cards given to them by Miami-Dade Police, which they have been trained to show if they encounter police.
- She expressed concern over the flu vaccinations, as her son has hemophilia.
- She asked whether the professors are contacted at the beginning of the semester to identify the FIU Embrace students? Ms. Attong responded has a three step process for notifying faculty. First, the Disability Resources Center contacts the professor via email. Second, an FIU Embrace program manager will also contact the professor offering their support. Third, the Miami-Dade County teachers,

will connect with the professor and identify the students to the professor. The FIU Embrace team also works with the student to assist them with self identifying to the professor .

A meeting attendee asked what affirmative efforts are made to teach individual consent boundaries and how to navigate consent? Chair Hernandez Suarez also commented that neurotypical students also struggle with this topic, and asked if this was built into the LIFE and PLUS program? Ms. Attong explained that this topic is ongoing in seminars and discussed at various points throughout the academic year.

Mr. Sagona mentioned that vocational rehabilitation used to provide bus passes and asked Ms. Khan if an ADA compliance specialist will be attending the event. Ms. Khan responded that this had not been done. Ms. Attong also commented that this event is focused on students voicing their opinions and expressions. Dean Mason suggested that the program inform the office of General Counsel . Mr. Aubourg also commented that if any ADA issues arise the General Counsel Office should be notified as these are federally regulated

Mr. Do suggested that offering drivers education to the students is one way of addressing the transporting issues.

### **Adjournment**

The Chair requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 3:57 p.m.