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Nova Southeastern University's Sixth President
Remarks from the 25th Annual Celebration of Excellence
Saturday, February 3, 2024

Thank you, and good evening.

The President's Award for Excellence in Community Service recognizes those who not only give to NSU but provide superior engagement in the community and encourages the ongoing pursuit of service to others.

In 2011, when I became president and CEO of this great University, Dr. Brad Williams had an idea to create an academic scholarship program in leadership which he named after our Athletic Mascot – Razor.

The goal of this elite leadership program was to recruit high school seniors with extraordinary leadership potential so that they would have an “edge” -- a Razor's Edge.

It was a wonderful idea and potentially a great program, however, as you know, NSU, a private not-for-profit university, without the largess of tax dollars and with a small endowment, didn't have the money to fund such a program.

Behind me are listed NSU's Core Values. We have published and lived by these values for almost 15 years. Joel Hochberg and Albert Miniaci have likewise believed in and lived those Core Values, and after

explaining Razor's Edge to both gentlemen over several enjoyable dinners, with a lot of laughter and several bottles of wine --- each challenged the other for the initial gift in order to breathe life into the Razor's Edge Program.

Their support of the program not only was demonstrated through "their treasures" but through "their time and their talents." They came to each introductory class and would engage with the students on their progress.

Razor's Edge scholars have participated in leadership workshops, conducted research, organized international initiatives, produced performance and visual art on campus, and served as tutors and academic consultants to other students.

All these years later, the results speak for themselves. Since 2011, 1,284 students have received the Razor's Edge scholarship, which boasts a 92% retention, completion, and graduation rate.

Razor's Edge alumni serve in diverse professions around the world --- including as doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers, and business executives. That means but for Joel and Albert, 1,284 young men and women possibly would not have had the opportunity to attend NSU, but more importantly, but for Joel and Albert, 1,284 young men and women would not have unleashed their potential to be leaders and make the world a better place to be.

Is it any wonder then why we are proud to officially name the program the Hochberg - Miniaci Razor's Edge Scholarship Program. But let's let the video tell the story.

<https://vimeo.com/907491456/89051f5b3c?share=copy>

Closing Comments

What a wonderful evening this has been. Let's have a big round of applause for all the Shark Circle honorees tonight...and Albert and Joel and their families.

Shortly, as we leave the Rick Case Arena, we will offer you dessert in our Arlene & Michael Pecora Shark Pit, which is as you exit the front of the Don Taft University Center going toward our Mako Shark Fountain – and if you don't think that I have dropped enough names in this statement, I have room for your name on many more facilities.

But first, since this is my last Celebration of Excellence as president of this great University, I would like to say a few words – a few serious words.

People who find their purpose in life, and follow their passion, give their lives meaning. It's called the hidden power of purpose, and it helps all of us to be energized and live longer, healthier, and happier lives.

You see, it's even been proven by science that the mind and the body are inseparable aspects of our existence. Or, as my mama used to say, "You're only as old as you think you are", and until the day she died, she had the energy and enthusiasm of an 18-year-old.

I found my purpose on November 22nd, 1963, ...during my Junior year in college, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. His words of admonition, repeated more with his death, resonated with me

greater than when he actually stated them during his inauguration - “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country.”

It was his words, when combined with his assassination, that inspired and energized millions of other young Americans like me to answer his call, and enter the noble career of public service - mine for 30 years as a city manager, helping to build and redevelop four major cities.

Then, for the last 26 years of my academic career at NSU, I found a new purpose which I feel is the most noble thing I have ever done – encouraging and helping young women and men achieve their academic dreams and goals, while providing an environment to assist and support them to unleash their potential to become leaders.

Demonstrating our love for NSU, you witnessed Jana and I receiving a Shark this evening. However, we were able to provide such a large sum of funds, solely because we participated in NSU’s pay-roll deduction plan. Over the last 26 years, through pay-roll deduction, Jana and I have been able to give and pledge more than \$1 million in order to establish two scholarships - one in her name and one in mine – both for students in academic disciplines emphasizing service to others... and, who want to make this world, not only greater and better, but more beautiful than when it was transmitted to us.

Through the video you all saw how Joel and Albert found the hidden power of their purpose, which not only enriched their lives but enriched the lives of thousands of others - all while giving meaning to life itself.

My question is now to you - have you found your purpose? If you have then God bless, but if you haven't, I hope Albert and Joel's story has inspired you to find your purpose helping young people, like they helped thousands through their "time, their talent, and their treasures."

I assure you it will bring greater rewards to you than the investment you make, and it will give your life new meaning, feeling that you are indeed making this world a better place to be. Or as Winston Churchill said... "You make a living by what you get, but you make a life, a wonderful life, by what you give!"

Now, since this is my last Celebration of Excellence as NSU's president, on the count of three, I want you all to give me a Big Fins Up and help me leave this evening with a great big bang.

ONE, TWO, AND THREE!