

MOZELLA G. MITCHELL, PH.D.
PROFESSOR AND CHAIR
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

CPR 107

Tampa, Florida 33620

June 10, 2009

President Modesto Maidique

Florida International University

11200 SW 8th Street

Miami, Florida 33199

Dear President Maidique:

I am writing to voice my deep concern for the economic situation at Florida International University that has led to the grievous circumstances of the plan to downgrade a major department in the Florida University System and the nation to a program. There simply must be another way out for FIU than to eliminate a greatly thriving department such as the Religious Studies Department at this University. I join the past presidents of the American Academy of Religion in stating the crucial nature of religious studies in our society and pointing out the model of excellence FIU Religious Studies has provided for similar departments in the state and across the country.

Here at the University of South Florida in Religious Studies we express our compassion for what our sister university is facing economically, along with our own such dilemmas; but we would hope that no department that has such an excellent faculty, thriving undergraduate and graduate program, and worthy student body, notable grants, scholarship, and publication, and relatively generous endowment as FIU's Religious Studies Department would be made to suffer such a fate as threatens this department at FIU. Therefore, my Associate Chair Dell deChant and I make an urgent appeal to the University to turn this around and do everything in its powers to keep this department as a thriving unit of education.

In all sincerity,

Mozella G. Mitchell, Ph.D., Professor and Chair

Dell deChant, Associate Chair and Undergraduate Director and Advisor