



Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami

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☞ *Of Blessed Memory*

May 1, 2009

Dr. Modesto A. Maidique
President, Florida International University
University Park
Miami, FL 33199

Dear Dr. Maidique

We are writing to you on behalf of the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami. We are alarmed about the possible closing of the Department of Religious studies, and we are writing to express our concern.

The value of the Department of Religious Studies within the university is well known to you. By all accounts, it is an excellent, vibrant academic center with international stature that reflects well upon the University.

However, we call to your attention the value of the department to the community beyond the campus. Religious studies faculty is deeply engaged with Jewish and other faith communities. Our institutions have benefited from the first-rate programs sponsored by this department. Beyond the academy, religious studies faculty have assumed a leadership role in fostering amicable interfaith relationships, which in today's day and age is critical. As both individuals and as a collective force, the religious studies faculty is a treasured resource which serves to cement fraternal bonds between FIU and the population it serves.

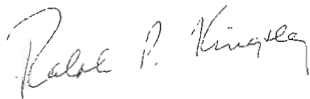
The public lecture series sponsored by the department are highly regarded in the community and contribute in a meaningful way to the cultural and intellectual life in Greater Miami. Graduates of the department have entered the clergy and the social service domain, much to the benefit of Jewish and other faith communities, as they appreciate the diversity of religious experience.

As rabbis, we appreciate and admire the work of the department, and we consider its professors to be colleagues in enlightening the community and in fostering a harmonious society, based upon mutual respect and understanding. It strikes us as odd to eliminate a program of such import at this particular time in history, given both the resurgence of interest in religion among the younger generation, as well as the role it is playing in contemporary political scene.

We understand that the university has real budgetary concerns, but to eliminate an academic program like religious studies in our estimate compromises the integrity of FIU as an institution committed to a balanced liberal arts curriculum. Our universities need to take the lead in advocating that the vibrancy of our national life should not only be driven by consumerist values, but through the commitment to the history of ideas and the spirit.

The humanities and social sciences help us to understand who we are as human beings. The elimination of this department would be a serious loss to FIU and our community, but more tragically it would reflect in our estimate the poverty of the state of university education.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Ralph P. Kingsley
President



Rabbi Frederick L. Klein
Executive Vice President