

Mrs. Ford:  
Univ. of Miami Founders Dinner  
February 27, 1976

Thank you for inviting me to share this special evening. I feel very much at home, because I know you care about learning and about people.

Last week, I reminisced with members of The National Parent Teachers Association about my experiences in sending four children through twelve years of school.

As I told them, my husband and I believe you don't just send children off to school, you try to share their world and their experiences.

As we watched each one of them go off to the first grade, we knew what their world would be like.....ABC's and learning to count. But each year, their worlds expanded with new friends, new interests, and new challenges.

As we've watched them in college, we've been even more fascinated at the worlds they are building for themselves.

Colleges are very special places for learning . . . not just about ideas . . . but about people. It's possible to go to a library and read about ideas, but what makes the college experience special is the people.

I'm sure you remember as I do, a very special teacher who turned a required course into a lifetime enthusiasm. I'm sure you remember, too, the friends you made and the you had.

By setting aside a time and a place for learning, we give our children more than the opportunity to prepare for a job. We give them breathing space to explore new ideas and meet new people.

Because we are a people of many interests in a nation with many needs, the diversity provided by our system of private and public universities and colleges is very important. We've seen in our own family how private and public education meets the different needs and interests of our four children.

Private colleges help keep alive special traditions like Theology, which our son Mike is now studying. Some offer a smaller, more personal experience which our daughter Susan enjoys at her college.

But whether private or public, our institutions of higher education are more than books and buildings . . . they are people working and learning together.

In many ways, we cannot prepare our children for the future, even through education. But we can help them to use their minds, to be open to new ideas and to understand people from different backgrounds.

Your financial support of The University of Miami shows you understand the importance of giving our young people a learning place . . . because only by helping open their hearts and minds can we hope to keep our nation strong and make the world more livable.

Thank you.