



Dear Argonauts,

It is the honor of my life to be selected to serve as the next president of the University of West Florida. I am grateful to the UWF Board of Trustees and Florida Board of Governors for their confidence, to the search committee for its diligence, and to the faculty, staff, students, alumni and community partners who make this institution so special. Most of all, I'm energized by what we will accomplish together.

Like many of you, my story is rooted in family, hard work and the belief that education is transformational. I grew up in Hialeah, raised by working-class parents who fled Cuba in the 1960s to find a better life. They worked 12-16 hours a day. Life was not easy. But always, my parents instilled in me what would become a lifelong passion for learning and teaching. This foundation is what fueled me through every pursuit, from the classroom to the baseball field.

I credit education for all the opportunities I have had. Without education, and without coaches, teachers and mentors who poured into me alongside my parents, I know that I would not be here. It has been my mission in life to pay this forward, because I see the game changer that education is. This belief is the fuel that led me to teaching, and then every job that followed.

I carry with me gratitude for those who invested in me and a deep respect for those who dedicate their careers to guiding students. I have seen this dedication here at UWF from so many incredible faculty and staff. You are changing lives every day.

I also know that great universities are built not by one leader, but by communities that care for one another. My wife and daughters have felt the care of the UWF community in so many ways since I arrived here in July as interim president, and we are grateful.

What I'm hearing—and what we will do

In the coming weeks, I will continue what I prioritized in recent months: spending time across our Pensacola campus and our regional sites to meet you where you are — classrooms and labs, advising suites and studios, athletic facilities and community clinics. I want to hear your ideas, see your work firsthand, and understand how I can help you do your best work.





From the conversations to date and from UWF's momentum, several priorities are clear:

1. **Student Success – From Access to Outcomes:** We will build on the success of our recruitment, retention and on-time graduation by expanding high-impact practices – undergraduate research, internships, clinical placements, mentorship and learning communities. We will focus on affordability, financial wellness and wraparound support that ensures every student who starts at UWF finishes with a degree and a plan.
2. **Academic Excellence and Research that Serves Florida:** UWF will double down on programs where we are distinctive and where Florida's needs are greatest – cybersecurity and computer science, health and human performance, education and public service, business and supply chain, coastal resilience and the blue economy. We will pursue strategic faculty hires, interdisciplinary clusters and partnerships that accelerate discovery and translate it into real-world solutions.
3. **Talent & Workforce Partnerships:** Northwest Florida is growing fast. We are the region's indispensable talent engine, aligning curricula with employer needs, expanding apprenticeships and co-ops, and building stackable credentials that help working adults upskill without pausing their lives. Together with our partners – K-12 districts, state colleges, military installations and employers – we'll create smooth on-ramps and upward mobility for students of every age.
4. **A Culture of Community, Inquiry and Civic Character:** Our classrooms must be places where ideas are tested, evidence matters, civil discourse is expected, and every Argo feels they belong. We will support faculty excellence, reward innovation in teaching, and protect the conditions that make genuine learning possible.
5. **Community Impact and Stewardship:** UWF is Pensacola's university and a trusted partner to the Panhandle and our state. We will heighten our community engagement, grow philanthropy, and pursue public-private collaborations that unlock new resources for scholarships, research and facilities, while stewarding tuition and taxpayer dollars responsibly.
6. **Athletics as the University's Front Porch:** Athletics will continue to reflect our values – excellence in the classroom and on the field, character, and pride in the Argo name. The winning spirits on our fields and courts fuel contagious energy that helps our student life and campus culture thrive.





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How I will lead

- **Listen first.** I will be visible, accessible and transparent, sharing what I'm learning and what comes next.
- **Set clear goals and measure what matters.** You will always know our North Star and how your work connects to it.
- **Empower people closest to the work.** Great ideas come from labs, studios, clinics and classrooms. My job is to clear barriers and accelerate progress.
- **Celebrate wins.** We will tell our story loudly and often to lift morale, recruit great students and colleagues, and grow support.

A personal note

My family and I are thrilled to join this community. We look forward to cheering alongside you at games, attending performances and exhibitions, celebrating academic wins and engaging with our neighbors across Northwest Florida.

I ask for your counsel, your candor and your partnership in the months ahead. Together, we will help more students find their calling, advance research that serves Florida, and write the next chapter of an institution that is bold, authentic, rooted, accessible and determined. This is the Argonaut spirit. This is UWF.

Go Argos!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manny Diaz'.

Manny Diaz
President, University of West Florida



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