



OP-ED

## South Florida has what Amazon values — we embrace change, innovation, reinvention

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*Jeff, what does Day Two look like?"*

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos begins a recent letter to the shareholders with this question. His answer is simple: "Day 2 is stasis. Followed by irrelevance. Followed by excruciating, painful decline. Followed by death. And that is why it is always Day 1."

The excitement surrounding Amazon's search for a location for its second headquarters is about more and better jobs, a way to keep talent from having to move elsewhere for better opportunities and a vibrant, thriving economy — and it's also about this "Day 1" thinking that Amazon is known for.

A spirit of determination that is always focused on pushing the boundaries of innovation to make our lives easier and better.

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When we talk about HQ2, we're also talking about Amazon finding a new home that embraces change, innovation and reinvention. A region that knows the future has arrived.

Miami is that place. Making the Top 20 list puts to rest any doubts about our region's capacity to support innovation.

It is a true indication that South Florida is an incredible cluster of talent — and a great investment. I believe that in many ways, geography is destiny.

That has never been more true. We are the gateway to the Americas, we have a thriving start-up ecosystem and an ever-growing creative economy.

Also, we have an outstanding, thriving and collaborative educational ecosystem. Colleges and universities in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties go above and beyond.

Among our institutions of higher education, both Florida International University and University of Miami have achieved Carnegie R1 classification for highest research activity.

In South Florida, Amazon will find two medical schools, highly ranked business and law programs, innovative incubators such as StartUP FIU and engineering talent that is hard at work pushing the boundaries of science with multiple patents every year.

Barry University, Miami Dade College, Florida International University and the University of Miami also are Carnegie recognized for community engagement.

Our community has the largest college in the nation with Miami Dade College's enrollment exceeding 100,000, as well as some of the largest Hispanic-serving institutions in the country, including FIU.

Our institutions also work closely with industry partners to remain responsive to their needs, while also providing students with an education that is enriched through collaboration.

At FIU, every day we work hard to stay ahead of the change. In fact, we routinely make sure that our degree programs are relevant and give our students the skills and knowledge employers need.

For example, we recognized an opportunity to prepare students with the skills they needed to lead in the field of the Internet of Things (IoT).

We are now the first in the nation to offer a bachelor's degree in IoT, which addresses four major areas, including hardware, software, communication and cybersecurity.

It's exciting to be at the forefront of this technological shift and know that our students would be ready to innovate in companies like Amazon.

In fact, some of our students have already landed jobs at Amazon, like Ina Thakur.

At FIU, she found supportive faculty and opportunities to advance her skills.

She credits our Information Systems and Business Analytics Department for preparing her for the workforce.

After graduating last summer with a Master of Science in Information Systems, she started work as a business analyst for Amazon in Seattle.

While speculation swirls about which location Amazon will choose, it's important to remember that South Florida has always been a region on the rise.

Every day is *our* Day One. There is an unmistakable vibrancy and energy here that cannot be replicated. Miami is the face of the future.

A region that relishes its diversity and understands that what makes us unique, is also what gives us an advantage over other cities across the nation.

We fight off Day 2 every day because we know that our community's children cannot afford for that day to come.

Amazon, we're ready!

*MARK B. ROSENBERG IS PRESIDENT OF FIU.*

