President Donna Shalala  
Opening statements  
“I want to start by saying that the buck stops here. I have already apologized but I want to apologize again to our community, both our University community and our alums, our trustees, as well as all of those who care and love Miami football, for the behavior of some of our students and our football players. I also want to apologize to Florida International University. I have done that to their President, but I want their community to also hear my apology.

“We have disciplined our student-athletes and given them serious warnings. We have set new standards. That standard being that we will eliminate from our team students that get into fights. That is a new standard from the University. That means we have zero tolerance for this kind of behavior. The sad part is for the men and women that have spent most of the last decade recruiting young men and women of character to the University to play on our sports teams and restoring our image in this community. I believe that the young men that we have recruited to the football team are young men of great character, but they did a very bad thing.

“We know that we are recruiting a different kind of student-athlete and it’s time for me to say publicly that I believe in them, that I believe they did something awful; but that I want them to continue at the University of Miami. It’s time for me to say to the community and to those who have been sending me e-mails that this University will be firm and punish people that do bad things, but we will not throw any student under the bus for instant restoration of our image or our reputation. I will not hang them in a public square. I will not eliminate their participation at the University. I will not take away their scholarships. We will discipline them appropriately. We will set a high standard for them and we will make it clear what our expectations are for them. We will do the same thing for our coaches, for our athletic director, and for any student on this campus whether or not they participate in a sport.

“It’s time for the feeding frenzy to stop. These students made a stupid, terrible, horrible mistake and they are being punished. They are students and we are an educational institution and we will act like an educational institution not like a P.R. organization that’s trying to spin and to restore an image that we worked so hard to put in place. I’ll continue to support our athletic program and I will continue to be firm and fair with the young people that come to the University, whether they are in our laboratories or our classrooms or in our libraries or on our playing fields. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.”

Response to those who think penalties are insufficient...  
“Well, first of all we’ve done more than that. In addition to the discipline that we agreed to with the Atlantic Coast Conference, we have also put these students on probation with a standard that says ‘Do this again and you’re off our team.’ They will be doing community service. There will be some additional penalties that Coach Coker and Athletic Director Dee decide to impose on them. For now the public standard is one that we’ve established, as well as suspension for one game.”

Missing game time part of their discipline...  
“I don’t want to comment on that. That’s really up to the Coach for him to make individual decisions. I can tell you this: the Atlantic Coast Conference has reviewed the film frame by
frame, the athletic department has reviewed the film frame by frame, as have the Provost’s office, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Dean of Students and all of them have come to the same conclusion; that these penalties are appropriate and that what happened on the field was inappropriate."

**Decision about FIU series...**
“President Maidique and I are meeting on Thursday and we will make a decision there and we will have a decision by the weekend.”

**On coaches being held more accountable...**
“We have done this for the behavior of student-athletes, for the character building and leadership training that we expect as part of our athletic program. Paul Dee has communicated to them in writing and in person. It should be no surprise to them that this will be part of their review as part of our annual reviews with their roles here at the University. We’ve put it firmly in writing to remind everybody of their responsibilities.”

**Could the coaches have done more?**
“I can’t answer that question because this was a spontaneous act, and I don’t know what strategies coaches use. I do know that they knew that they shouldn’t do that. It wasn’t like they had never been told do not run out on the field and start a brawl. What the coaches could have done? What strategies coaches employ? Football has been going on for a very long time and they obviously work very closely with these young men as do our other coaches. It’s not a question I can answer.”

**Why not a more harsh penalty for Brandon Meriweather?**
“We reviewed every single case and I think that Paul Dee and Coach Coker can answer that question. What I can’t answer is questions about individual athletes. What I can say on behalf of the University is that I believe there are appropriate penalties in place and that we have said what we are going to say about those penalties. What I will report on next will be if we will continue this series with FIU for next year.”

**On the type of community service the suspended players will do...**
“I’ll leave that to Coach Coker and the athletic director. They have a mechanism here for community service. We want to make sure that it’s serious and from the players that I’ve talked to they understand. They have clearly gotten the message.”

**On the image of the football program...**
“I think that everybody has strung together all of the bad events of the past. This is not the same program. This is not the old Miami. This is the new Miami and we had a terrible incident. We’ll just have to work hard in the way we did before in terms of our behavior and the standards that we set for the University and for our athletes. We’ve always known that we couldn’t make mistakes. This is not new for the University of Miami. We don’t get a break. I knew that before I came to Miami. I like that standard. It’s tougher and we are tougher on ourselves than other people are.
“What we won’t do is to take it out on these young people. What we will do is constantly remember that we are educators. We’re not going to end their lives or end their careers or end their educational experiences here at the University. I am prepared to take all of that flack on myself by saying that.”

On fights and Miami being a trend...
“You know each incident is a particular situation and we did take actions. The Louisville thing, they started to explain it to me. There is an explanation for Louisville which is not acceptable. It’s a practice of running out on the field that we will not repeat, and obviously we have to look under our feet as we are walking out on the field, which we will do and make sure we understand the traditions of the institution. I have already reminded our coaches that there are traditions at Duke in the nature of their cheering that they better be prepared for.”

On who has the final say of whether a player is off a team...
“I delegate that responsibility. They might inform me in this case because it’s so visible, but I delegate that responsibility to the athletic director and the coaches because they have to be satisfied that that player’s behavior and that player’s understanding of what was inappropriate in their behavior and that that player has done enough.”

On Anthony Reddick’s suspension...
“That’s going to be up to Paul Dee and Coach Coker. I will not make individual decisions.”

Will all the suspended players do community service...
“The answer is yes.”

On the difference in FIU-UM punishments...
“There is no gulf. It’s essentially the same thing and in the athletic standard we are all essentially doing the same thing. That is suspending players and setting a standard in which they fully understand what the standard is, but I don’t think there is any significant difference in what we did. They chose to throw two players off the field. We chose to suspend one player indefinitely and to suspend all the others for one game and then to set a standard in which they completely understand this cannot happen again at the University of Miami. Educators read this thing differently, but we are all within the same framework of what’s appropriate for our conference and what’s appropriate for our University.

On whether or not she is surprised with the media coverage...
“No. Here at the University of Miami you have to meet a standard no one else has to meet because of our past history, so I fully expected this to spin out of control. But I also expected that at some point I had to stand up and say we don’t go out and shoot our kids for instant restoration of our image. We will work our way out this. I have helped recruit many of these players, talked to their parents, looked their parents straight in the eyes and said at the University of Miami we care about character and we will be firm with the young person you send to us. We will also be fair and they will get a degree from the University that they can use afterwards. Eight members of this team have already graduated from the University and are enrolled in either a second degree program or in a graduate school. About 10 of them will graduate in December and another large group will graduate in May. We have an excellent standard academically. We are
above the national norm in terms of graduation. Any parent can be proud to send their young person to the University, whether they are going to major in some subject or play on one of our teams, but the parents have to see us having that standard and being firm and holding people, the adults, responsible for working with their young people whether they be professors or they be coaches. That’s what we are about at this University.

“What I will not do is I will not crucify these young people. I will hit them hard but I’m also going to reach out and pick them up.”

Is the University regressing back to “thug” image?
“At this moment, someone at the University is doing something absolutely stupid that I’m going to have to work to straighten out. If you want to work at a University, you’re not in complete control because you have 10,000 teenagers and a limited number of adults and all you can do is set a standard and hold people to those standards. Is it a step back for us? Yes, but the one thing we’ve always had the University of Miami is speed on and off the field.”

Is she conflicted about the FIU series continuing next year?
“I’m not conflicted when I’m talking about young people or about the opportunities we provide. It’s a complicated decision for us, but I’m not tearing myself apart over it. I have to talk it through with Mitch (Maidique). We have great respect for each other. Despite all this conversation, FIU and the University, we do lots of things together. Mitch and I talk all the time. He and I will work it through for what’s best for both of our institutions.”

Is your preference to play?
“No. I am keeping an open mind until I have a chance to talk. I’m not trying to send up any smoke signal that they can react to. Mitch has been out of the country and I want to be fair and wait until we sit down on Thursday.”

On the responsibility fo the coaching staff...
“Coach Coker is responsible for whatever penalties there are. Is he in complete control? I’m not in complete control, but we take ultimate responsibility for what people in our community do and we don’t have a choice. If we want to be in business, we have to take a responsibility and it’s an educational business with awfully young people. These young people have to learn to control their behavior. It’s part of growing up in America, whether they are in a violent business or they are not in a violent business. I just want everyone to remember what kind of institution we are and that we have standards and goals and that we are in the business of fulfilling young people’s dreams. We are not going to run away from that or from that responsibility.”

On whether or not FIU set a tougher standard?
“No. They have not.”

On whether or not anyone was justified in the fight?
“I actually didn’t look at the tape on purpose. I was at the game, very close to what happened, and I figured it would just make me madder and what I had to do was to have a cool head.”

How can the image change?
“We have to keep working at it. We are good people and we have to keep working at it. We can’t give up and we particularly can’t give up on the young people of our community and the wider community that come here. So we just keep working at it because we believe in them and we believe in what we’re doing at this educational institution, so we’ve got to keep working at it. Thank you.”