

University of Miami Head Women's Basketball Coach Tricia Cullop's Opening Statement at Press Conference, April 11, 2024:

"I'm extremely honored to be chosen to lead the women's basketball program at the University of Miami. This is a world class education. This program has a winning tradition. A talented team that I can't wait to coach. It's a beautiful campus, every turn I make as I make my way around campus, I'm so impressed with what I see. It's a top-notch facility that we're working in. Not only the offices, the locker room, the arena too. We're going to be playing in an unbelievable conference, and that is so competitive, yet inspiring. And it's in a wonderful location. I got to tell you when Dan asked me all the reasons I was interested, and I listed those but then I said 284 days of sun here and you had me.

I have the utmost respect for Katie Meier, and I want to make sure that everyone realizes that we're not here to blow this thing up. She did an amazing job in her tenure building this program into something really special nationally, and our job is to pick up the reins and try to not only maintain that but take it to another level. You know, it won't be easy to follow in her footsteps because of the respect that we do have for her, but I will say, we're going to certainly pull up our bootstraps and try because we are so excited to be here. I also want to acknowledge two people that laid the foundation for that program, and that's my former college coach Lin Dunn as well as Fern Labati, who stopped by my office yesterday. And we have so much respect for what they did to build this program from the ground up, and also for Katie for what she's done in her long tenure.

I want to thank President Julio Frenk, CEO Joe Echevarria, Executive VP Rudy Fernandez, Senior Deputy Director Brian Baptiste, Senior Women's Administrator Rachelle Paul, as well as our athletic director Dan Radakovich. When I asked people about the leadership at Miami, they said jump in because you're going to be surrounded by amazing people. In my decision making my whole career it's not been about the facilities, it's not been about the campus, it's been about the people that I will surround myself. And you don't win with those other things, you win with people, and I knew I would be in great hands in this department. I want to thank our women's basketball supporters, some of them I had an honor to meet before we opened today. I

also want to thank the Canes Connection for all they're doing in the NIL space. We are so grateful for the work they are doing to keep us competitive.

16 years ago, Mike O'Brien hired me to lead one of the best mid major programs in the country. I'm extremely grateful to Mike for giving me that opportunity, as well as our president Dr. Gregory Postel and our current athletic director Bryan Blair. It was an amazing opportunity, and I got the privilege of enjoying many successful and enjoyable seasons there. I appreciated how that community wrapped its arms around our program, and I fully expect that to happen here. I also want to just say that we are going to do everything in our power to build this fan base. So, if you can point me in the right direction to get more people there, do it, because after we finish up solidifying our team, recruiting, and maybe finding a house, I will be encouraging anybody and everybody to come to our games.

I'm excited to announce that we do have some key members of our staff here. We will be retaining, and we're excited that he's staying, Fitzroy Anthony. He's done a fantastic job. When I took the job, I got in the car and drove over to the Final Four. Not for the games, but for him. I thought it was important that for our continuity and for his skill set that we needed him. And so, we met, he didn't know me, I think I maybe alerted or scared him just a little bit because I was so intent on keeping him, but after we had a chance to talk, I was so glad to hear that he was willing to stay and help us continue what he started. Along with that, we are so glad that Lonnette Hall and Margie Gill are gonna be joining us as well. They have helped us accelerate our recruiting efforts and hit the ground running and when you're making a change like this that is so integral to our success. We would be many weeks behind if those three hadn't decided to help us and stay here, and so we are grateful for that.

I'm also thrilled to bring two members of my former staff here with me, because they are a big reason why we had three championships in a row and why I have less gray hair: Jessie Ivy and Danielle Page. One thing you'll learn about my hires is that they've got to be amazing humans first. They've got to be high character people, they've got to work extremely hard, they've got to stand for the right things, and then they better know basketball. Those two, combined with these three, already make an outstanding staff and we're not done yet. We've got a few more pieces to fill, but I do think that had to happen

first. We had to have the foundation in place. Last year's Miami team should have been in the NCAA tournament. It was razor thin, you could make an argument either way, but from a coach's perspective I will tell you, they should have been in.

One thing I will say is that we are returning a strong nucleus, and our goal is not just to be barely in, but to be all the way in, and to make sure we're in and making some noise. So, we're going to be building and we're going to be working tirelessly to put together an up-tempo team that you're going to enjoy their running style. You're going to enjoy a stingy defense and continue all the work that Fitz has put in with this defense. I really want this team to frustrate teams defensively, not only with the press, but in the half court. And put together an offense that's fun to watch, where we share the ball for the best shot, not just any shot. Where we push the ball intently because we're in amazing shape and we're going to wear teams out.

So finally, I just want to say that we're going to strive relentlessly to make you proud of us in the classroom, on the court, and in the community. And I'm going to need all your help to make sure that community part happens, because as we get to know everyone, we want to get our kids out even more. As they meet our kids, you see what's happening nationally with women's basketball, and we want this program to catch hold of that too. Thank you so much for being here today. I can't tell you how honored I am to be your head coach and Go Canes!”