New Florida Atlantic University President Mary Jane Saunders is seen along the Treasure Coast as someone who will recognize the uniqueness of each FAU campus and listen to the FAU community.

Saunders, who has been provost and senior vice president for academic affairs at Cleveland State University, was selected Wednesday as the university’s sixth president.

She replaces former Lieutenant Governor Frank Brogan, who left in September to be chancellor of Florida’s state university system.

Brogan said he swapped congratulatory e-mails with Saunders after her selection.

“I am very excited for Florida Atlantic University and the state university system,” Brogan said.

Brogan said the university attracted an impressive field of candidates for the position.

“That says a great deal about the institution,” he said.

FAU Treasure Coast students, faculty and staff praised Saunders for her energy level and enthusiasm. They said she had a lot of ideas that could benefit the Treasure Coast campus.

“She is sensitive to the fact each campus is unique and will have its own character,” said Treasure Coast Academic Advisor Gregory Gilbert.

“She is full of energy,” said Treasure Coast FAU student governor Carmela Innakmorato of Port St. Lucie, who met Saunders when she toured the campus last week.

Prior to her selection, Saunders toured every FAU campus, as did the other two finalists: University of Central Florida Provost Terry Hickey and Wichita State University President Gary Miller.

“She’s a go-getter,” said Treasure Coast FAU nursing professor Jill Winland-Brown. “I was so impressed.”
Winland-Brown said she was impressed with Saunders’ intellect and her experience.

“She had the answers on the tip of her tongue,” she said.

Gilbert said he was pleasantly surprised with Saunders’ selection.

“I think she brings a lot of vitality. She has a dynamic vision of FAU,” Gilbert said.

Gilbert said Saunders seemed to understand the differences among the FAU campuses.

The Treasure Coast FAU campus is unique from other campuses because it shares facilities with Indian River State College.

“We look forward to working with Dr. Saunders as we continue the collaboration between IRSC and FAU to meet the higher educational needs of the region,” said IRSC President Edwin Massey.

Innakmorato said she was impressed with Saunders, but some students favored the answers other candidates gave about improving student life.

“She was kind of very general in her answers,” Innakmorato said, adding she thought that raised some red flags. “She didn’t really answer a lot of questions specifically.”