

EDUCATION

MDC students are being trained to fix cars of the future. Here's how Tesla is involved

BY MICHELLE MARCHANTE

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Nine Miami Dade College students graduated from Tesla's START program, a 12-week course that trains students to become electric vehicle technicians. BY JOSÉ A. IGLESIAS

William Ramirez, a first generation college student, has a lot to be grateful for.

The 22-year-old became one of the first students to graduate from Miami Dade College's new Tesla START program Wednesday. He also has a technician job waiting for him at a Tesla Service Center in New York.

"It's a life-changing experience," Ramirez said. "The fact that we have all this help from Tesla themselves to place us in our desired areas across the country is something that I would not have imagined would have happened to me."

He's talking about the Tesla START program, an intensive 12-week course that trains students to become electric vehicle technicians. The course gives students the opportunity to get hands-on experience in the college's new Electric Vehicle Training Center and at Tesla's Coral Gables Service Center.

Miami Dade College is one of six colleges and the first in the Southeast to implement the Tesla START partnership.



William Ramirez, 22, is one of the first nine students at Miami Dade College to graduate from the Tesla START program. Michelle Marchante
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Those who successfully complete the full-time course will graduate with a career technical certificate in advanced automotive service technology — and are almost guaranteed a job at one of Tesla’s service centers.

“Every program that we launch is always focused on minorities and how to give a ticket to the middle class and this program is a great example of that,” said Antonio Delgado, MDC’s dean of Engineering, Technology and Design. “It’s a great opportunity for our community ... to get that really high-paying job or ticket to expand their opportunities especially in a technology that is growing and is the future: electric vehicles.”

Tesla declined to disclose wages or salary figures, but Delgado told the Miami Herald in February that technicians who service Tesla vehicles can start at about \$25 per hour.

The program was also built to be affordable, he said.

Students who enroll in the program can expect to have a tuition of \$2,428.19, according to Miami Dade College’s website.

The program’s affordability is one of the reasons why 21-year-old Diana Molero applied.



Diana Molero holds her diploma during a graduation ceremony at Miami Dade College's West Campus on Dec. 4, 2019. She was among nine students who were the first to graduate from Tesla's START program, a 12-week course that trains students to become electric vehicle technicians. They each earned a Career Technical Certificate in Advanced Automotive Service Technology. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

Molero, a former gasoline technician, said cars are her “hobby,” and she is excited at the prospect of working with more environmentally friendly automobiles. She also loves the car designs and the different app functions of the car’s interior “tablet.”

She showed off a variety of the tablet’s capabilities, including information about the car, settings, games (when the car is parked). There’s even a digital fireplace on the screen for a romantic date. You could also place a virtual whoopee cushion on someone’s seat to get a good laugh.

The first generation college student and the only female graduate in MDC’s Tesla START program this year also has a one-way ticket to Tesla. She has a job waiting for her at a service center in Dania Beach.

“It feels amazing,” she said. “I’m super excited for what the future holds.”

Besides celebrating the accomplishment of their students, Miami Dade College administrators were also celebrating the inauguration of their Electric Vehicle Training Center at the Miami Dade College West Campus, 3800 NW 115th Ave. in Doral. The center was built to be identical to Tesla’s Service Centers across the country, including those in South Florida.



An overall view of the center where Miami Dade College students are trained to become Tesla electric vehicle technicians in a 12-week course. MDC celebrated the inauguration of its Electric Vehicle Training Center at its West Campus, 3800 NW 115th Ave. in Doral, on Dec. 4, 2019. The center was built to be identical to Tesla's Service Centers across the country. All elements of the program were designed by Tesla, which also provided the vehicles and tools the students needed during the course. Jose A. Iglesias JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM

All elements of the program, including the colors of the center, the student uniforms and the curriculum were designed by Tesla. The company also provided all the vehicles and tools the students needed during the course, Delgado said.

During the inauguration of the center, Ramirez, Molero and the seven other graduating students gave family members a tour of the facility, which had various Tesla models on display. The cars, Ramirez said, are like "tablets on wheels."

"Tesla is the beginning steps of a staircase," he said. "This is a company that is going to be much bigger than it is today. It is the future and it's coming today."

TO KNOW MORE

Those interested in learning more about the program or applying for the next Tesla START program can visit mdc.edu/tesla.

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1 of 5

Miami, December 4, 2019- Overall view of the garage where students are trained to become Tesla mechanics. Miami Dade College's West Campus hosted an inauguration ceremony on Wednesday, Dec. 4, of its new, one-of-a-kind and state-of-the-art Electric Vehicle Training Center that will train students as Tesla technicians for the leader in electric car design and manufacturing. MDC is the first institution in the Southeastern United States to partner with Tesla to offer a certificate training program for service technicians called Tesla START. The Career Technical Certificate in Advanced Automotive Service Technology "Tesla Technician Program" powered by Tesla START is an accelerated 12-week program that pays students while they train to become an electric vehicle technician. Tesla provides the vehicles, equipment, instructor, tools and curriculum for hands-on learning. Following successful completion of the program, students are eligible to work as full-time employees at a Tesla service center. JOSE A. IGLESIAS JIGLESIAS@ELNUEVOHERALD.COM



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