

# 37 Years MIAMI TODAY

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## HEALTH TECHNOLOGY INNOVATOR TACKLES COVID-19 ON MULTIPLE FRONTS , PAGE 9



**DHL OPENS FIRST IN HIALEAH:** Hialeah will serve as the home of DHL Express's first fully-branded, company-owned retail store in the US. The store at 407 W 49th St. offers both staff assistance and a self-service kiosk. "For years, Miami has been the up-and-coming gateway city to Latin America as well as an important hub for DHL. And now, as pandemic stay-at-home orders expire and businesses reopen, we are seeing an increase in the volume of international shipments coming through the Miami-Dade area," said **Richard Saavedra**, VP and general manager, Southeast Area, DHL Express U.S. in a press release. "South Florida is the ideal market for the country's first DHL-owned retail location, and we're excited to support local businesses as they re-emerge from Covid-19-related shutdowns."

**LITTLE HAITI COMPLEX FUNDING:** Miami commissioners approved more \$234,000 for the internal and external repairs, renovations to the building, park enhancements and right-of-way improvements for the Little Haiti Community Cultural Center. The Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs awarded \$78,250 to city for the center as part of the cultural facilities grant. The city will provide a matching fund to the center of \$156,501. Located at 212 NE 59th Terr., the center provides spaces for art galleries and is home of the Caribbean Marketplace, the center's largest venue space where visitors can find Haitian music, art and crafts for sale.

**SAYING YES TO THE TEST:** Drive-through, walk-up and appointment-only facilities across Miami-Dade are giving residents the opportunity to take Covid-19 and antibody tests. Some healthcare providers that offer these services for their patients say responses from patients, and in some cases parents, have been favorable and that few parties are reluctant to take the test. Dr. **Marcos Mestre**, Nicklaus Children's Hospital senior medical director of pediatric services, said most parents are willing to allow their children to be tested. Nicklaus currently tests all patients seeking surgery since procedures often require intubation, as well as any patients entering psychiatric units or exhibiting Covid symptoms. Four percent of the tests have been positive, he said, though many patients are asymptomatic. Testing occurs in the hospital itself or at Nicklaus' outpatient clinics, and staff don full PPE to perform the nasal swab test. For individuals who may have had Covid, many medical practices offer antibody tests. **Marc Marchello**, a senior partner at Miami Family Medicine, said demand for this type of test was particularly high. Within a day of informing patients that antibody tests were available, he said, hundreds of email requests had flooded his inbox and all patients are now offered the test.

## THE ACHIEVER



**Lenore Rodicio**  
Overseeing the quality of Miami Dade College education  
The profile is on Page 4

## In downturn construction jobs soaring

As unemployment in Miami-Dade fell slightly in May to 11.3% from 11.8% in April at the peak of the virus-induced shutdown, sunshine bathed one industry: construction jobs hit an all-time high here.

Construction rose to 54,800 jobs in the county in May, the most for any month in US Bureau of Labor Statistics records, up 3,800 from April and 1,600 more workers than a year earlier.

That gain in Miami-Dade construction jobs came as the value of construction starts in South Florida overall was plunging, falling 25% in May from the level of May 2019, according to Dodge Data & Analytics, which tracks new construction. The value of nonresidential starts fell 35%, from \$415.7 million to \$269.8 million, and the value of residential starts fell 13%, from \$749.4 million to \$558.8 million.

Construction was the sole category where jobs rose year to year in May in Miami-Dade amidst overall double-digit unemployment, though financial jobs were down just two-tenths of a percent, the small information sector was down less five-tenths of a percent and the government sector was down a relatively small 1%.

The largest loss was in leisure and hospitality, which has felt the brunt of the county's virus-induced job losses. The sector's jobs were down 37.3% from May 2019, a relative improvement on 45.4% in April, as employment rose from 80,300 persons to 91,800. But as recently as March, as the virus closings began, the sector paid 142,700 workers here.

The second hardest-hit sector in May was manufacturing, where jobs here fell 14.4% over a year, from 42,400 to 36,300. The cluster labeled "other services" was down 12.2%.

Jobs in both professional and business services and the areas of trade, transportation and utilities were off 8.7% year over year, Education and health services had 7.2% fewer jobs, though it added back 2,400 from April to May.

## Commissioner stymied in bid to save golf course

BY GABRIEL POBLETE

A billion-dollar development to replace the golf course in city-owned Melreese Park keeps chugging ahead, but a zoning application for it met opposition from a commissioner who said Miami is getting ahead of itself and not following the process.

Manolo Reyes, an established foe of the development, named Miami Freedom Park, presented an item last week that called for the city and its outside counsel to halt all zoning applications related to the project until the commission has approved all lease agreements. His legislation died on the dais, with no other backing.

"I want to know why we're going for an SAP [Special Area Plan] or a zoning change when we don't have a contract, we don't have any leases, and we have not agreed on anything," he said.

City Attorney Victoria Mendez said the city and Miami Freedom Park were originally co-applicants, but to comply with city code, the city is now the sole applicant.

City Manager Art Noriega said the city began the Special Area Plan application with the understanding that the zoning items would

not go to the commission before the lease agreement.

"My concern is it hasn't been done before, that we shouldn't start doing it, and we shouldn't set precedents like that," Mr. Reyes said.

The proposed 131-acre development at Melreese Park just east of Miami International Airport is to feature a 25,000-seat stadium for Major League Soccer team Inter Miami CF, 1 million square feet of office, retail and commercial space and a 58-acre public park. In a referendum, 60% of voters approved the city negotiating the lease with the developer.

Inter Miami announced the developer was moving ahead with the Special Area Plan, a provision in city zoning that allows more flexibility for projects larger than 9 acres.

Mr. Reyes said the city was acting as if the project already had approval. When his item died for lack of a second, he laughingly admitted he hadn't expected anyone else to vote for it.

"I wasn't expecting one, but my point is clear, and I wanted people to know that processes are followed when there are certain people," he said, "but when we get people that they're very influential and they have a lot of money

to spread out and all of that, then we bend over backwards in order to accommodate them, and that's not the way this government should be run."

Mr. Reyes' opposition to Miami Freedom Park is well-known. At his order, the commission held a special November meeting so it could vote on a lease between Miami Freedom Park and the city. He wanted the vote before then-commissioner and project critic Wifredo "Willy" Gort's term ended. However, negotiations between the city and Miami Freedom Park weren't completed.

Earlier this year, Mr. Reyes failed to gain legislation that would strengthen the city's policy of no net loss of park space to require that lost parkland be replaced with equal sized parkland in the city, unless overturned by unanimous vote.

During the discussion, another commissioner said the deal was not a certainty. Ken Russell said he wasn't satisfied with the amount of green space the developer claims must be replaced in order to meet the no-net loss policy.

"I can tell you right now," Mr. Russell said, "20 acres is not enough, and that's what's being applied for in terms of replacing the green space that's there right now."

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# Lenore Rodicio runs Miami Dade College daily operations...

As she tells it, Dr. Lenore Rodicio found her workplace of more than 18 years by happenstance. A trained chemist, she returned to her hometown of Miami after completing her doctoral degree to conduct research at the University of Miami.

The end of those activities coincided with the birth of her second child. After weighing options that would allow her to care for her newborn, she sought an adjunct professor position at Miami Dade College (MDC), the largest school in the Florida College System and the second-largest college or university in the nation.

"It only took a couple weeks of teaching there before I fell in love with the institution, its mission and, mostly, its students—a unique population of individuals with incredibly varied backgrounds coming here with, in some cases, real challenges in both their personal and professional lives and in the academic needs they had," she said. "To see the transformation that occurred in them as they went through courses and with each success they had, I realized there was something very special at this institution and felt drawn to it in a way I hadn't to anything before. When a full-time faculty position became available, I applied and have been there ever since."

Between May 2002 and now, Dr. Rodicio steadily rose through MDC's ranks, from associate professor, chairperson of natural and social sciences, dean of academic affairs and executive director of student success and completion to vice president of student achievement, provost of academic and student affairs and, most recently, executive vice president and provost of the college at large.

Dr. Rodicio, MDC's top education official, is now a finalist for the college's presidency and the only candidate still from within the institution. While the selection process for the position is on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic, she said, she remains committed to earning the role.

Dr. Rodicio spoke by phone with reporter Jesse Scheckner.

**Q: What is a regular day for you?**

**A:** My role as executive vice president and provost has two distinct facets. As provost, I oversee the consistency and quality of our academic and student services. That entails ensuring our curriculum is of the highest quality and that it's delivered in the most effective and efficient way possible to students. I also help to ensure that all the services we provide to students support them and help them to complete their studies.

As executive vice president, my role entails making sure the trains run on time. In some ways, it's equivalent to a chief operating officer. I oversee the coordination of facilities, finance, human resources and technology for the institution.

In the time we're living, with the pandemic we're trying to work our way through and manage, emergency preparedness also falls under my purview. I act as the incident commander in our unified response plan.

**Q: Which operational changes that came with Covid-19 are likely to be long-lasting?**



Dr. Lenore Rodicio is both executive vice president and provost of Miami Dade College.

## The Achiever

### Dr. Lenore Rodicio

Executive Vice President and Provost  
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Age: 46  
Born: Miami  
Education: Doctor of chemistry, Louisiana State University, 1999; Bachelor of chemistry, Barry University, 1994  
Personal philosophy: "Be truthful at all times and be kind to everyone."

**A:** Appreciating the proper role of technology and the role it plays in education.

We have realized the power of technology in educating individuals. We've always used technology to augment what we do in the classroom — we have a very large online offering — but now with the training we've done for our faculty, we've seen both the pros and cons.

We know the things technology is really good at helping us to deliver, but we also have a better appreciation for things that require a face-to-face presence or a different type of interaction with the students.

**Q: What do you see online class enrollment being summer and fall?**

**A:** For the summer we're fully online — fully remote; we use the term remote as opposed to online to distinguish between courses that were intended to be fully online versus those meant to be face-to-face that we had to transition to remote.

We have some faculty who are approaching those courses as we would any online course, but others are using synchronous methods — Zoom and Skype meetings with students — in order to connect with them as opposed to only using the Learning Management System we have for our MDC Online programs.

The only exception is a few face-to-face courses we're offering in some criti-

cal workforce areas like law enforcement and health that are virtually impossible to offer online. Those are being run with limited enrollment and strict social distancing and hygiene protocols.

For the fall, it's still early to tell. We're working through some scenarios that fall into three categories. One is where we have some combination of online and face-to-face courses that start to approach a more normal operation for the institution, which would be ideal.

If we get to a point where we can have a more normal operation, there still will be a huge increase in students enrolling in online courses. We'd already seen a steady increase in that over the last few years.

The fact that more students and faculty are comfortable now with this format will see that trend continue upwards irrespective of how the pandemic evolves.

Another scenario we're planning for is for being nearly completely online, as we are now, if the situation doesn't improve and it's not safe to return. And the last one we're looking at is how we can create limited enrollment with some blended courses, where students come to campus less than they normally would and complete the rest of their studies online.

We hope by mid-July to have a clearer picture of what fall will look like. We've pushed back the start of our fall semester to Sept. 1 to have more time to see how this evolves and get all our plans in place.

**Q: What other kinds of classes are either very difficult or impossible to offer online?**

**A:** Pilot training programs. The only way you can do that is by getting on a plane and flying. That's now being offered face-to-face.

Another group of courses that can be offered online but are not optimum there are things like the science laboratories in chemistry and biology. It's not the same, working directly with chemicals in a lab as it is looking at simulations.

Those, right now, we still have in a remote setting. If the situation continues for much longer, they'll probably be the next set we'll try to find creative solutions to do in person.

**Q: How does MDC's faculty break**

**down between full- and part-time?**

**A:** About 53% of our course sections are taught by full-time faculty. All our faculty have at a minimum a master's degree in the area they teach, as required by our accreditation regulations. Many, particularly our full-time faculty, also have doctoral degrees in their respective areas.

One of the things we do when we bring our faculty onboard is provide professional development on how to better engage with students and on novel pedagogical techniques to make them more effective teachers.

We invest a lot in that. Over the last few months, dating back to March 12, we also increased our training in online tools and technology for remote teaching and have also offered seminar types of training for both full-time and adjunct faculty.

That faculty training and support has established some faculty who are serving as mentors to others as well to help guide them through this. I'm extremely proud of how our faculty have responded to this.

They've rolled up their sleeves. Those who weren't as comfortable with the technology have taken advantage of the training, and those who were already tech whizzes when it came to online teaching have come forward to help others get to that same level.

**Q: What is happening with enrollment numbers?**

**A:** Prior to the pandemic we saw a steady decrease in enrollment. One of the unique characteristics of community colleges is that when the economy is doing well, our enrollment tends to go down. Individuals will either take less courses so they can work more or drop out of school altogether and pursue employment.

Our enrollment before was about 4% down compared to the year prior. We would have anticipated summer to follow the same pattern. We don't have the final numbers yet, but right now it looks like we've gained a bit and are around 1% to 2% down compared to last year.

It's still too early to tell what the effects of the pandemic will be. It'll depend a lot on whether we can resume normal operations. If so, and if the economy is still in recession, we'll expect to see an increase in enrollment as people come to us to retool and retrain.

We launched two sets of programs over the last couple months in response to the unemployment and pandemic. One was a set of non-credit courses, our upskill programs, that are just for retooling and retraining but don't lead to a college credential.

Many are in areas like digital marketing, cloud computing and other IT areas, as well as substitute training courses. Those filled immediately. Now, we're also starting our college credit certificate programs, Kick-Start Your Career, which do lead to a college credential.

They can be completed in two semesters. We're providing scholarships to cover tuition and fees, as well as a stipend to offset the need to work, so students can remain enrolled full-time. Those are also in similar areas to the upskill programs and at capacity in enrollment.

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# ...while overseeing quality of education and student services

The fact those have been so attractive, I anticipate as individuals find themselves unemployed, they'll turn to us to help retrain them in areas that continue to hire despite the pandemic.

**Q: What has the shutdown of classroom education due to the virus done to the economics of the college?**

**A:** We're still collecting tuition and fees. The only shift for the summer, because we are completely remote, is with courses that had special fees to offset costs of support services to students, particularly for laboratories, technology and equipment they'd use on campus.

Because they do not have access to that now, we've waived those fees. That short-term effect probably amounts to between \$1.5 million to \$2 million in revenue.

Long term, because there's an economic downturn, less tax dollars will be collected. Our legislature in Tallahassee will have to make difficult decisions about how to stretch the dollars across all entities funded by the state.

As they return for special session and finalize what that budget will look like for us and the 27 other state colleges, our budget may be impacted. We're monitoring that and working on our advocacy front to make sure that, to the extent possible, our budget remains intact.

**Q: How has enrollment from abroad changed with the virus? Do you see those changes lingering?**

**A:** We haven't seen a huge shift. While we are a very large institution, and Miami is a large, international city, most students enrolled at our institution are residents and in-state students.

Maybe a couple thousand students are classified as international. As this continues and movement from other countries into the United States decreases or is at a standstill, probably in the next year is when we'll see that impact.

**Q: Which courses or degree tracks are the most popular or fastest growing?**

**A:** The areas that are the most attractive to incoming students, as well as the ones seeing continued and steady growth, are

primarily in IT and health.

They've always been courses with high enrollment. Others that have always been at the top of the list for enrollment are in the business areas. Those continue to increase.

**Q: How does MDC deal with needs for remedial work among students who may have large gaps in their high school educations?**

**A:** We've been doing a lot of work and research in this area. There have been policy changes that occurred in Florida that fundamentally changed how we approach this. Some students are exempted from testing for remedial skills.

We tend to use a combination of measures of student readiness, high school grades and test scores to advise students on the type of remedial coursework they need.

Some have the choice to enroll or not enroll in developmental education courses. For those who do, we've significantly revamped how we teach those courses to make them more successful.

For those who choose to enroll directly into college-level courses, we've created additional assessments and touchpoints for faculty to determine where students have skills gaps so we can provide additional support in tutoring, corequisite courses and other opportunities to help them brush up those skills.

Over the last few years, we've seen significant improvements in students completing those gateway courses. We've also reviewed all our academic programs to ensure that the courses we're requiring students to take are ones they need in their academic pathways. All these things together have resulted in improvements in student success.

**Q: How much of an issue is faculty recruitment? Are some jobs harder to fill than others, and what is your responsibility in that area?**

**A:** It's always a challenge, a combination of recruiting faculty with the technical expertise and appropriate credentials but also the dedication to teaching and learning that we require at our college.

There are some areas where it's easier to hire faculty than others. Our biggest challenges are in areas with the highest growth of enrollment. Disciplines like business, IT and healthcare are also ones where it's most difficult to recruit.

As an educational institution, we can't match the salaries these individuals could obtain if they were employed as IT analysts, nurses or physician assistants. Salaries our graduates make upon graduation sometimes exceed those of the faculty teaching the courses.

It's a challenge to be competitive with the field so we can have the best-trained faculty for our students. Those are the areas where we have the greatest turnover. Luckily, they're also where we have a great cadre of adjunct faculty and individuals working in the field who can bring the expertise they see every day into the classroom.

**Q: What is the scope of your own responsibilities versus those of the president?**

**A:** I oversee the logistics, the day-to-day. The president sets the mission and vision, provides the overall leadership and makes sure all the campus presidents and I are aligned with the strategic plan for the college, ensuring that contact with the community is solid and that we're responding to its needs.

My job is more internal-facing, making sure the programs we offer meet that mission and vision set by the president, align with national best practices for higher education institutions and that we have the data to support their effectiveness.

**Q: One of the issues in the college's search for a new president was that of Chinese teaching on campus. Is it still being taught in any form – language, culture, history or anything else?**

**A:** In the past, we had a Confucius Institute on campus that closed due to decreasing enrollment. There was little demand from the students, and it was not something we felt the need to continue funding.

There were also concerns about being associated with the institute. If there ever

is a demand from students for Mandarin language, we can offer courses through our curriculum.

**Q: What do you foresee the role of MDC being a decade from now? What will have changed?**

**A:** We've already started the wheels in motion for some of the things that will be big changes moving forward. A lot of the work we've done for the last few years is creating stackable credentials, starting even from non-credit coursework to industry certifications that lead to college credit certificates and then associate degrees.

Those allow individuals with clear entry and exit points to help support students as they continue along their educational journey. They allow us to be more dynamic, flexible and responsive to the needs of industry.

What you'll see over the next few years is a focus on continuing traditional offerings that allow students to continue their studies into a four-year institution. Our associate in arts degree is a transfer degree.

We've already seen a trend where that's beginning to decrease. There's been an increase of students who want to come in for specific workforce programs. That trend will continue. As that happens, the institution needs to be flexible and dynamic to keep up with the needs of local industries and communities.

**Q: What was the last good book you read, and what book have you most given as a gift?**

**A:** I love classical English literature, especially the works done in the 1850s. I'm very fond of Elizabeth Gaskell.

One of her books, "North and South," is probably my favorite and one I re-read often. It's a reminder of the differences we have, but even if we come from different backgrounds there's always a consensus to be found.

The only way you can do that – a recurrent theme throughout the book – is to listen to others, try to understand where they come from and reach a point where you can find common ground on which to resolve issues and problems.

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