

Miami Herald

Want to take a class with SoftBank's top executives? Check out this course

BY ROB WILE

JUNE 29, 2021 7:03PM



Marcelo Claire, CEO of SoftBank International, with Alexandra Zatarain, vice president of brand and marketing at SoftBank portfolio company Eight Sleep; and Matteo Franceschetti, CEO of Eight Sleep. Eight Sleep, which is moving to Miami from New York, is the third startup to receive funding from SoftBank's Miami investment initiative. [CARL JUSTE CJUSTE@MIAMIHERALD.COM](mailto:CARL.JUSTE@MIAMIHERALD.COM)

Global venture giant SoftBank is tapping top executives from its mostly Miami-based International Group for a new course aimed at students enrolled at Miami's three primary colleges and beyond.

The SoftBank Operator School is designed to give students from Florida International University, the University of Miami, and Miami Dade College an understanding of how tech startups work and career paths they can provide. Topics of the weekly course will include startup culture, go-to-market strategies, making data-driven decisions, building for scale with artificial intelligence and building in Miami.

Masterclass presentations from SoftBank executives, leaders of its portfolio companies, and other figures in the Miami tech community will be open for virtual participation free of charge to anyone interested in working at or launching a technology startup in South Florida or Latin America.

And FIU, Miami Dade College, and University of Miami students will participate in complementary programming that goes more deeply, including workshops, office hours with the SoftBank team, access to co-working spaces and capstone projects that solve real challenges at SoftBank portfolio companies. They also will receive information about career opportunities inside SoftBank's portfolio companies.

The courses are part of SoftBank Group International's efforts to maximize its Miami presence. Earlier this year, SoftBank [launched a \\$100 million initiative to invest in Miami startups](#). It is also [relocating the hubs](#) for its \$5 billion Latin America fund and \$100 million Opportunity fund in the Magic City. The Wall Street Journal has also reported SoftBank is searching the local market for [as much as 100,000 square feet in new office space](#).

And in addition to the SOS course, SoftBank helped sponsor local and regional fellowships [for a data science training program aimed at underrepresented communities](#).

Miami innovation leaders have long discussed ways to beef up professional opportunities for local students and ways to connect them to leading tech firms — something the SOS program will help address, said Marcelo Claire, CEO of SoftBank Group International.

“SoftBank sees Miami as a future technology hub for the world, and that future starts with education,” Claire said in a statement. “Our vision is for the SoftBank Operator School to become a training ground for the next generation of talent to become leaders in the most successful technology startups in South Florida and Latin America. We know these regions have talent. Now it's time they get the training.”

Laura Gaviria Halaby, director, operating group at SoftBank International, said the course offering has been greeted enthusiastically by SoftBank executives, as well as leaders from SoftBank's portfolio companies, some of whom will also be part of the speaker series.

“A lot of entrepreneurship is learning from one another, or lessons learned from others at various stages,” Gaviria Halaby said in an interview. “That's one of the big things we're trying to accomplish: How we can take advantage of the knowledge of all the portfolio companies we have.”

In addition to Claire, speakers for the program will include Miami Mayor Francis Suarez; Shu Nyatta, SoftBank Group International managing partner; Alex Szapiro, SoftBank Group International operating partner; Francisco Sorrentino, SoftBank Group International chief human

resources officer; and Shervin Pischevar, founder of Pischevar Haynes Foundation and Sofreh Capital.

“The SoftBank Operator School will change the entrepreneurship landscape in South Florida,” said FIU President Mark B. Rosenberg in a statement. “At FIU we are focused on providing our students experiences and opportunities that help them succeed. In fueling the startup ecosystem, spurring economic growth and creating high-paying jobs in South Florida, we support our students and uplift the community.”

“It takes a collective effort to grow and innovate South Florida’s tech ecosystem,” said Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega in a statement. “We are thrilled to partner with SoftBank and our local educational partners to continue expanding opportunities and equip students with the skills to be successful startup operators and build the next generation of tech leaders to fuel our workforce.”

“We look forward to partnering with SoftBank to help grow Miami’s pool of innovation talent,” said Julio Frenk, president of the University of Miami in a statement. “University of Miami graduate students will gain experience through our ’Cane Angel Network both investing in and working for world-class start-ups from SoftBank’s portfolio of companies,” he added.

Non-students can register at softbankmiami.com/softbank-operator-school.

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/article252444318.html>