

At Democracy's College, The Goal Is Creating A Love Of Civic Action



Dr. Eduardo Padrón Brand Contributor
Civic Nation BRANDVOICE

Dr. Eduardo Padrón, President of Miami Dade College (MDC), is a guest contributor for [#VoteTogether](#)

Since its inception, America's democracy has belonged to the people, and its strength and survival are intrinsically linked to a civically conscious and actively engaged society.

Despite the inarguable role individual Americans play in the governance of our great nation, there is recent speculation that younger generations may be somewhat apathetic to our political process. Research indicates young people in the U.S. are growing more pessimistic about the political system and are therefore more disengaged, a worrisome trend that must be reversed for the sake of our country's future.

At Miami Dade College, fondly referred to by so many as Democracy's College, we understand the fundamental role higher education plays in motivating students to be informed and active citizens. For decades, via our teaching, community involvement and partnerships, we have brought civic consciousness into the minds and hearts of our students, letting them know that their voices matter and must be heard.



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This election season is no different. We have partnered with #VoteTogether, an initiative of Civic Nation aimed at increasing voter participation by organizing thousands of non-partisan, family-friendly celebrations at and near polling locations during early voting and on Election Day. It's been proven that community celebrations positively impact voter participation by up to four percentage points, and therefore we have encouraged our students and employees to create teams and host events that motivate others to vote. #VoteTogether celebrates our communities, our nation, and our right to vote.

In addition, two of our eight campuses will be official early voting sites in Miami-Dade County beginning October 22, an important step in ensuring our students, employees, and the entire community have convenient access to the polls. This accomplishment was only possible because of the tireless advocacy and perseverance of our students, who lobbied before the Board of County Commissioners last month on the importance of early voting sites at MDC.

Our College's Institute for Civic Engagement and Democracy remains our powerhouse of civic involvement, and it is especially effective at responding to the unique challenges of our students. Many of them are first-generation, low-income, and under-prepared students, who often work and attend school simultaneously and may place civic engagement at the bottom of their priority list. By collaborating with faculty to infuse civic engagement and democratic learning into the classroom, we are creating a scalable way to reach these students and hopefully making them aware that our country needs them.



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This year, all our campuses hosted very successful National Voter Registration Day events, and via grants, we were able to secure external funding to hire 27 students as non-partisan voter engagement interns. Our media services team also put their ingenuity to work and created our “Your Vote is Your Voice” video highlighting the many reasons why every vote counts.

Our efforts will continue as we strive to make civic engagement a priority for the next generation of leaders. Our students represent the future of our country, and creating a love for civic advocacy is the least we can do to ensure they remain engaged and committed citizens of this great nation we call home. Let us turn apathy into action, and create in our youth the understanding that their voice matters. Our country’s future is in their hands and depends on them.



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An American by choice, Eduardo Padrón arrived in the United States as a teenage refugee in 1961. Since 1995, he has served as President of Miami Dade College (MDC), the largest institution of higher education in America with more than 165,000 students. He is credited with el... [Read More](#)