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With selection of Pumariega to lead MDC, we can put fractious process behind us | Opinion

BY BERNIE NAVARRO

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Madeline Pumariega was selected to be the next president of Miami Dade College. *VIA TWITTER*



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After almost two years, some consternation and more than a handful of ruffled feathers, the Miami Dade College (MDC) Board of Trustees unanimously chose a new leader to fill the void left by Eduardo Padrón. It would feel almost blasphemous to merely refer to Padrón as the former president of MDC without praising his five decades of service to the college and community. We would need more than a few hundred words to list all of his accomplishments.

It is also important to recognize Rolando Montoya who so professionally, selflessly and effectively led MDC as interim president in what must feel to him as much more than 16 months. Many of us look forward to his guidance and support during the transition and beyond.

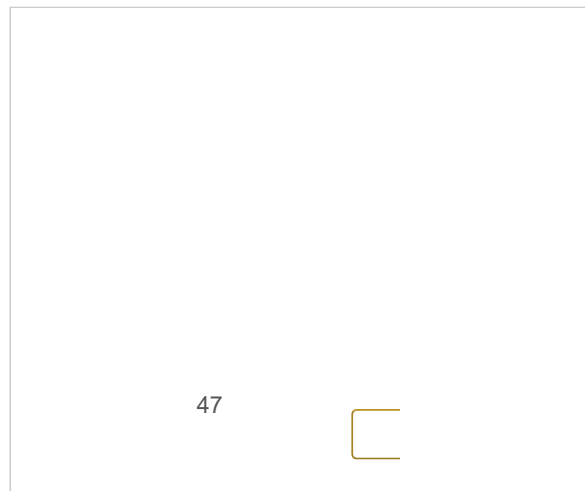
Like Padrón and Montoya, our new president — Madeline Pumariega — is a homegrown product with her own positive history at Miami Dade College. A Hialeah native, Pumariega spent 20 years at MDC working her way up from being on the basketball team as a student athlete to serving as president of the Wolfson Campus. After MDC, she went to the nonprofit Take Stock in Children of Florida, followed by becoming the first woman named chancellor of the Florida College System and her current post as executive vice president and provost of Tallahassee Community College.

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In selecting Pumariega to be MDC's new president, the board of trustees closes a search process that, at times, revealed some fissures within the MDC family. The 19-month, sometimes tumultuous, chapter placed our students and institution in a vulnerable position as the strategic plan, along with many important decisions were placed on hold in order to select a new leader whose vision will now be part of this process moving forward. It is time to heal and move the institution forward with one of our very own at the helm.

In choosing Pumariega as president, Miami Dade College has once again illuminated its commitment to diversity and affirmed its ethos of achievement through education irrespective of gender, race or ethnicity. I am proud of our board's decision and even prouder of the unified resolve that trustees showed with their full support of Pumariega, a proven educational leader.



Our new president will have plenty on her plate, I am rooting for her and stand ready to help her in any way I can so she can succeed along with my colleagues on the board. At the end of the day, we all win when MDC, our economic engine and democracy's college succeeds.

Bernie Navarro is a trustee at Miami Dade College and founder and president of Benworth Family Office, a private equity fund focused on real-estate investments.





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