

Letter: MDC has launched 2 million dreams

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My father worked hard, my mother set the rules and like so many immigrants, they instilled in me the importance of education.

I slouched through most of high school, but everything changed when a man with a walrus mustache visited my school. Apply yourself, Eduardo Padrón told me. Find your passion, and MDC will help you.

Suddenly, there I was tutoring my peers in math, helping them turn a corner they couldn't yet see. My friends and I even delivered Thanksgiving dinner to Camillus House. This is the magic of MDC, when learning and serving turn the lights on. I've experienced good fortune since MDC. As incoming chairman of MDC Foundation, there is no other achievement in my life that has given me greater pride.

This month's I AM MDC Day was a testament to MDC's impact on so many lives. The community contributed \$2 million to support students, an unprecedented feat for community colleges and rivaling some university efforts. And this was accomplished during a leadership transition and as Hurricane Dorian threatened.

Consider the challenges and accomplishments of MDC students: 43 percent live below the federal poverty line and 65 percent are low income; 70 percent work; and almost half are the first in their families to attend college.

Yet, MDC students have the highest economic mobility rate among Florida state colleges and rank fourth nationally; 99 percent of graduates are employed within one year; 93 percent graduate debt-free; and MDC's Honors College sends graduates to every elite university.

We live in a community with a real-life dream factory, empowering countless success stories from every household. Thank you for embracing MDC and, rest assured, the next generation is about to turn the same corner you and I have to jumpstart their dreams.

Al Salas

alumnus and incoming chair, Miami Dade College Foundation,
board of directors