

MDC student creates animated film currently airing across Latin America

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Brenna Verner, a two-time graduate of Miami Dade College (MDC), has just seen a long-cherished dream come to life on the screens of ViacomCBS' Nickelodeon and Nick Jr. television networks as her animated short film, *A Balanced Breakfast*, recently premiered across Latin America.

"I am filled to the brim with overwhelming joy and gratitude. This represents nothing short of my lifelong dream. It is all I ever hoped and worked for," Verner said. "I'm proud of myself and my team for not giving up and seeing it through despite the challenges presented by the pandemic. It was all worth it to bring this idea to life and it means the world to me to see people enjoying my creations on an international scale."

Verner, 29, is a proud alumna of MDC's Miami Animation & Gaming International Complex (MAGIC), a state-of-the-art animation and gaming facility at the Wolfson Campus launched in 2015 to strengthen and better position Miami as the new hub for the animation and game development industries.

Created by Verner and produced by a team of MAGIC students, *A Balanced Breakfast* is a two-minute short film featuring a trio of flavorful sister princesses — Sweet, Salty, and Sour — who argue over what to make their parents for their anniversary breakfast. As all of the girls have "different tastes," it winds up being a funny recipe for disaster.

The 2-D animation was created using Toon Boom Harmony, an animation software which serves as the industry standard and boasts big name productions such as *Spongebob Squarepants* and *The Simpsons*.

Verner and team were mentored and guided by MDC faculty and professionals from ViacomCBS Networks Americas (parent company of Nickelodeon and Nick Jr.) through a partnership with MAGIC to mentor students and showcase their best work.

"We are very proud of the work Brenna created together with all the students who participated in this animated film production with Nickelodeon," said Mauricio Ferrazza, MAGIC chair. "Our partnership with ViacomCBS embodies the essence of the MAGIC program, working with industry partners to guide students and teach valuable skills targeting the animation industry."

Verner first enrolled at MDC in 2009 as the only animation major in the honors program, when the curriculum was limited to 3-D classes. After graduating with an associate degree in computer arts and animation, she earned a bachelor's degree in film, video, and new media from Florida Atlantic University, where she graduated magna cum laude.

In 2015, she returned to MDC to participate in the MIA Animation Conference's first Indie Game Design competition, in which she took first place. Her winning video game design featured 12 original characters including a candy-coated girl named Dulcia, who she would later develop into Princess Sweet and eventually created the entire Flavor Kingdom, now featured in A Balanced Breakfast.

Impressed by what she saw at MAGIC, Verner became an MDC student again in 2018 and earned an Associate in Science in animation and game art.

Born and raised in Miami, she is the oldest of three siblings raised by a single Cuban mother, which taught Verner about resourcefulness and self-sufficiency.

"Coming from a low-income family, I knew it was entirely dependent on me to earn enough to afford my college education," she said.

While studying hard and working full-time, she maintained a 4.0 GPA, saved money, and continued to dream of animation, a passion she discovered as a child when she picked up her first crayon. Now she is the first in her family to graduate from college and pursue a professional career.

She also uses her skills and talent to bring out the best in children with and without learning disabilities, or "different abilities," as an animation teacher with Danimation Entertainment, Arts 4 Learning, and Varsity Tutors.

"My dream, besides creating my own cartoon series and working in a studio like Nickelodeon, is to continue teaching animation to kids," she said. "I love to empower students of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds to be themselves and chase their dreams. I help my students all over the world to build both their animation skills and their self-esteem, and in doing so, it feels I am fostering the next generation of artists and changing the world."

For more information about the Miami Animation and Gaming International Complex, visit www.magic.mdc.edu.

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