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Miami Dade College president to receive highest civilian honor from president



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Over the last two decades, Miami Dade College President Eduardo Padrón has overseen a dramatic expansion that opened college classroom doors to tens of thousands of minority students and helped shape the school into a national model for affordable education.

On Wednesday, the White House announced that President Barack Obama would honor Padrón for his achievements with the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

"I am humbled and so grateful to the President for this special honor," Padrón said in a statement. "This award truly is an affirmation of Miami Dade College and the life-changing work that takes place every day at our campuses and classrooms. This recognition is also for every professor, administrator and staff member who has stood by my side during the last four decades, pushing forth our mission to change lives through education. And I especially dedicate this honor to the millions of students who found an open door to opportunity at Miami Dade College and gave me the chance to make a difference in their lives."

Obama will present the award at a White House ceremony on Nov. 22, inducting Padrón into a small circle of distinguished leaders that includes Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Stephen Hawking, Margaret Thatcher, Bob Dylan, Yogi Berra and Neil Armstrong, to name a few.

Padrón is being honored for his stewardship of Miami Dade College, the nation's largest and most inclusive institution of higher education. With more than 165,000 students, the college enrolls and graduates a greater number of Hispanic and African-American students than any other school in the country. Under Padrón's leadership, Miami Dade College has helped thousands of young people -- including many poor and immigrant students -- attain the dream of a college education, often becoming the first in their families to do so.

Padrón has also been a fierce national advocate for expanding access to higher education, and for making colleges affordable and accessible for low-income and minority students. Six presidents have appointed Padrón to national leadership roles, including, under Obama, Chairman of the White House Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans and the U.S. representative at UNESCO's World Conference on Higher Education.

In addition, Padrón has served as the chair of the American Council on Education, the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Business Higher Education Forum, among other higher education boards. He has received numerous honorary doctorates and accolades, including recognition from the governments of Spain, France, Argentina and Morocco.



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