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Miami Dade College president Eduardo Padron to receive Presidential Medal of Freedom

Padron honored for fighting for high quality, affordable education

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Posted: 2:13 PM, November 16, 2016

Updated: 5:54 PM, November 16, 2016

MIAMI - Miami Dade College president Eduardo Padron will be one of 21 people to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the White House announced Wednesday.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation's highest civilian honor, and the honorees are selected by the president for their contributions to the security or national interests of the country.

"The Presidential Medal of Freedom is not just our nation's highest civilian honor - it's a tribute to the idea that all of us, no matter where we come from, have the opportunity to change this country for the better," President Barack Obama said in a statement. "From scientists, philanthropists and public servants to activists, athletes and artists, these 21 individuals have helped push America forward, inspiring millions of people around the world along the way."

Padron was chosen because of his work over four decades to ensure that all students have access to high quality, affordable education.

"He has championed innovative teaching and learning strategies, making MDC a national model of excellence," the White House Press Office said in a news release.

Many South Florida leaders congratulated Padron on the honor, including U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

"As president of Miami Dade College for over 20 years, Eduardo Padrón has helped countless Americans receive a quality education," Rubio said in a statement. "Because of Dr. Padrón's leadership, Miami Dade College now enrolls and graduates more minority students than any other institution in America, and his efforts to help students achieve their own American Dream are well deserving of the Presidential Medal of Freedom."

The 21 recipients will be presented with their awards at the White House next Tuesday.

Below is a list of the other honorees:

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Elouise Cobell (*posthumous*)

Ellen DeGeneres

Robert De Niro

Richard Garwin

Bill and Melinda Gates

Frank Gehry

Margaret H. Hamilton

Tom Hanks

Grace Hopper (*posthumous*)

Michael Jordan

Maya Lin

Newt Minow

Robert Redford

Diana Ross

11/17/2016

Miami Dade College president Eduardo Padron to receive...

Vin Scully

Bruce Springsteen

Cicely Tyson

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