

Miami Dade's Padrón to retire this summer



Miami Dade College President Eduardo Padrón (center) with Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and Lt. Gov. Jeanette Núñez, who held their first event following inauguration at MDC. (Photo: MDC)

BY MATTHEW DEMBICKI FEBRUARY 3, 2019

There are good college presidents, there are great college presidents and then there's Eduardo Padrón.

The long-time president of [Miami Dade College](#) (MDC), whose reputation for elevating the success and profile of his college has drawn kudos and meetings with celebrities, U.S. presidents and foreign dignitaries — announced on Friday that he plans to retire in August.

Among the first Padrón informed his plans to retire as president was Walter Bumphus, president of the [American Association of Community Colleges](#) (AACC).

“It is an honor to serve the nation’s community colleges,” Bumphus said. “No one exemplifies our unique and multi-faceted mission as well as Eduardo Padrón. He may be the most accomplished community college president in our history, and his legacy is secure in the thousands of students that will reach their goals because of his tireless commitment to their success. His retirement is well-earned, and I wish him nothing but the best.”

Although he's retiring, Padrón will continue to serve the college as president emeritus and in particular help strengthen the MDC Foundation.

From humble beginnings

Padrón himself exemplifies what community colleges can do. He arrived in 1961 as a 15-year-old Cuban refugee who soon found his way to what was then Dade County Junior College and later Miami-Dade Community College. Later on, he earned a bachelor's degree, a master's degree and a PhD. In 1970, he returned to his alma mater to teach as a full-time associate professor, rising up the ranks until becoming president in 1995.

Over his nearly 24 years as president, Padrón — known as a bold leader with personal humility — has been one of the most effective national voices for access and inclusion. Student success is at the heart of MDC's mission, and that culture of success has elevated the college to a position of international prominence.

Throughout his career, Padrón has worked tirelessly to ensure all students have access to high quality, affordable education. His efforts have paid off. The college has impressive results in student access, retention and overall achievement. MDC enrolls and graduates more minority students than any other institution in the country. In fact, under Padrón's leadership, MDC developed into the largest campus-based institution of higher education in the U.S.

In addition, innovative teaching and learning strategies, which Padrón has championed, have made MDC a national model of excellence while preparing students for the 21st-century global knowledge economy.

Padrón spent a career “making good on the promise of the open door,” said John Roueche, Sid W. Richardson Regents chair emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin, adding that Padrón often called MDC the “dream factory.”

“While many of our nation's community colleges were focused on extending the mission of access with equity — a most noble value and goal — Dr. Padrón was focused on making sure that those students who enrolled through the open doors were given every opportunity and support to achieve their education dreams,” Roueche said.

Kudos worldwide

In 2013, Padrón and MDC received the inaugural [AACC Award of Excellence](#) in the category of diversity. The following year, MDC received the AACC Award of Excellence in the category of student success.

In 2016, President Barack Obama awarded Padrón with the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

“He's one of the world's preeminent education leaders, thinking out of the box, supporting students throughout their lives, embodying the belief that we're only as great as the doors we open,” Obama said of Padrón in awarding him the medal at a White House ceremony. “Eduardo's example is one we all can follow — a champion for those who strive for the same American Dream that first drew him to our shores.”



Padrón receives the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama in 2016.

Padrón’s successes have garnered attention not only nationally, but internationally. During his career, he has been selected to serve on posts of national prominence by five American presidents, where he served on several special White House committees. Among his prominent national honors include serving as a fellow on the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Internationally, he’s been named Commandeur in the Ordre des Palmes Académiques from France and named to the The Order of Queen Isabella from Spain’s King Juan Carlos II.

Despite the national and international attention, Padrón remained very locally focused by serving on many civic and business organization boards, such as the United Way, Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, Dade/Miami Criminal Justice Council and the Judicial Nominating Commission.

Terry O’Banion, president emeritus of League for Innovation in the Community College, said Padrón’s personal and professional journey to become “one of the most significant leaders of our time is a record unmatched in community college history. Both journeys inspire and motivate all of us to do our jobs better.”

With his successes, Padrón always acknowledges those who have helped him, from board members to staff, faculty and students.

“I want to express my deepest appreciation to the countless colleagues and students who have helped me and touched my soul during my amazing journey at the college. Without them I would have accomplished nothing,” Padrón said. “There is still much work to do, and I look forward to serving the college and especially Greater Miami in new capacities.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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