

# 37 Years MIAMI TODAY

WEEK OF THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2021

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## STATE BILL WOULD BLOCK COMMUNITIES FROM OVERSEEING VACATION RENTALS, PG. 14



**LINCOLN ROAD REVISITED:** Miami Beach commissioners are to discuss this week a resolution that would reduce the price and scope of the Lincoln Road Master Plan. While the original plan was set to cost about \$77 million, city administrators are advising that the project be capped at \$52.4 million and that intrusive and expensive elements such as the repaving of sidewalks be removed. The item was originally scheduled for discussion in December.

**OBSERVATION WHEEL MEALS:** Since the beginning of November, Bayside Marketplace's observation wheel has been offering views of the downtown Miami skyline, with daily visitors rising into the thousands, according to **Charlene Leavitt** of Skyviews Miami, the attraction company that is managing the wheel. "During Christmas week, we had up to 3,000 visitors a day. We are just so grateful for how locals are coming out and supporting us," she said. Next on the agenda is to sign a contract with Bayside's Landshark Bar & Grill to provide catering for riders with hopes to have it up and running in about a month, Ms. Leavitt said.

**SURPASSING SAN FRANCISCO?** Miami will be buying additional trolleys for the citywide system with a \$354,000 grant from the Florida Department of Transportation and matching funds to come out of the city's share of transit surtax. The air-conditioned trolleys are free and run from 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. for most locations, although the city has in the past expanded the schedule for Miami Heat games, Art Basel and other special events. Notable stops along the route include Mary Brickell Village, Brickell Key, Coconut Grove, AmericanAirlines Arena, PortMiami, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Marlins Stadium, Vizcaya and Miracle Mile.

**COVID AND PROPERTY TAXES:** Miami-Dade Property Appraiser **Pedro Garcia** is urging homeowners to review homestead exemption information and automatic renewal receipts he recently sent out "to ensure they are receiving all the benefits they deserve," a press note from his office said. In accordance with Florida law, property owners must also inform him if they no longer qualify for certain exemptions. The deadline for property owners to update their information online or by sending it to the Office of the Property Appraiser at 111 NW First St., Ste. 710, Miami 33128 is March 1. "I want everyone that can qualify for an exemption to apply today on our website or in-person, especially if they have recently purchased a new home," Mr. Garcia said in a statement, adding that it's particularly important for "those financially affected by the Covid-19 pandemic..."

## THE ACHIEVER



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

**Madeline Pumariega**  
Returns home to become Miami Dade College president  
The profile is on Page 4

## Restaurant health tops city menus

Covid recovery plans to run into September

BY SUSAN DANSEYAR

Miami City Commissioners will consider helping restaurants continue to survive the pandemic when they vote today (1/14) to temporarily extend until Sept. 30 the Covid-19 Restaurant Recovery Program.

After the virus threatened to shut down restaurant patronage, the city adopted legislation in May that allowed establishments to temporarily add or expand outdoor seating on their properties and public rights-of-way such as sidewalks, nearby on-street parking as well as roads and traffic lanes that have been closed. Restaurants can apply for an outdoor café temporary permit at no cost. Businesses do, however, need to pay for barricades and delineators necessary for a safe outdoor dining space.

The city has extended the program, which applies to establishments that prepare and serve food but not bars serving food, several times since its inception.

Safety guidelines remain in effect for restaurants that expand their seating capacity outdoors: establishment still can't have more than 50% occupancy inside; must maintain 6 feet between parties; and any outdoor seating must maintain similar distancing. Combined indoor and outdoor operation cannot exceed 100% of the restaurant's legally permitted building occupancy.

The legislation being considered today would direct City Manager Arthur Noriega to work with the Miami Parking Authority, Miami Police Department, Coconut Grove Business Improvement District, Wynwood Business Improvement District and the Downtown Development Authority to accomplish the program's goals.

*Details: InternetPublicWorks@miamigov.com, or call (305) 416-1570 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.*

## Court file overhaul gathering dust with records

BY JESSE SCHECKNER

More than two years after Miami-Dade commissioners voted to spend up to \$55.5 million to overhaul the county's court case and file management system, case files are still in paper form, sitting in boxes in storerooms collecting dust.

Now, with a global pandemic accentuating the absence of a contactless system and retirement of the county's top tech official imminent, the commissioner behind the directive is again demanding something be done to bring the county courts into the 21st Century.

"Our courts couldn't even operate, even if they could do so in social distance, because we are so antiquated," Commissioner Sally Heyman said. "We have two stories at the Gerstein Justice Building that are just files, an entire building downtown. We need to get them computerized."

That's been the plan since December 2018, when commissioners directed former mayor Carlos Giménez to request project proposals in response to an unsolicited offer from Ohio-based CourtView Justice Solutions.

By June 2020, however, all negotiations had fallen through as every company bidding

was "deemed nonresponsive," Ms. Heyman said at the time.

By then, bidders on the contract had spent thousands in the process. The county said it would spend about \$500,000 on "procurement consulting service."

To avoid tossing out what the county had already spent and progress staff had made so far, the commission told Mr. Giménez's administration to re-enter talks with the six companies that responded to the bid request and, to ease the process, to including a "more flexible evaluation of price and allow proposers to offer new proposals that would cure identified responsiveness issues."

Ms. Heyman told Miami Today on Monday that the county nearly had a deal in hand with one of those companies and that the deal would have gone to the commission for approval in November but a lobbyist for one competitor "sabotaged" proceedings, derailing the process and requiring the county to once more request proposals.

The undisclosed lobbyist "slowed the process down, put a bunch of concerns out there that weren't true [and] had nothing to do with it," she said. As a result, the bid solicitation "had to be reprocessed, and hopefully it will

come to fruition in January."

Whether that happens depends on how quickly Mayor Daniella Levine Cava's staff can write a new report, finish negotiations and return with a contract for commissioners to OK.

It will also depend on Chief Information Officer Angel Petisco, who has led assessments of each department and office's needs. He retires at month's end.

Except for a yet-uncalled-for special meeting, the only meeting commissioners have scheduled this month, when they could approve a contract, is Jan. 20.

In the context of the pandemic, Ms. Heyman said, the county's repeated failure to secure a contract for a Criminal Justice Information System has exacerbated already stifling file-handling shortcomings.

"We could have run things efficiently, had more court proceedings, instead of clerks having to go into closed rooms and file cabinets, bringing papers out and having to sterilize it before we put them back," she said. "If we had [the information] at the touch of a button, we could do remote trials and hearings, efficient for our courts and at an incredible savings. It would be a game-changer."

## AGENDA

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# Madeline Pumariega returns home as college president...

Throughout her long career in education, Madeline Pumariega has focused on breaking barriers both for students seeking access to college and professionals looking to follow her lead. This week, she will shatter another glass ceiling as she takes her place as the first female President of Miami Dade College, the largest community college in the US.

Ms. Pumariega, who was born and raised in Hialeah, has a long history with the college, where she began her undergraduate career as a basketball player before earning a bachelor's degree from St. Thomas University and a master's from Florida Atlantic University. After graduating, she returned to Miami Dade College as an academic advisor and continued to work there for 20 years, eventually serving as President of the Wolfson Campus.

Upon leaving she took a position as CEO of nonprofit Take Stock in Children, which focuses on breaking the cycle of poverty through education. The goal of creating pathways to success for first generation and low-income students, Ms. Pumariega said, is still on her mind as MDC's new president.

No stranger to setting an example, Ms. Pumariega was the first female and Hispanic individual to be appointed Chancellor of the Florida College System in 2015. She oversaw 28 state and community colleges across Florida in this role before moving on to become the Executive Vice President and Provost of Tallahassee Community College, her most recent position.

As an athlete, Ms. Pumariega said, she left everything on the court. As a professional, she said, she is driven by the same passion and work ethic. And though she may be the first woman to hold not one but two prestigious positions within Florida's educational community, Ms. Pumariega said she won't be the last.

The new president was interviewed by Miami Today reporter Kylea Henseler.

**Q: What are your goals as the new president of Miami-Dade College?**

**A:** To continue to build on the excellence of Miami Dade College and usher a new era of innovation and academic excellence.

One area I will focus on is enrollment. We have recently seen declines, so I'll be working together with the leadership of the college and our community partners to build pathways that increase enrollment. It's important right now for individuals to go to college, or come back to college, and level up their skills so they are prepared for the jobs of the future.

The second area is ensuring that we get the resources we need to continue to build on that excellence and find ways to partner and meet the needs of the workforce. In a post-covid environment, our college is going to be critical in helping the economic recovery efforts of our community.

Lastly, my goal is to support the entrepreneurship and technology ecosystem of our county by providing a talented workforce and supporting innovation.

**Q: What drove you to apply for this position?**

**A:** It seemed to be the right time – I came to Tallahassee as Chancellor – to



Photo by Marlene Quaroni

Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega aims to rebuild enrollment losses.

## The Achiever

### Madeline Pumariega

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Age: 53

Education: doctoral candidate in higher education, Barry University; bachelor's degree from St. Thomas University, master's from Florida Atlantic University.  
Personal Philosophy: Always be kind, stay humble and never stop learning, while making a difference in the lives of others.

return home and lead a college that provided me such an opportunity to serve the community where I grew up.

**Q: You're the first woman to take on this role; do you have any thoughts on that?**

**A:** What a privilege it is to be to be the first woman! I was also the first female Hispanic Chancellor to lead the Florida college system, so I take this seriously and I hope I'm not the last.

I hope that I can serve as an inspiration to young women and women everywhere, that they can be that first female who shatters some glass ceilings.

**Q: What led you to pursue a career in education?**

**A:** My mom was a teacher, so I always understood the importance of education through her eyes. Both my parents came from Cuba, and I remember her saying that what can never be taken from you is your education.

I spent some time in banking and my dad is in banking, so I'm kind of a cross-section between business and education influenced by the two of them.

But really my passion for education came from watching my mom help so many students as a teacher for Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

**Q: What do you think are the most im-**

**portant challenges facing local higher education?**

**A:** There's a combination. The challenge in a covid environment is moving much of our support and instruction into a virtual environment while still ensuring academic excellence and student success.

Another is making sure that we are aligning to the workforce needs of the community and building partnerships so that students leave our institutions with real world experience.

Third, something that is really important is closing the equity gap and making sure that every student is given the opportunity and environment to succeed so that they have a path to economic mobility.

**Q: With Take Stock in Children you focused on helping disadvantaged students access higher education. Will you try to continue this as president of MDC?**

**A:** Yes, absolutely. Building on my answer before, it's about focusing on strong academic pathways, especially for students that are first generation.

First-generation or low-income children often, while they aspire to go to college, may not have a clear pathway with the resources that they need to be successful. It's something that's near and dear to my heart. I focused on it during my time at Take Stock, as Chancellor, and certainly now at TCC. We're really looking at data to see where there's gaps where students are not being as successful, and then developing strategic partnerships and interventions to help them get support.

**Q: Could you give an example of how you might improve these partnerships and "pathways" to help students succeed?**

**A:** Sometimes students may not be successful, not because they don't have the academic skills, but because they have so many things that they're juggling in life. Things such as caring for family, or in some cases caring for children.

So I think of partnerships in the community that help gather additional support for the students, whether it could be childcare or part-time employment so they can support themselves. Within the institution, it's about building learning support systems and interventions that help us know when a student may need

academic support.

**Q: How would you compare Miami Dade College with others in the state?**

**A:** Miami Dade is the largest college in the state and one of the largest in the country. We have a long history of innovation, developing new programs and leading the way.

All of our colleges are their own communities' colleges, because that's really the role of community and state colleges: to serve their community.

But because Miami-Dade is positioned in Miami, the reach is even further. The gateway to Latin America comes through Miami, so MDC also has a uniqueness that you may not find in other colleges across the state. It's known for academic excellence, student success, innovation, and cultural programs like Miami Book Fair and Miami Film Festival.

There's also entrepreneurship programs coming out of the Idea Center. The Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses initiative and the Fashion Institute are both examples that really make Miami Dade special.

**Q: Has the college's board given you any specific direction?**

**A:** The Board of Trustees sets the vision for the college, and their vision is that Miami Dade continues to grow and to be recognized as a national leader in education that supports the needs of our community we serve.

There is a focus across the college and the board on reversing the trend of declining enrollment. 53% of our budget comes from state legislative dollars, but the other 47% comes from student fees generated through enrollment. Ensuring that we continue to prioritize enrollment and financial sustainability is important.

Equally as important is continuing to build on academic excellence and the reputation of the college across the country and in our community.

**Q: How much is enrollment down during the pandemic, and is there a specific plan for increasing it?**

**A:** Currently enrollment is down 12%. That is consistent with national averages, which have open access colleges like Miami Dade College down about 8%. That is a trend right now; community and state colleges are seeing enrollment decline because of Covid-19.

We can mitigate some of those declines by introducing other instructional modalities, as well as making sure we're helping students find their way to the college by creating clear pathways and using technology to reach them, and working with our partners in school districts making sure students know the importance of working on post-secondary credentials, whether it's a certificate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree or working with our university partners.

It'll be an area that we focus on, and it's so important because the jobs will come back and they're probably going to require additional skills. This is an important time to invest in your education, finish that degree or earn that credential so that we have the talented workforce we need to grow jobs in Miami.

**Q: What was it like to transition into the new role during Covid-19?**

**A:** It's been interesting, right from the

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# ...for 'a new era of innovation and academic excellence'

first interview in the process being virtual. For the second interview I visited the campus with social distancing.

All the colleges are in the same situation. Because I'm in Florida at Tallahassee Community College and I know the state, the transition's been a bit easier. It's about understanding how to support the college and the faculty and the staff during a pandemic and prioritizing health while also prioritizing outreach efforts.

**Q: What percentage of Miami Dade's offerings are currently remote, and do you see making any changes going into next semester?**

**A:** When you think about where we are right now as a community and the uptick in covid numbers, the approach the college is taking balancing online, hybrid and face-to-face courses is probably the most prudent. We'll continue to make decisions driven by data, science and listening to medical experts.

**Q: Do you have any new degree programs in mind for the college?**

**A:** As we look toward the future there will be opportunities in the financial technology area, and Florida is poised well for that. Everything engaged with artificial intelligence and automation will continue to be the future of work.

We'll continue to prioritize programs that meet workforce demands, especially around technology. We are trying to support the entrepreneurship and technology ecosystem for Miami, which seems to be an area where there's a lot of interest in growing and attracting new businesses.

One of the things new businesses consider when coming to a new location is talent, and I want to make sure that every business interested in coming to Miami-Dade County understands that MDC will be an educational partner to help them meet those talent needs.

**Q: MDC already has a few four-year degree programs. Do you foresee adding more?**

**A:** State colleges are workforce driven, so we wouldn't develop a program unless there was a demand from the workforce

that wasn't being met by our university partners.

I expect to do much more partnering with other universities. We have excellent universities in the area, whether it's Florida International, University of Miami, St. Thomas or Barry University. I'll always try to focus first on our two-plus-two seamless transition to the universities, and then address any workforce demands that we believe may be unmet.

**Q: Do you foresee any new partnerships with local companies or organizations?**

**A:** I've already talked to FIU's leadership team, and I think we'll look at opportunities where we can partner and strengthen our collaboration so that we're meeting workforce needs. I expect to continue to partner with Miami-Dade County Public Schools in early college pathways.

Our mayor is really interested in growing and attracting businesses to Miami-Dade, so I believe we'll continue those types of partnerships as well. We'll also have the opportunity for national partnerships like the ones we have with Tesla, Facebook and Goldman Sachs.

**Q: A few years ago you helped expand the Culinary Institute at Miami Dade and launch the Idea Center. Do you see any new programs in the pipeline?**

**A:** We will ensure that we are developing new programs, strengthening that pipeline and building real world experiences for our students.

One area I want to strengthen is our internship and work-based learning opportunity programs for students, so that they have real world experience when they enter the workforce. They're not only ready academically, but they also have those future-proof skills.

These are skills that go with you regardless of your job, whether it's communication, critical thinking or strategic decision-making. These kinds of skills are transportable, and they're certainly going to be needed today and in the future as well.

**Q: What are the trends in tuition costs**

**at Miami Dade College and where do you see these headed?**

**A:** Tuition has been flat for the last seven or eight years. Something the governor and legislative leaders have really focused on in Florida has been making sure that college is affordable and accessible, and that colleges and universities keep tuition stable and look at how to create textbook affordability programs.

I expect those things, particularly with the downturn of the economy, to continue in terms of making sure that we keep our tuition accessible for all students and develop other affordability pathways like scholarships and rapid-response credentials, which are short-term programs.

**Q: How would you characterize faculty pay levels at Miami Dade versus other colleges in Florida? Will you look to make any changes?**

**A:** Miami Dade has long prioritized faculty. They are the cornerstone to our success, so it's always important to work with faculty and make sure that not only the pay and benefits are there, but also the opportunities for professional development and growth.

Our faculty are incredibly dedicated to student success and academic excellence, and I will continue to support them in any way that I can.

**Q: What percentage of faculty is full time versus part time or adjunct, and do you see any trends emerging on this front?**

**A:** The college has recently added full-time faculty. Dr. Rolando Montoya, who served as interim president, has been focused on hiring faculty in areas that are critical to strategic growth.

I don't have the exact number, but when I was there previously it was pretty close to 60/40; over the years that number has gone toward a 55/45 ratio of full-time to part-time faculty.

I will add that sometimes adjunct faculty, especially in specialty programs, really bring a wealth of experience from industry, which is important for us. Having faculty who are experts in their profes-

sion share that knowledge with students strengthens the educational experience.

**Q: How else do you plan to get involved in the community?**

**A:** Before I left Miami I was on the executive committee of United Way. I expect to come back and support them, as they do great work. The college is also involved with many service learning activities, so I expect to continue to do so as the college's leader. I have a strong sense of service and giving back, and I expect to integrate right back into the community.

**Q: What personal characteristics do you think have been most instrumental in helping you get where you are today?**

**A:** Something I learned from my parents is hard work; that's a guiding principle for me. When I played basketball I worked hard and left everything on the court, and I approach my work the same way.

I'm driven by purpose and by passion. I'm passionate about changing lives through education, and I lead with purpose and value the importance of being an authentic leader. It's important to build trust and lead with heart, and that inspires people. By yourself you don't accomplish what needs to happen; you really make a difference and drive institutional and personal success by working with others.

Those are things that have been important to me throughout my whole career. Work hard, stay humble and lead with purpose and passion.

**Q: What book has had the biggest impact on your life, and why?**

**A:** One book I read recently is "Dare to Lead" by Brené Brown. It's about vulnerability and courageous leadership, and we are in a time where we need courageous leaders.

Steve Jobs' autobiography also speaks to clarity around vision, learning from failure and leveraging it to success, and focusing on 'the experience.' He talks about the Apple experience he wanted us to have, and I translate that into the vision I have for our student experience at Miami Dade.

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