

More Than 10K Ballots Cast At Miami-Dade's Colleges — Where Early Voting Almost Didn't Happen

By [JESSICA BAKEMAN](#) · 18 HOURS AGO



Miami Dade College president Eduardo Padrón and county commissioners celebrate the opening of early voting at the college's north campus on Oct. 22. Nearly 3,000 people had voted at that location as of Wednesday, Oct. 31.

KATIE LEPRI /WLRN

More than 10,000 people have voted early at college campuses in Miami-Dade, taking advantage of three polling places established by county leaders at the last minute under pressure from students and civil rights groups.

Ballots cast at Florida International University and Miami Dade College's north and Kendall campuses make up about 6 percent of the [total number of votes registered at polling places](#) from the beginning of early voting, on Oct. 22, to the end of Wednesday. (Thursday's totals are not yet available.)

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In July, a state court overturned a previous ban on early voting at college campuses. At first, Miami-Dade County officials refused to open additional sites, arguing the plans for budgeting and administering early voting at 25 locations were already set. But [the ACLU of Florida and other groups pushed for sites at FIU and MDC](#), stressing some students might not have access to other locations given their class and work schedules and transportation limitations.

Ultimately, Miami-Dade mayor [Carlos Gimenez agreed](#) to open the three sites.

Melba Pearson, the ACLU of Florida's deputy director, called the turnout at college campuses so far "outstanding."

"Our young people now have the opportunity to be involved in our governing process and have their voices heard, with limited disruption to their education," she wrote in an e-mail. "Access to voting should always be made easier, not harder."

Because of the previous ban, there were no early voting sites at colleges in Miami-Dade in 2016. But in 2014, there was one located at FIU. Then, only 199 people had cast ballots at the FIU location on the 10th day of early voting, and 2,276 total on all days of early voting. This year's FIU location has nearly doubled that number already,

with 4,461 votes as of the end of Wednesday. Including Thursday, there are still four days left to vote early before Election Day, which is Nov. 6.

MDC's Kendall campus has racked up 2,921 votes so far, and the north campus, 2,794. MDC president [Eduardo Padrón voted at the north campus](#) on Oct. 22, just hours after the polls opened there, with a cheering crowd of students in tow.

The early voting locations in Miami-Dade with the highest turnout so far are the public libraries in Coral Gables and North Dade, with nearly 13,000 votes cast at each location.

Early voter turnout throughout Miami-Dade County had topped 174,000 at the end of Wednesday. That's more than twice the number of early votes cast by the same point during the 2014 midterm elections: about 78,400.

With four more days, Miami-Dade early voters have already surpassed 2014's total of about 117,000.

In the first 10 days of early voting during the 2016 election, more than 304,000 people had cast ballots in Miami-Dade. (Turnout is consistently much higher during presidential election years.)

Meanwhile, turnout is even better at college campuses in [Broward County](#). So far, more than 14,000 people have voted at locations at Nova Southeastern University and two Broward College libraries. Those polling places were also opened as a result of the July court ruling.