

FOR THE EXCLUSIVE USE OF ME@MW.COM

From the South Florida Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/southflorida/news/2016/06/10/padr-n-higher-education-key-to-innovation.html>

ULTIMATE CEO INSIGHTS

## Padrón: Higher education key to innovation

Jun 10, 2016, 6:00am EDT

Eduardo Padrón isn't bashful about the role he believes Miami Dade College has played across South Florida.

Beyond the six degree options and more than 300 programs and pathways it provides to more than 161,000 students via online programs and at eight campuses countywide, there are the alumni.

Actors Steven Bauer and Sylvester Stallone, Grammy-winning singer Willy Chirino, City National Bank President Jorge Gonzalez, developer Manuel D. Medina, Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Jackson Health System President Carlos Migoya and former Memorial Health System CEO Frank Sacco all attended MDC.

"It's hard to find a household in Miami-Dade County that hasn't been touched by this college," he says.



JOCK FISTICK

Eduardo J. Padrón, President, Miami Dade College

What's your take on the state of higher education in South Florida? We have great institutions of higher education. We are very diverse, and we have different concentrations and different goals. But we complement each other. That is something that is very good for South Florida. Some of us are very affordable as public institutions, which makes it possible for people at all levels to be able to afford a post-secondary credential, which nowadays is your ticket to the middle class. I don't think we do as good a job of promoting that as we need to. That is important, because the economy here continues to evolve and new businesses are developed that require that variety of skills in order to move forward.

What gives you cause for pause? I worry about the fact that, in order to keep up with the growing demand and being able to provide state-of-the-art training for our community, it requires significant resources. Those of us who [work for] public institutions, we try to keep our tuition low to keep it affordable to the community. It's a struggle to find the financial support that is required from the state in order to maintain our offerings at the highest possible level. That's a big challenge, and we need to be honest about that.

What do you like and dislike most about your job? What I most enjoy is working with various business leaders in the area, analyzing their needs and making sure that we are able to meet those needs. Every time we do that, we guarantee jobs for our students. Our work doesn't end with a degree. It ends with finding opportunity for the students to get good jobs that will allow them to support their families and to support the American dream. That's my favorite part.

What aspect of education do you think people misunderstand? Frankly, there's a deficit of understanding in terms of what it takes to be a strong community. Education today, more than ever, plays a very significant role in the innovation economy. When high school, many years back, was enough to get a good job and join the middle class, today, without a post-secondary credential, you cannot aspire to do that and we maintain the cycle of poverty. Education, more than ever in the 21st century knowledge economy, is the key to not only the city, the state and the nation, but to compete effectively in the global economy.

**Eduardo J. Padrón**

President, Miami Dade College

Age: 71

Birthplace: Santiago, Cuba

Residence: Miami

---

Editor's Note: This is the first in a weekly series highlighting the *Business Journal's* South Florida Ultimate CEO Awards honorees. The award recognizes 15 of the area's top CEOs, highlighting the breadth of talent and leadership across our unified tri-county region. We'll feature at least one of these chief executives weekly as a lead-up to the Sept. 29 awards program at the Fort Lauderdale Marriott Harbor Beach Resort & Spa.

**Jeff Zbar**

Correspondent

*South Florida Business Journal*

