

## The Newspaper for the Future of Miami


# Personalized tech teaching called education's future

Written by Lauren Lamb on July 13, 2021

New models must be created to teach using technology in our universities, three Miami-Dade university and college presidents agreed last week in a Knight Foundation Town Hall that aims to help develop a technology model at the urging of the Biden Administration.

The Commission on the Future of Technology has been asked to focus on digital access and equity, platform and user privacy and market competition and innovation or opportunity, former Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick explained to the town hall. "How we can and should use technology to strengthen education and develop talent for the economy and society we are becoming."

"There's no better time to be in education and to be focusing on tech. But we have to make a couple of shifts first," Florida International University President Mark Rosenberg told the audience. "The models that the three



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of us, the presidents, represent are 19th century models of teaching. We have to get far more agile. We have to treat people as learners, not students.”

The presidents made it clear that they want to focus on meeting students where they currently stand with technology knowledge, not where educators want them to be. New models to teach with technology will have to be created, Dr. Rosenberg said.

“The pandemic accelerated innovation. It broke down silos. Teaching with technology would have taken a year’s work. But it happened in a week,” Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega said. There is a new normal that makes virtual pedagogy standard, and students are going to demand personalization in teaching, she said.

Florida Memorial University President Jaffus Hardrick agreed that the pandemic caused a change. “This last year brought us to the reality of the responsibility to be innovative. We can be so silos. But we had to make a shift.”

However, he said, his students at the historically Black university faced a digital divide – 90% are first-generation college students or from economically challenging backgrounds. “I had to scramble to go get devices for students be able to continue studying... It said to us that we have to do something differently in

investing. I called President Rosenberg on several occasions and asked what they were doing.

“I was stepping into something that none of us were ready to deal with. We have a lot of talented students that come to our university, but by the time they finish with us they’re ready to compete with anyone.”

“If you had a magic wand for perfect federal policy, what might you do?” asked Raul Moas, Miami-based Knight Foundation’s director for Miami community and nation initiatives programs.

“One of the things the federal government can look towards Florida for is what the governor just signed,” President Pumariega said. Florida House Bill 1507 is modernizing workforce, creating offices to reimagine education and career help, she said. “Florida will be a model as we break down those silos that exist within in our workforce programs and boards and colleges. We have to blur the lines between credit and noncredit. As lifelong learners, we’re going to need stackable credentials,” she said.

“That means students may come into the education process in a non-credit way, picking up an industry certification, which are digital apprenticeships. How do you take that and convert that into earning credit that leads you to a degree? Those multiple entry and exit points are important and our federal policies and the way we fund students have to align for that nimbleness,” Dr. Pumariega said.

“No matter how you slice it, it comes down to investment and cost. Universities need to be producing talent for the marketplace,” Dr. Hardrick said. Universities have to be nimbler in creating stackable credentials, he said, and federal funding needs to create and be just as nimble success.

“The federal government is heavy on baccalaureate degrees. That’s gotta dissolve. Because our universities have huge clusters of talent, and we need to leverage it for

the companies that are out there. The federal government needs to foster more internships,” Dr. Rosenberg said.

The panel stated that universities’ pedagogy must be more technology based to graduate students who are presented with opportunities in their future.

“The students hunger for technology because they know that’s where the future is,” President Hardrick said. The panel agreed that equity must be considered and they need to heal the digital divide between those who are food or housing insecure if they’re not growing up as digital natives.

“We have a diversity that you may not find in other communities, and we want to make sure that we elevate everyone. That will mean being intentional and that we have the resources to close the gap,” President Pumariega said. “Talent is universal, opportunity is not.”

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