Tech Trail: Miami Dade College Innovation chief touts inclusive tech 'for everyone'

BY ROB WILE

September 05, 2021 7:19AM

Antonio Delgado, new Vice President of Innovation and Technology Partnerships at Miami Dade College, said his own immigrant experience mirrors that of many of the schools' students. CHARLES TRAINOR JR. *CTRAINOR@MIAMIHERALD.COM*

In his new role as Miami Dade College's Vice President of Innovation, Antonio Delgado has a simple yet far-reaching goal: To make Miami's tech boom accessible to all.

"For families that feel it's too far, that this is not for them, that it's just increasing prices in Miami — no, it's more than that," Delgado told the Miami Herald this week. "It's possible to be part of what we're building. This is for everyone in the community."

He believes that his own story of perseverance can serve as an example: Born and raised in Cuba, Delgado found his advanced credentials discounted when he arrived in the U.S. 10 years ago.

"I was ready for the American dream, but when I got here, I couldn't find a job," he said. "I realized I didn't have the work experience — that I'm an immigrant. Now I realize — Miami, as a city of either first- or second-generation immigrants, lots of people here have these experiences that I suffered myself. I'm seeing myself in my students."

In his previous role as MDC's engineering program dean, Delgado helped the school secure more than $15 million in grants, including from the National Security Agency (NSA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), Mozilla and Google.org, the search giant's nonprofit group. He also built partnerships with tech heavyweights, including Amazon, Tesla, IBM, Microsoft, SoftBank and Google. And he helped launched MDC's Cybersecurity Center of the Americas, its Cloud Computing Center, and its Electric Vehicle Training Center.

And don't tell Antonio Delgado that Miami doesn't have the talent.

"It's perception," he said. "You hear all the time that there's no talent in Miami — and you hear it so many times that you just repeat what you hear."

One hundred thousand students served annually. State-of-the-art facilities — including new centers for financial trading, digital marketing, cybersecurity and, soon, artificial intelligence. World-class faculty.

For Delgado, there should be no difficulty for any South Florida company, whether old-school or brand new, in finding qualified workers thanks to these facts. He believes some companies may instead remain biased against hiring someone who may be technically entry level.

"Maybe we have a shortage of talent with many years of experience," he said. "The reality is, there is shortage of talent coming in. We are graduating students with skills and certifications that prove that they're ready."

TECH-ENABLED MATTRESS FIRM VALUED AT $500M

Eight Sleep, whose tech-enabled mattresses are designed to adjust to a user's unique physiology, announced last week that it had raised $86 million in its latest round of funding, valuing it at a half billion dollars. The SoftBank-backed firm, which moved to Miami earlier this year, has raised $150 million to date. The firm also announced that Antonio Gracias, who currently serves on the board of Tesla, will also be joining the Eight Sleep board.

"The sleep tech market is only in its infancy," Gracias said in a statement. "The opportunity is limitless, as we spend up to a third of our lives asleep. Consumers are increasingly focused on sleep fitness as the understanding of how deeply. The first night I slept on the 'Pod' [the company's high-tech sleep system] I knew we had to get involved."

MIAMICOIN RAISES MORE THAN $3 MILLION FOR CITY

After beginning trading on the cryptocurrency exchange Okcoin — which just opened a Miami office — MiamiCoin, the cryptocurrency designed to serve as a platform for funding municipal improvement projects, has raised more than $3 million for the city of Miami.

For now, the price of one MiamiCoin is about $0.01. CityCoin founder Patrick Stanley told the Miami Herald that the long-term vision for cryptocurrencies like MiamiCoin goes beyond price, and is meant to redefine civic engagement and add value to cities.

While there is not an exact way to know how many users of MiamiCoin exist yet, those who have tapped it have earned, collectively, some $8.4 million.

Miami city officials say the topic of accepting MiamiCoin-generated funds remains under discussion.

https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/article253929178.html