

Want to be a cannabis connoisseur? Miami Dade College has a class for that.

[BY SAMANTHA J. GROSS](#)

AUGUST 07, 2019 05:50 PM,
UPDATED AUGUST 07, 2019 10:15 PM

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/article232607187.html>

A look at how medical marijuana is grown, processed and sold at Curaleaf, one of Florida's larger medical marijuana companies. Robert Levy, director of cultivation at Curaleaf, offers a tour of the high tech grow house. BY [EMILY MICHOT](#) | [MARTA OLIVER CRAVIOTTO](#)

In the crowded lobby of Miami Dade College's North Campus in late July, groups of people waited in line to register for classes, secure their financial aid and ask their lingering logistical questions as they prepared for the fall term, which starts Aug. 23.



The walls were papered with posters advertising courses of all kinds, but one stood out among the rest.

The poster features a hand, holding a dropper bottle of yellow oil on a backdrop of marijuana leaves. The text at the bottom asks: "Ready to enter in the emerging medical cannabis industry?"


The advertised course, Florida Cannabis Policy and Regulation, is one of three classes offering North Campus students the opportunity to learn about cannabis law in Florida, the medical marijuana industry's history and the biology and chemistry of medical marijuana plants.

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/education/article233629977.html>


Miami Dade College
 North Campus

SUMMER B COURSES


 mdcnorth

Florida Cannabis Policy and Regulation



SUMMER B COURSES!
(JUN. 24 THRU AUG. 2)

**READY TO ENTER IN
 THE EMERGING
 MEDICAL CANNABIS
 INDUSTRY?**

M/W/F
 10:25 AM - 12:40 PM
 COURSE#: CJL2990
 REF.# 12376

T/THU
 5:40 PM - 9:00 PM
 COURSE#: CJL2990
 REF.# 12377

REGISTER NOW!

A poster about a Florida Cannabis Policy and Regulation course is displayed at Miami Dade College North Campus. Samantha J. Gross

Dean Michaela Tomova said the development phase is a good thing, because the industry and law are changing rapidly.

“Every day we read something different,” she said. “We will do this right, and we will be the epicenter of [cannabis] education.”

Read Next
[FLORIDA](#)

[These families made a fortune with pot illegally. Now, pot is paying the bills again](#)

JULY 16, 2019 8:00 AM

The cannabis policy course debuted this summer, but the rest are brand new to the college. The next round of courses — the first of their kind in the Florida College System — start Aug. 23 and will last 16 weeks.

The idea came to faculty in March 2019, when some interested members were scoping out which other colleges and universities had programs focused on the quickly growing industry.

In Florida, there were a few programs that were mostly online and less focused on the hard sciences. The college's program will include cannabis-specific courses, hands-on opportunities as well as other "contextualized" courses like botany focused on medicinal plants.

Read Next
[NAKED-POLITICS](#)

[Smoke medical marijuana? This rule update might affect you](#)

JULY 11, 2019 3:41 PM

Initially, faculty had explored the possibility of a medicinal plant program, but changes in the Florida Legislature sparked them to pursue cannabis as a specialty.

In 2016, about 71 percent of voting Floridians approved a constitutional amendment to legalize medical marijuana. In 2019 the Legislature lifted a ban on smoking medical marijuana and also approved a bill to create a hemp program under the Department of Agriculture.

"We said, 'You know what? Let's explore it,'" said Efrain Venezuela, the campus' associate dean. "One of the things we do best is find ways of growing whatever we have

to adapt to the changing market. ... Our interest is to provide the best education for the workforce.”

When these students complete the program, they’ll join a growing rank of cannabis workers taking advantage of a burgeoning industry in Florida, Venezuela said.

Thanks to the buildout of the state’s medical marijuana industry, there were 1,290 full-time jobs in Florida’s cannabis sphere in 2017, according to [a three-year study conducted by Leafly and Whitney Economics](#), an economic and management consulting service.

Read Next
[AMERICAS](#)

[**Jamaica allows medical marijuana, but now what? ‘We’re not going to be like Colorado.’**](#)

JUNE 26, 2019 7:09 PM

One year later, the medical marijuana patient population jumped from 65,000 to 165,000 and the job count spiked to 10,358 — the largest increase in full-time cannabis jobs in the country.

For context, about 211,000 Americans work in the legal cannabis industry, compared to 69,000 brewery workers.

“We’re going to see huge growth here in South Florida in this industry and we want to be providing the right individual for that job,” said Pablo Sacasa, chair of the Chemistry, Physics and Earth Sciences Department.

Glassdoor, one of the world’s largest job and recruiting sites, reports that median paychecks in the cannabis industry are about \$58,111 — 10% higher than the average U.S. salary of \$52,863. Salaries in cannabis range from \$22,000 for medicinal marijuana delivery drivers to \$215,000 for individuals with medical or legal expertise.

Tomova said with the right expertise, students can fill needs for high-paying jobs like medicinal plant technology and lab testing.

“We’re hearing a lot about what goes into those products, what goes into those medicines. ... We need experts who can do quality control,” Tomova said. “Everywhere you go you see cannabis. There’s even CBD for dogs. Who knows what’s next?”

Faculty and staff have been working with industry partners like Trulieve and Miracle Leaf for internship opportunities and special programming, and well-known cannabis attorneys like Dustin Robinson to firm up the curriculum.

The courses will eventually have an advisory board made up of pot professionals from across the state.

Jonathan Miller, general counsel for the U.S. Hemp Roundtable and former Kentucky state legislator, said community colleges in his state already offer training and job opportunities in the hemp industry through various partnerships, a program which he says has been successful.

“People get really practical, meaningful skills at community college,” Miller said. “Hemp fits so perfectly into that paradigm.”

Miller, who has been working with Florida on drafting its cannabis legislation and rule making said Florida is “vaulting to the head of the pack” when it comes to cannabis, and that the industry fits in well with a community college system.

“My advice for Miami Dade College is to reach out to folks in the cannabis and hemp industries who are looking to start building their own footprint,” he said. “It works hand in glove.”



On June 28, 2016, Surterra Therapeutics Cultivation Manager Wes Conner displays the fully grown flower of one of their marijuana plants at their North Florida facility, on the outskirts of Tallahassee, Fla. JOE RONDONEAP FILE