

Wolfson Campus Might Be Miami's Greatest Hope

05/16/2016 03:41 pm ET | Updated 1 hour ago

Like 5



J.J. Colagrande writer of awesome novels.

Most people in Miami might not realize the importance of Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus. In addition to being a bustling urban campus with 40,000 students enrolled, it is of course the administrative hub of the whole college wide system overseeing eight other campuses and 136,000 students, making the school the largest college in the country. And this is only the tip of Wolfson's Iceberg.

Miami Dade College also owns the Freedom Tower and it is a part of the Wolfson campus. The Freedom Tower is Miami's greatest landmark and it does not sit empty.

The first floor is home to an open-air reception hall, free to the public when not in use. Marco Rubio launched his presidential campaign from that room. John Kerry spoke just last month. The King of Spain received an award recently also.

The first and 2nd floor is also a museum, free to the public, housing permanent and rotating exhibits in photography and a variety of other mediums.

That is the MDC Museum of Art + Design (MOA+D).

The third through eighth floors of the Tower house administrative offices.

MOA+D is on the 3rd.

The fifth, seventh and eighth floors are home to The Center for Writing and Literature at Miami Dade College, producers of the Miami Book Fair, the Miami Writers Institute, countless literary events throughout the year and the Read to Learn book drive program giving tens of thousands of books away to kids each year.

Below them on the 4th floor is the Miami International Film Festival and the 6th floor is occupied by MDC Live Arts, whose programming is broad in range.

The Freedom Tower is still our Statue of Liberty, yet more so as it currently produces our finest and most reputable culture. Anything more liberating than culture?

Miami Dade College also recently established the Miami Culinary Institute, Bldg. 9, basically a culinary school hosting an amazing food and wine theater, a fine dining restaurant on the top floor and a deliciously affordable café on the ground floor.

Then there is Building 8: home to MAGIC, the new state of the art animation and

game design studio. Start climbing that building, pass two floors of modern classrooms, you'll find the Idea Center, a Knight Foundation project home to startup companies with an emphasis on tech and coding, climb higher you'll discover the Wolfson archives, Miami's largest home of visual footage documenting our history and climb to the top floor you'll find a gym to work out in.

Wolfson also has an Honor's College that is among the best in the nation.

Wolfson houses the Earth Ethics Institute, focusing on environmental issues.

They also have the School of Continuing Education, offering hundreds of non-accredited programs to those who want to learn but are not interested in a degree.

Don't forget the University of Florida has a campus at Wolfson called the New World School of the Arts, and there is a charter school for high school students with the same name in the same building.

As if this wasn't enough, Miami Dade College recently acquired another landmark property for Wolfson, the old Miami U.S. Courthouse that has been shuttered since 2008. This building is one of the most classical in the city and Miami Dade absorbed it for free. The college and the government's property-management arm, the General Services Administration, signed a 115-year, one-dollar-a-year lease agreement.

[According to the Miami Herald](#), MDC officials don't yet have a firm plan for the building's use, but they have contemplated housing in it the college's architecture school, a paralegal-training program and its fashion institute.

I live in this neighborhood. Walk its streets daily and find inspiration and heartbreak.

I teach at this school too, among others like Barry University, and I can testify under oath Wolfson's student body is among the most unique and diverse in the country.

In the face of the Panama Papers revealing that Miami's real estate market is basically the money laundering hub of the world; in the depression that the Genting Group still wants to build a giant casino in the center of our downtown corridor; in all the closings and clutter and construction and out-of-control rent and income inequality, there are forces that continue to push Miami forward and there may be no larger entity on the side of the people than Miami-Dade College's Wolfson Campus.