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# Miami Herald



## SHE'S MDC

How Madeline Pumariega, who grew up in Hialeah, went from a student and basketball player at Miami Dade College's Kendall Campus to lead one of the country's largest colleges as its fifth president and first female one



**MDC president celebrated**  
Watch as Miami Dade College  
celebrates Pumariega's one-year  
anniversary.

**BOND WITH HER DAD**  
Family is paramount:  
Pumariega spends plenty of  
quality time with her  
84-year-old father. **5A**

**A LIFE IN PHOTOS**  
Photos of Pumariega,  
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college basketball player for  
MDC. **6A**

**MDC'S HISTORY**  
Now one of the largest  
colleges in the United  
States, Miami Dade College  
had a humble start. **6A**



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Madeline Pumariega near her office inside the school's Wolfson Campus in downtown Miami.

# From Hialeah student to MDC'S FIRST WOMAN LEADER



**MDC makes its decision**

Watch as Miami Dade College makes its selection of Pumariega as its next president a year ago.

**BY JIMENA TAVEL**  
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The teacher still remembers her first interaction with a particular student about 40 years ago. It was her first year teaching at Henry Filer Junior High School in Hialeah, and she ran into then-ninth-grader Madeline Pumariega in a hallway.

"What are you doing?" the rookie instructor asked her.

Pumariega replied, without missing a beat: "Standing."

The teacher, Arlene Prieto, giggles as she recounts the memory of now one of her closest friends: "I asked her a stupid question, and she had this smart, real direct answer. I laughed, and that's how we connected."

That dry humor and quick wit still characterize Pumariega, 54, who was named president of Miami Dade College on Nov. 17, 2020, when, after a spiraling 19-month search process, the seven-member MDC Board of Trustees selected her as the college's fifth president, its first female leader, in its 61-year-history.

Come Friday, Pumariega, 54, a graduate of Hialeah High, Class of 1986, and an MDC alum and

former basketball player at MDC's Kendall Campus, will have the college chain and medallion placed on her shoulders in a historic investiture ceremony at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts. She will be the leader of the largest college in Florida and one of the largest in the country, with roughly 120,000 students and 6,500 faculty and staff.

The milestone comes amid a year of monumental struggles.

On the education front,

Pumariega, like educators across the country, battled the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought on mental health challenges for students and, in MDC's case, a precipitous drop in enrollment that led to the loss of 9,000 students from 2019 to 2020 — the steepest decline in the college's history.

On the personal side, she grieved her own mother, who died shortly before Pumariega was named president. The country song "Five More Minutes" by Scotty



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Miami Dade College's first female president, Madeline Pumariega, with Student Government Association President Isabella Cunningham at MDC Wolfson Campus

McCreery comes to her mind when she thinks of that loss, because she wishes she could relive "the good stuff, the good times."

Her mom, a former teacher who once graded papers alongside a young Madeline asking her to paste stickers on them, never saw her take on the college presidency. But as Pumariega goes through her executive duties, she thinks of her.

"I know she's watching from another seat in the house," Pumariega said.

**INVESTITURE DATES BACK TO MIDDLE AGES**

Her investiture ceremony, a tradition to transfer power that dates back to the Middle Ages, will finalize a weeks-long celebration across all eight of the college's campuses.

In the so-called road to investiture, students, staff and community members have showered Pumariega with presents, including a key to the city of Hialeah, a portrait and a pair of Tiffany pearl earrings.

Katherine Padilla, a second-year student pursuing an associate's degree in business administration at West Campus in Doral, handed her the Tiffany's turquoise bag with the earrings at a recent celebration that included a sky blue carpet entrance followed by a carnival with dancers in bejeweled costumes and plumed headpieces.

Padilla, the campus president, said the local Student Government Association purchased the earrings for Pumariega after scouring her Instagram profile to gauge her taste. Pumariega, who often wears a multi-strand pearl necklace, grinned when she received the gift. She told Padilla she would wear them to the investiture ceremony.

"O-M-G, yes, please wear the earrings!" Padilla said. "It feels very empowering, and it feels like this generation of females can accomplish whatever they want to accomplish."

"It's not about me," Pumariega repeated during the event. She plans to donate the gifts to the college's archive, and write a check to Padilla and her colleagues to reimburse them for the pearls.

In early November, during the inauguration of a HistoryMiami Museum exhibit on the college, Pumariega said she wanted the investiture to be a

commemoration of the college's legacy rather than hers.

"I said we would only do it if we could go back and do a history of Miami Dade College," she told the crowd that night about the showing. The exhibition walked visitors from the early days of the "Chicken Coop College," nicknamed for the original buildings that turned into classrooms, to today's MDC as a pillar for economic mobility, culture and education in Miami-Dade County.

Years after their encounter in the junior high hallway, Prieto reunited with Pumariega while they both worked for the college. Their friendship has turned into a sisterhood, despite Prieto living in Virginia now. They speak on the phone regularly.

"She definitely hates being the center of attention," Prieto said.

Pumariega doesn't display photos of her or her family at the President's Office, and she rarely talks about her personal life in professional settings.

"She's a very private and modest person," Prieto said. "For her, it's about the work."

**'WHOA, WHO IS THIS LADY?'**

At 6-foot-2, Pumariega towers over almost everyone and that, coupled with her power suits, manicured nails and styled ash blonde hair, can make her initially intimidating.

Padilla said she first met Pumariega at a Student Government Association meeting at the beginning of the fall term. Pumariega showed up unexpectedly, and although Padilla had heard about Madame President Pumariega, she didn't immediately recognize her.

"I was like, 'Whoa, who is this lady?' I had heard about her, but I had never seen her. So, when she came in, and I saw she's like this super tall and elegant lady, I was like 'Whoa.'"

"I was super nervous. I wanted to make a good impression," Padilla said.

Throughout the semester, Padilla has encountered Pumariega at other gatherings. "She's not scary. That was my first impression — that she seemed scary — but she's not scary at all," Padilla said.

Pumariega forgoes

SEE MDC, 4A



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Madeline Pumariega, far right, and WSVN-7's Belkys Nerey, next to her, help culinary students make paella during the Wolfson Campus Investiture Ceremony on Nov. 3





Madeline Pumariega speaks during the Wolfson Campus In estiture Ceremony on No 3.

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FROM PAGE 3A

## MDC

handshakes for side-hugs and skips the small talk to jump straight into candid conversations.

She recently told a group of students over lunch that the next time they would ditch the “rubber chicken” and get McDonald’s instead.

She’s also not afraid to criticize the college, stimulating honest feedback.

In mid-November, during another meeting with students, one of them timidly complained about MDConnect, a web page for college services. Pumariega leaned closer and whispered, “Can I tell you a secret? I have the same problem. It’s not intuitive.”

She then launched into a detailed explanation on how her team is trying to improve it.

In that same meeting, she told students the college wants to increase campus engagement. Those who attend MDC often work part or full time to make ends meet, or often take care of an elder or younger family member to help out at home. All of them commute, as the college lacks dorms, so making time to watch a volleyball game or join the Japanese manga club can be difficult.

Pumariega, however, is slowly changing the school to cultivate student involvement. She said she has questioned why some libraries push away students with unnecessary regulations, like forbidding eating and drinking completely.

“I said, ‘No food or drinks? Well, then I’m not coming,’ ” she told the students, who roared in amusement. “Those are antiquated rules.”

Pumariega described her leadership style as collaborative. She spends less time giving orders and more time listening to others, she said.

She also tries to give her team space to make mistakes and grow from them, pointing out any mistakes privately.

“If every day you’re flying off, if every day you’re screaming, if every day nobody is good enough, people eventually just turn off,” she said. “And I think that when employees turn off, that’s dangerous for an institution, because you don’t feel that motivation anymore.”

### ‘SHE BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER AGAIN’

Michael Bileca, chair of the Miami Dade College Board of Trustees, credits Pumariega’s approach to developing a newfound unity among top leaders at the college.

Eduardo Padrón, her predecessor, retired as president in 2019 after nearly 50 years at the school — the last 24 years as president of the college. During his tenure, the college grew from a two-year community college to a major force offering four-year degrees. He also played a key role in Miami’s cultural and downtown renaissance, launching the Miami Book Fair at the school’s Wolfson Campus, growing the Miami Film Festival and renovating the Freedom Tower into an art museum.

But Padrón, who declined to comment for this article, ran the school with a longtime group of lieutenants, including Lenore Rodicio, his right-hand person. The board of trustees passed over Rodicio for the presidency; she resigned shortly thereafter to work as a senior fellow at the Aspen Institute and the Bill Melinda Gates Foundation.

“The environment was more of a top-down structure; campus presidents were not given full transparency on information on their campus,” Bileca said. “[Pumariega] brought them together again. She created an empowered atmosphere and an atmosphere where there is ownership of all levels of organizational leadership.”

Pumariega has also rallied those who weren’t her fans when she applied for the job.

“There was some concern by others through the search process, and to have her come in and be such a unifying leader has been an incredible thing to watch,” he said. “It’s been a year, and I have yet to hear anything but overwhelming positive feedback.”

Bileca said he believes Pumariega’s strength and success come from her extensive experience, both at MDC and at other educational posts.

Pumariega started her career at MDC, as an academic adviser and adjunct faculty member at the Kendall Campus, which she attended in the 1980s. After five years, she transitioned into student services at downtown Miami’s Wolfson Campus, working as a dean of students there, and then a



### About the co er

MDC President Madeline Pumariega at the college’s Wolfson Campus Photo by Al Diaz, adiaz@miamiherald.com

dean of students and administration at the Medical Campus.

She then became the president at Wolfson, the college’s signature campus, from 2011 to 2013. At the time, she helped grow the Miami Culinary Institute and launch the Idea Center, an entrepreneurship hub.

After two decades at the college, Pumariega moved on to become chief executive officer of the statewide nonprofit Take Stock in Children, which helps kids further their education, for about two years. At the time, she had been diagnosed with breast cancer and did some soul-searching.

Pumariega, born in South Miami as the second child of two Cuban exiles, then was tapped as chancellor of the Florida College System, the first woman and the first person of Hispanic descent to hold the job. The college system oversees 28 institutions, including MDC, and serves more than 800,000 students.

Pumariega, who was chancellor for three years, then briefly took on a teaching job at New York University, and simultaneously became the executive vice president and provost of Tallahassee Community College for nearly two years. In January 2021, she officially started her current job at MDC.

Because of her time in Florida’s capital city, she’s a known figure there.

Elizabeth Ramsay, president of the United Faculty of Miami Dade College, said she has witnessed Pumariega’s acclaim across the community, even among Miami-Dade’s delegation in Tallahassee.

“Each time that we’ve met with a senator or a representative they always said, ‘How about that president of yours? She’s just great!’ ” Ramsay said. “And in some cases that’s the only point upon which we agree.”

### A HIALEAH GIRL

Her ability to navigate the corridors of Tallahassee, which for much of its history has been a white male-dominated power structure, comes, Pumariega says, from growing up in Hialeah in the 1980s.

“I’m like 6-foot-tall, and I’m from Hialeah, so anyone trying to intimidate me ... that’s just not going to work,” she joked.

Watching her mom work as a teacher and her dad as a banker after migrating from Cuba showed Pumariega the value of a solid work ethic. Ramsay, the faculty union president, said she stood beside Pumariega for years while they volunteered at the Miami Book Fair. She’s a “roll-up-your-sleeves kind of person.”

Those who knew Pumariega in high school say she wasn’t exactly a popular kid, but she didn’t

have problems making friends. She played softball and basketball and swam.

Victor Whitaker, her former water polo and swimming coach at Hialeah High, said Pumariega started out as one of the slower swimmers her first year and then, by her senior year, led the team as its captain.

“She started as a guppy and ended as a shark,” he said.

When he found out about a month ago that Pumariega is now the president of MDC, Whitaker pulled out the Hialeah High yearbook and reminisced. But what he didn’t feel was surprise.

“That one made sense because of how she approached high school. She was a real go-getter. She managed sports and got really good grades.

“I’m proud of her. It makes me feel like it was worth all of the after-school and Saturdays and Sundays,” he said.

At MDC, Pumariega continued her love for sports, specifically basketball. She started as a basketball player at the Kendall Campus in 1986. As a center, she led the team to the state championship tournament. She later returned as an assistant coach for the women’s basketball team for five seasons. She was inducted into the MDC Alumni Hall of Fame in 2018.

Pumariega’s upbringing shaped her views on faith and family, both crucial in her life.

She spends most of her free time visiting her only daughter, Alyssa, a 17-year-old senior at Florida State University School in Tallahassee. She enjoys her Sunday nights with family dinners, surrounded by her loved ones and loud music. And on weeknights, she’s nearly always

SEE MDC, 5A

“THERE WAS SOME CONCERN BY OTHERS THROUGH THE SEARCH PROCESS, AND TO HAVE HER COME IN AND BE SUCH A UNIFYING LEADER HAS BEEN AN INCREDIBLE THING TO WATCH.”

Michael Bileca, chairman, MDC Board of Trustees



Madeline Pumariega joins Louis Wolfson III, left, and MDC Professor Emeritus and Miami historian Dr. Paul George at HistoryMiami.



### A final goodbye

Former Miami Dade College President Eduardo Padrón honored at graduation during ‘bittersweet’ sendoff

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# Dad has her back but never let her win at b-ball



**In estiture ceremony**  
Watch Miami Dade College President Pumariega's in estiture ceremony at the Kendall campus.

BY JIMENA TAVEL  
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On a recent evening, as she prepares to head out from her Wolfson Campus office after a long workday to attend a nearby cocktail event, Madeline Pumariega phones her father.

“¿Ya tú estás saliendo del banco?” she asks him, looking at the time — about 6 p.m. — on her watch. “Are you leaving the bank yet?”

Her 84-year-old dad still drives from his home in West Kendall to work as the executive vice president of business banking at Iberia Bank. “*Pronto, ¿por qué?*” he responds, “Soon, why?”

She drops an impromptu invitation to the opening of an exhibition at History-Miami Museum, an event that will honor her first year as president of Miami Dade College, leading up to her investiture ceremony scheduled for Friday at the Arsht Center. “There’s this event,” she says. “Do you want to come? I’ll send you the address.”

A talk with her father, Miguel Pumariega, is built into Pumariega’s jam-packed day. Around sunset, either he calls her or she calls him to figure out when they will get together, often over dinner.

Their close-knit relationship has shaped Pumariega, 54, who now leads the largest college in Florida and one of the largest in the country. Her mother, a former teacher, passed away late last year, so she cherishes the time she has left with her dad, while thinking her mom is “watching from another seat in the house.”

Pumariega’s parents instilled family and faith as foundational and leading principles in her life, even after they separated when she was a little girl.

Her mom was one of



Madeline Pumariega and her father, Miguel Pumariega, 84, near her office at the Wolfson Campus in downtown Miami.

eight children, so Pumariega, besides her siblings, grew up around cousins close in age and sees them — and their children — regularly.

“If I’m not at the college, I’m with family,” she says. “That’s really important to me.”

She spends most of her free time during the week-ends with her daughter, 17-year-old Alyssa, a high school senior at Florida State High School in Tallahassee. Pumariega and Alyssa’s father separated; he now lives in Argentina. (Prior to Pumariega taking the MDC post, she was provost of Tallahassee Community College and former chancellor of the Florida College System in Tallahassee.)

“That is the most important role I will ever play in my life: Alyssa’s mom,” she says. “And the greatest contribution I will ever make to the world is Alyssa, because she is amaz-

ing.”

The family-centered environment, as well as her Catholic upbringing, showed Pumariega the value of lifting others up.

“People ask me, ‘How did you become the president of Miami Dade College?’ And I say, because of God’s grace,” she says. “God is why.”

**‘I BACK YOU UP’**

Born in Pedro Betancourt in the Matanzas Province of Cuba, Miguel Pumariega left the island on Dec. 2, 1961, thanks to his dad, who had left earlier. He and Aleyda, his wife and Pumariega’s mom, moved to New York together for a few years and then landed in an East Hialeah home.

His eldest son’s childbirth took nearly 24 hours. So when Pumariega, their second child, came along, Miguel sat in the waiting room of South Miami Hospital and prepared himself

for the delay. To his surprise, about an hour later when he walked around to check in with the doctor, he realized his daughter had been born.

“Where have you been?” Miguel recalls the doctor asking, chuckling.

Her quick arrival into the world foreshadowed her decisiveness later in life. Miguel says his daughter, fiercely ambitious, has always set and achieved goals for herself.

“I am very proud of Madeline, not only because of her accomplishments, but also because of the type of person she is,” Miguel says. “She likes helping people. She has a huge heart.”

Pumariega gravitated toward sports early on, probably because of her competitive nature, he says. In school, she played softball and basketball and swam. At home, she played basketball against her 6-foot-tall father.

“I never gave her a chance to win,” he says. “I used to tell her, ‘You’ll beat me when you can beat me.’ But then she got bigger, and the tables turned. She started beating me.”

At about 16, Madeline announced she wanted to work at the bank with him. He got her in.

“I back you up,” he told her.

A few years later, she told him she wanted to quit because she wanted to focus full-time on her education.

“I back you up,” he told her again.

Last fall, when she notified her dad she would apply for the presidential post at the college after working there for more than two decades, Miguel recited the words again: “I back you up.”

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# MDC

hanging out with her 84-year-old dad, Miguel.

“God is great, and America is great, because only here could a girl from Hialeah get to where I am now,” she says. “And I feel proud to know that there’s a little girl in Hialeah now thinking she can accomplish this too someday.”

Pumariega doesn’t hide the fact that her gender makes a difference. Because she’s a woman, she says, she connects with faculty and students in ways her four predecessors didn’t. And because she’s a woman, Pumariega said, she asks questions men might not, or delivers messages in ways men might not.

As a separated wife and mother, she brings up child care a lot.

“The outcomes are not any different. The expectations are not any different. But the lens in which I might see something is going to be different than how a male counterpart does,” Pumariega said. “They’re not wrong or right. They’re not ying or yang. They’re just different.”

Prieto, her close friend, said Pumariega doesn’t dwell on the negative.

“She’s able to navigate those things,” Prieto said. “Her philosophy is to just not focus on that and to just keep moving forward. I think one of the reasons she broke through at Miami Dade is that she was so prepared and so qualified, and such the right person, and so good at what she does, that it became really hard to say no to her.”

Her positive mentality also helped her overcome

difficulties in her life, like her mom’s passing and her own breast cancer.

“She’s an incredibly brave and strong human being,” Prieto said.

**PRIORITIES FOR MIAMI DADE COLLEGE’S FUTURE**

When Pumariega returned to Miami Dade College in early 2021, she realized she had a critical mission ahead of her.

From 2019 to 2020, the college lost about 1,000 students — the worst enrollment decline in the school’s 60-year history, which the interim president at the time called “highly unusual and concerning.” At the beginning of 2021, MDC stood to lose more than \$16 million in revenue because of the steep drop.

But Pumariega took charge and raised enrollment figures from -17% in January 2021 to +2% in August 2021. She has a one-word answer: “Data.”

Her team called those who had left the college and asked them why, then asked each other how they could get them back.

“I’m a data nerd so I looked at the data and realized it was urgent,” she said. “That was about securing our future.”

Securing the college’s financial future remains a priority for her, alongside redesigning the student experience and the academic support system.

When Pumariega first arrived at Miami Dade College, she did so as a student, a basketball player on an athletic scholarship. At the time, to register for classes, she looked at a board that listed all courses available. She picked the reference numbers she needed. Then waited in a long line to either tell her numbers to



Madeline Pumariega speaks with students at MDC Wolfson Campus on Nov. 10

a staffer behind a window, or punch the numbers in a phone.

Sometimes, after the tedious process, she found out the classes had already filled up and she needed to pick other ones, only to scream in frustration and throw her head in between her knees.

“But that evolved, and we need to evolve again,” she says about the registration process.

She’s not sure what the evolution involves; she’s looking for that “Uber of education,” looking to revolutionize higher education in the same way Uber revolutionized transportation.

In the meantime, she’s trying to incorporate as much technology as possible to facilitate the processes. She’s tasked technicians to come up with a “one-click registration.” She’s launched initiatives to provide “real-time sup-

port,” like text messaging before a final, where the college reminds students where they can find tutoring ahead of a big test.

She doesn’t see the college expanding in terms of land as it already has eight campuses — Hialeah Campus; Homestead Campus; Kendall Campus; Padrón, Wolfson, Medical and North Campuses in Miami; and West Campus in Doral. But she wants the college to expand in terms of degrees and certificates offered.

She also wants the college to modernize its teaching, so it’s not only infusing applied knowledge like math and history, but also enterprise skills like teamwork, dependability and resilience. In addition, she wants students to grow digitally at MDC, so by the time they leave they know how to communicate online,

and solve problems and parse information with software.

She’s not sure how long she’ll stay as president; she just knows she’ll do it for as long as she feels she’s making an impact. Regardless of when she leaves, she wants to be remembered for one thing:

“That I cared, that I lived a life with purpose and that my purpose was about serving students and creating bigger and brighter futures for them,” she said. “That the people around me felt that I fueled their dreams; that if you worked around me, you were having fun, you were doing great work and you felt appreciated.”

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# How MDC went from the ‘chicken coop’ to one of the biggest colleges in the country

BY JIMENA TAVEL  
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Throughout its 61-year history, Miami Dade College has relentlessly stood, as community members often refer to it, as a “beacon of hope.”

As the first rung in the ladder for millions who seek to transform their lives through education, the college has helped people rise out of poverty, immigrants find their footing and enteran professionals reinvent themselves with better job skills

Although it first started as a makeshift college in renovated chicken coops, it has grown into eight campuses across Miami-Dade County, with a student body of about 120,000 students, representing 167 nations and 63 languages. The college enrolls more minority students than any college or university in the United States. Hispanics account for 75 percent of its credit enrollment, and Black non-Hispanics account for 15 percent.

The college attracts commuters, as it offers no housing facilities. Only 41 percent of the students fall under the “traditional” college age of 18 to 20 years old; 24 percent of the students are 26 or older. Many of the students work at least one job and often take care of a family member.

The college also serves as an economic engine, as its alumni and about 6,500 employees contribute more than \$3 billion annually to the local economy, according to the school.

It’s also a cultural mecca. It’s home to the Miami Book Fair, Miami Film Festival, the Museum of Art and Design (located within the historic Freedom Tower), the Tower Theater and the Miami Culinary Institute.

**MAJOR MILESTONES OF THE COLLEGE’S HISTORY**

**Sept. 6, 1960:** To help with desegregation and service the thousands of Cuban refugees arriving in South Florida, Dade County Junior College opens its doors to the public. During that inaugural year, 1,428 students enrolled, including seven Black students.

The institution becomes the first integrated junior college in the state. Black and white students mingled in occasional classes, according to Herald archives.

Kenneth R. Williams is the first president. Any county resident who graduated from high school could enroll at the “Chicken Coop College,” as it was nicknamed after the chicken houses were repurposed as makeshift, musty classrooms.

**1962:** Peter Masiko becomes the second president of Dade County Junior College.

The college becomes completely desegregated.

Soon after, the college acquires 230 acres of a former Naval air base called Masters Field on Northwest 27th Avenue from the General Services Administration.

**1963:** Scott Hall, the college’s first building, is completed on the college’s then-main campus, known today as North Campus.

**1964:** South Campus, later renamed “Kendall Campus,” begins classes at Palmetto High School.

**1965:** The college gains full accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, according to Herald archives.

The state of Florida charters MDC Foundation as a nonprofit organization.

**1967:** The college becomes the largest institution of higher education in the state, enrolling 23,341 students.

**1968:** The Florida Legislature separates community colleges from the public school system. The District Board of Trustees starts governing the college.

**1969:** The college enrolls its 100,000th student.

**1972:** The InterAmerican Center, the future Eduardo J. Padrón InterAmerican Campus, opens in Little Havana.

**1973:** The college changes its name to Miami Dade Community College.

**1976:** The college dedicates the Medical Center Campus.

**1980:** Robert H. McCabe replaces Masiko as president. Masiko, who died in 1981, advocated for an “open-door college,” believing in everyone’s potential and instituting policies that allowed nearly anyone to get in.

**1981:** Hialeah Center opens.

**1984:** The inaugural Miami Book Fair International takes place, originally called “Books by the Bay.”

Downtown Campus gets renamed as Mitchell Wolfson New World Center Campus.

**1985:** On its 25th anniversary, the college becomes the first community college in the country to have graduated 100,000 students. It gets designated the finest community college in America by the University of Texas Community College Leadership Program.

**1988:** The college creates the New World School of the Arts, both a high school and college designed to offer dual-enrollment to performing and visual artists.

**1989:** Liberty City Entrepreneurial Education Center opens.

**1990:** Homestead Campus opens.

**1992:** Voters passed a referendum in which they agreed to a tax hike that would generate \$100 million over two years for the college. The college establishes its Community Endowment.

**1995:** The third president of Miami-Dade Community College, Robert H. McCabe, steps down.

He revolutionized the way the college rewarded teachers, giving pay raises based on classroom performance, not degrees, publishing or research.

The college appoints Eduardo J. Padrón as its fourth president.

**1998:** The InterAmerican Center becomes InterAmerican Campus.

**2001:** The college enrolls its one-millionth student. The state approves the first bachelor’s degree for the college.

**2002:** The City of Miami turns over the operation of the historic Tower Theater to the college.

**May 24, 2003:** Florida Legislature authorizes name change to Miami Dade College. Also that year, the college assumes responsibility for operating the popular Miami International Film Festival. MDC launches its Honors College.

**2004:** Hialeah Center becomes Hialeah Campus.

**2005:** First MDC students graduate with bachelor degree, and West Campus opens.

Following several decades of neglect, Cuban American community leaders rescue the Freedom Tower, a former Miami News building and Cuban refugee center, and donate it to the college, which creates the Museum of Art and Design there.

**2006:** The college is entrusted with operating the Lynn and Louis Wolfson II Florida Moving Image Archive, the nation’s largest state archive of video and film.

**2010:** The college celebrates its 50th anniversary. A new Science Complex opens at North Campus and the Confucius Institute opens.

**2011:** The Miami Culinary Institute opens at Wolfson Campus.

**2013:** MDC admits its 2 millionth student.

**2014:** MDC launches an entrepreneurship hub, the Idea Center.

**2015:** The college opens Miami Animation and Gaming International Complex (MAGIC).

**2019:** Padrón announces his retirement. The college appoints Rolando Montoya as interim president.

**November 2020:** The board of trustees selects Madeline Pumariega as the first female and fifth college president.

**Friday, Dec. 10:** Pumariega will have the college chain and medallion placed on her shoulders in a historic in-estiture ceremony Friday at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Miami.

Source: *Miami Dade College, HistoryMiami, Miami Herald archives*

Jimena Tavel: 786-442-8014, @taveljimena



LILIANA MORA / MDC

Madeline Pumariega, president of Miami Dade College, in January at MDC’s Wolfson Campus in downtown Miami.



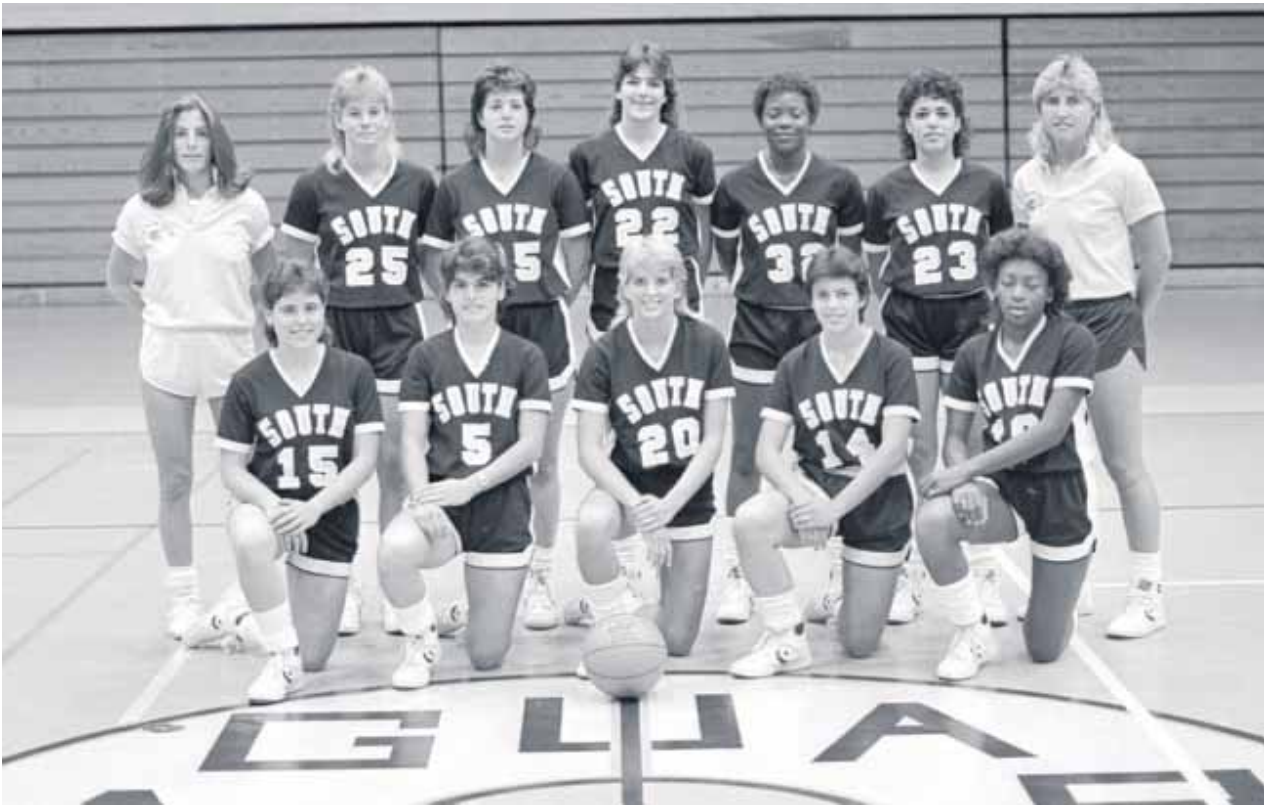
MATIAS J. OCNER / mcnr@miamiherald.com

Pumariega speaks during MDC graduation ceremony at loanDepot park in Miami on May 1.



Miami Dade College

Pumariega enjoys her turn at the grill at MDC’s Medical Campus In-estiture celebration. Each of MDC’s eight campuses held their own events.



Pumariega at 22, top center, when she played on the women’s basketball team at MDC’s South Campus in the 1980s.



With Dwyane Wade at the Wolfson Campus to promote kids’ reading and ‘Pride and Prejudice’ in 2006.



CARLOS LLANO

‘An Evening With Tom Wolfe’ during the 2012 Miami Book Fair International at the Wolfson Campus.



At the Kendall Campus in-estiture event.



Pumariega enjoys a playful moment with the women’s basketball team at the Kendall Campus in-estiture.