



Miami Dade College to expand emerging tech programs, open a Center for AI and expand ‘AI for All’ with new \$15M investment

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The \$15M in funding comes from Knight Foundation, Miami-Dade County, City of Miami and Miami DDA

This vision will soon be reality: Every Miami Dade College student, regardless of their discipline, will be exposed to emerging technologies. The College is poised to be the first of its kind in the nation to require all students to take at least one Applied AI course. MDC will soon offer a bachelor's degree in artificial intelligence, as well as a certificate program in Applied AI. Offerings in cybersecurity, data science, cloud computing, gaming and other emerging technologies will be bolstered with additional faculty and resources. And there is, beginning today, a central Hub for all things Miami Tech at MDC.

Miami Dade College under President Madeline Pumariega will do all this through a \$15 million combined investment from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami-Dade County, City of Miami and the Miami Downtown Development Authority. The investment consists of \$5 million from Miami-Dade County and \$2 million from the City of Miami in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, a \$7 million match from Knight, and \$1 million from the Miami DDA. It was announced today at a press conference on MDC's Wolfson campus that included remarks by the mayors of Miami and Miami-Dade County, the DDA and MDC leadership.

"MDC has been the higher education leader in the South Florida community for 62 years, helping to build and elevate our city from within," said Pumariega, also an MDC alumnus. "With these historic investments and support from key partners, we are continuing that mission, preparing students for top jobs in emerging and growing technology careers, helping residents upskill to attain economic mobility, and driving the growth of businesses in South Florida."

MDC is one of the largest public colleges in the nation with over 100,000 students, of which 91% are Hispanic or Black and more than 50% are first-generation college students. The new funding comes at a time when enrollment in tech programs has reached an all-time high, even as other programs have been flat. The enrollment in MDC tech programs that lead to employment, such as bachelor's and associate's degrees and certificates, was a record 1,830 students this past fall, representing a 120% increase in enrollment in just four years. It's the kind of growth Florida International University's tech programs are also seeing.

"Literally, there's never been a time in Miami where more Miamians have said 'I want to be in tech,' so leaning into that trend makes all the sense in the world," said Raul Moas, senior director of Knight's Miami program. "Miamians are raising their hand, they are seeking ways to break into the sector."

Indeed, in the past 12 months, Knight has committed nearly \$23 million to tech talent development, representing more than a third of Knight's investments in the Miami tech community over the last decade. "The goal for us, what motivates us, is an engaged, participatory community to help build the Miami that they aspire to see today and tomorrow, and it is through tech," Moas said.

The funding comes at a time greater Miami is experiencing a boom in tech with thousands of startup founders, VC investors, larger tech companies, and tech professionals moving to or expanding in the area. Needs for tech talent have never been higher.

Specifically, the funding will allow MDC to add 15 new faculty in AI and other emerging tech disciplines at MDC's School of Engineering and Technology (EnTec) – that's an increase of over 20%. EnTec will also develop new courses and professional development programs in these fields, including a bachelors and certificate in applied AI. Indeed, this investment will also build on MDC's AI for All work it has already started, and MDC soon will require all students regardless of their career track to take at least one course in applied AI.

MDC will also build an AI Center to foster experiential learning and collaboration between industry and academia, which will join existing MDC technology centers focused on animation and gaming, cloud computing and cybersecurity. With the AI Center, "we're mimicking the real spaces where students get to work after they graduate. And at the same time, we're creating engagement between companies, employers and students," said Antonio Delgado, MDC's VP of Innovation and Technology Partnerships. "It's a space where everything speaks AI."

All of this will likely be rolled out in the next year or two. Much of the activity will be centered around the MDC North and Wolfson campuses where the AI Centers will be but will involve all the MDC campuses, Delgado said. To bring it all together, MDC is rolling out today MDC Tech, the College's gateway to connect students, community members and employers with tech offerings at MDC.

Through the MDC Tech site, current and prospective students will have access to all MDC Tech courses, programs and professional development opportunities, as well as scholarships. Tech companies and other local employers seeking local tech talent will also find a direct platform to reach MDC students with the most sought-after tech skills. Starting today, MDC will also be offering a free AI speaker series, both in person and online, for students and the community at large, bringing in experts from around the country. Find details on MDC Tech.

What's more, all of this joins a foundation of innovation at the College, already home to the renowned Miami Animation & Gaming International Complex, better known as MAGIC, The Idea Center, the Cybersecurity Center of the Americas and the Cloud Computing Center. Over the past five years, MDC's EnTec has created new degree and certificate programs in cybersecurity, cloud computing and data analytics, working with companies like Microsoft, Google, IBM and Amazon. Last week, MDC and the City of Miami announced it is developing a Miami Tech charter school.

"This is just the beginning and is an investment to take Miami Dade College to another next level. Along with the tech offerings that we have in the college and scholarships to help the students, we will hire new faculty and create new engaging opportunities not only in terms of degrees but

also upskilling and reskilling for our global community,” said Delgado, who was formerly dean of EnTec. “We are 100% committed to create the pathways to employment in the tech ecosystem.”

Delgado’s messages to companies: “We are here to work together with companies on their needs.” Many of the companies are not even looking in Miami for talent because they don’t believe Miami has the talent, he said. “We do have the talent, and we are going to continue expanding that talent. We want to work with you, we want to collaborate with you, we’re here for Miami.”

Since 2012, Knight has invested more than \$60 million into nurturing Miami’s tech and startup ecosystem. This latest investment builds on Knight’s support of Miami tech talent, including a \$15.3 million commitment in Florida International University, the University of Miami and Baptist Health South Florida announced in February 2021. Three months ago, Knight announced a \$2.25 million investment in CodePath to expand and launch programming at FIU, Florida Memorial University and MDC to connect students to tech careers.

Moas signaled there is more to come on the tech talent front. One area Knight is interested in is reimagining higher education’s career services, and through its recent funding of FIU, one of the projects will be contracting with a globally renowned design firm to help do just that within FIU’s College of Engineering. A reimagined Career Services model could then be rolled out to MDC and other higher ed institutions.

“Where there’s opportunity to continue to innovate and meet the community and industry where they are today is around Career Services, career pathways — how we help students and companies find one another at the right time in the right way and in a way that leads to the best outcomes possible,” Moas said. “Right now those systems are in urgent need of reimagination.”

Moas believes this new investment in MDC, together with the Knight’s previous investments in FIU, UM and CodePath last year, come at the right time for the Miami tech ecosystem.

“What I’m hearing from university leaders across the region is an absolute commitment to reimagine and reinvent all parts of the pipeline.”



The Miami Dade College press conference where the funding was announced on Wednesday. It was also live streamed. Photo at the top of this post shows a cybersecurity class at MDC.

Read more at : <https://www.refreshmiami.com/miami-dade-college-to-expand-emerging-tech-programs-open-a-center-for-ai-and-expand-ai-for-all-with-new-15m-investment/>