

## eMerge conference showcases Miami's innovation and growing tech hub

BY MICHAEL BUTLER

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Miami-Dade presents some of its AI collaboration with a robot named Sophia during the two-day Miami's Emerge Americas 2022 showcasing the best in tech innovation. BY [CARL JUSTE](#)

During his opening remarks Monday at eMerge Americas annual technology conference, Miami Mayor Francis Suarez left no question about [his belief](#) in the city's growth as a [tech powerhouse](#).

“There is an attitude in Miami that has created [an emergence](#),” he said at the Miami Beach Convention Center, where one of South Florida's key tech events got underway. “You're seeing a transformation from one generation to another generation.”

To emphasize that point, Suarez invited a group of schoolchildren that were seated at the front of the crowd onstage to loud applause.

“Create the kinds of ideas and companies that will change the future for them and their children’s grandchildren,” the mayor said. “That’s the challenge that I see before us.”

Since 2014, eMerge has helped guide Miami into a [bigger tech-driven future](#), with opportunities for entrepreneurs to pitch their ideas and more.

At this year’s two-day event that runs through Tuesday, more than 200 companies and public entities have exhibits. Guests at the conference include: Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian; Serena Williams, legendary professional tennis player, venture capital investor and Ohanian’s wife; former NBA All-Star and now tech entrepreneur Baron Davis; Peter Smith, CEO of Blockchain; and entertainer Pitbull.



Detail shot of the back of ‘Sophia’ revealing her inner workings as visitors look with amazement at Miami-Dade County’s exhibit at eMerge Americas 2022, a two-day technology conference at the Miami Beach Convention Center. Carl Juste [cjuste@miamiherald.com](mailto:cjuste@miamiherald.com)

Ana Chammas, Miami-Dade County director of innovation, said it was important for the county to participate in a conference that represents the intersection of many different industries and career paths. The Miami-Dade exhibit space featured an

interactive walkway, two roving robots with blinking neon eyes and a female robot that could speak on command.

“We’re trying to make government not just something that is approachable and reachable and attainable, but we want people to understand in our community that we’re offering [equitable opportunities to bridge the digital divide](#),” Chammas said. “We were one of the founding sponsors and really believe in what eMerge Americas is doing and what they’ve done for our community.”

Pedram Nimfreez is a part of Florida Atlantic University’s machine perception and robotics lab. A proponent of artificial intelligence and its applications, Nimfreez is fascinated by the new technology and concepts that could be viewed on the main expo floor in the convention center. He thinks it’s only a matter of time before artificial intelligence is at the center of our lives.

“Everybody’s going to learn AI or work for someone that does,” Nimfreez said.

Antonio Delgado, Miami Dade College vice president of innovation and tech partnership, and his colleagues were at eMerge to interact with conference attendees. That included communicating the need for tech education in a city that has quickly become awash with technologists from other places.

Delgado affirmed that residents of all backgrounds can learn new skills at Miami Dade College or earn degrees, and that he does not want to see anyone get left behind as tech gains more of a foothold in Miami.



It was a packed house Monday, April 18, 2022, at the two-day eMerge Americas technology and innovation conference at the Miami Beach Convention Center. Carl Juste [cjuste@miamiherald.com](mailto:cjuste@miamiherald.com)

“As Miami’s tech wave continues, the [college announced in February it’s receiving \\$15 million](#) from a quartet of public and nonprofit entities to beef up its technology curriculum — and make artificial intelligence education available to all of its students. The investment will be used to hire as many as 15 faculty members with tech backgrounds that can satisfy surging enrollment in MDC’s School of Engineering and Technology. MDC is also launching MDCTECH, a web portal designed to serve as the hub for its tech efforts.

In addition, MDC officials announced the creation of a tech-focused charter high school that will be centered at the college’s Wolfson campus.

“We all see what’s happening in Miami,” Delgado said, noting the college “is that bridge to help anyone in Miami get a job.”

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