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City of Miami votes to fund scholarships for local STEM college students

By Alexander Lugo

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Miami Mayor Francis Suarez helped create Venture Miami, which just got \$500,000 approved for local higher education scholarships. JOSE A IGLESIAS jiglesias@elnuevoherald.com

Miami Commissioners voted Thursday to set aside \$500,00 for a higher-education scholarship program, as the city government seeks to build a more tech-based economy.

[Venture Miami](#), a [\\$3 million project](#) created by the city to boost Miami's tech industry, will create scholarship programs with Miami Dade College, Florida International University, University of Miami and Florida Memorial University. All four schools will match the city's contribution.

“With the influx of tech companies that are coming, one of the questions was ‘How can the community better plug into and receive, not only value, but also make careers?’” said Erick Gavin, executive director of Venture Miami.

Venture Miami would fund the program for the first two years — but it's betting on support from The Miami Foundation and tech companies moving in to keep it running, said Keith Carswell, senior advisor to the city manager for economic development.

“The idea is that, after the second year, this fund will stand on its own and be self-supported,” Carswell said.

For a student to be eligible, they must be a Miami resident planning to enroll in one of the participating universities' STEM programs. The scholarship will help recipients pay for any costs that programs like federal student financial aid can't cover. The goal of the program is to give Miami students free access to careers in technology, said Gavin.

Commission Chairwoman Christine King raised concerns about whether more money would go to UM students because of how much higher tuition is there in comparison to the other schools.

Because more Miami residents attend Miami Dade College than any of the other school, it will have more students benefit from the program, said Carswell.

However, UM and FMU students will cost more to fund individually, said a spokesperson for Mayor Francis Suarez's office. Those schools will likely either get the same amount of money or more directed to student scholarships.

All commissioners in attendance voted in favor of the funding.

“As a former teacher, any assistance that we can provide, count me in,” said Commissioner Manolo Reyes. “I believe we have to do whatever we can to keep our students local.”

Read more at: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article263927291.html>