

You can attend Miami Dade College for free if you qualify for their historic new program

BY JIMENA TAVEL OCTOBER 30, 2023 4:17 PM



Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava (far right) and Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega clap during a press conference about the first-of-its-kind “Future Ready Miami-Dade Scholarship Program” held at the college’s Wolfson Campus in Downtown Miami on October 30, 2023. *Miami Dade College*

For the first time ever, Miami-Dade County is prepared to help recent high school graduates who live locally pay for their associate’s degree at Miami Dade College.

Daniella Levine Cava, the county’s mayor, and Madeline Pumariega, the college’s president, announced the first-of-its-kind “Future Ready Miami-Dade Scholarship Program” during a press conference Monday at the college’s Wolfson Campus in Downtown Miami.

“This is a win-win-win: it’s for our young people, our whole community that benefits from having an expanded talent pool and our overall economy,” Levine Cava said. “Investing in education today is definitely investing in our collective future.”

Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava waves at the crowd during a press conference to announce student scholarships at Miami Dade College’s Wolfson Campus in Downtown Miami on October 30, 2023. *Miami Dade College*



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The Miami-Dade County Commission committed to funding at least \$3 million in total for the program in coming years, but Pumariega said she hopes the effort will continue after that runs out. Commissioners already approved the first \$750,000 in the 2024 budget about a month ago, and about 2,000 students will benefit from that first check, the college estimates.

Although the county has funded other specific scholarships, this is the first time it does it in such a widespread manner.

A credit costs roughly \$118 at Miami Dade College, meaning each student could get about \$1,400 per semester.

However, Pumariega said the college will treat it as a “last-dollar scholarship,” meaning it only activates after any other financial aid like a federal Pell grant or Bright Futures Scholarship from the state kicks in, so students could get less than \$1,400 depending on their unique situation.

“We want to make sure that we’re judicial in the way that we spend the county’s money. This isn’t a stack-able scholarship,” she said. “If they have other aid, that aid comes first, and this scholarship is a safety net. And if they have no aid whatsoever, this scholarship is really the opportunity that will change their life.”



Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariega speaks about student scholarships during a press conference at the college's Wolfson Campus in Downtown Miami on October 30, 2023. *Miami Dade College*

'THIS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IS GOING TO CHANGE LIVES,' SAYS STUDENT

In addition to the county's help, Career Source South Florida, a branch of Florida's workforce development program, will award students in the program grants of up to \$5,000 for any non-tuition costs. Depending on their needs, students could get up to \$2,500 for childcare, \$2,500 for housing expenses like rent and utilities, \$500 for transportation, and \$500 for ancillary expenses like tools and uniforms. In order to qualify for Career Source help, residents need to make less than \$62,000 per year.

"There's no excuse why you should not apply and no excuse why could not complete a degree," said Rick Beasley, the executive director of Career Source at the presser Monday.

Camila Garcia-Llaurado, a second-year student at Miami Dade College pursuing an associate's in biology, said she wouldn't have been able to quit her full-time job at Publix to focus on her studies if she hadn't gotten a scholarship through the Honors Program last year.

Because she didn't have to worry about debt or anything related to finances, the 19-year-old got to enjoy extracurricular activities; for example, she got elected as the vice president of Wolfson Campus.

Similarly, she hopes the Future Ready funds will empower others.

"This scholarship program is going to change lives and it's going to change them fast," she said.



Camila Garcia-Llaurado, a second-year student at Miami Dade College pursuing an associate's in biology and the student body vice president of Wolfson Campus, speaks about the Future Ready Scholarships at Wolfson Campus on October 30, 2023. *Miami Dade College*

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR A FUTURE READY SCHOLARSHIP AT MDC?

If you recently got your high school diploma or an equivalent degree like the GED and have a GPA of at least 2.0, you could attend the college at zero cost. Eligible graduation dates are between May and July each year so students can enroll in the first term of the following fall. This year, they can enroll in the upcoming spring, Pumariega said.

Applicants must be admitted to the college first, and register for 12 or more credits per semester.

To apply for a scholarship, you need to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the [Expected Family Contribution Calculator](#) — then email those results to your college's campus's Financial Aid office.

The scholarship covers up to 60 credits toward an associate degree, but students can also get certificates on areas like cybersecurity, gaming and animation, and nursing from the college.

For more information, visit www.mdc.edu/future-ready.