

Diario Las Americas

Publicado el 03-18-2013

MDC Needs Legislative Support Bill

There is no question that Miami Dade College (MDC) is a jewel in our community. It currently serves 170,000 students on eight campuses and almost 70% of MDC students graduate from our local high schools. Not only is it the largest institution of higher education in the country, it graduates more Hispanics and African-American students than any other in the nation. Ironically, while MDC is receiving national and international accolades, it is facing serious financial pressures that may jeopardize its immediate future.

College and state records indicate that while student enrollment has dramatically increased over the last decade, state funding has alarmingly decreased during that same time period. Since the school year 2006-2007 the enrollment for full-time equivalent students increased by 18% but the state funding decreased by 24%. To make up for the difference, MDC has needed to increase the cost of tuition with the approval of the Legislature. This has been a painful decision to make.

Forty-six percent of MDC students are below the poverty standard as defined by the federal government, 69% work while attending college and many are the first in their families to earn a college degree. Students of all ages come to MDC because they know that good opportunities await those who receive a good college education. They need our help.

There is a bill in the legislature that will permit MDC to ask local voters through a public referendum if they would be willing to increase a ½ penny sales tax for ten years to provide for more scholarships, faculty and much needed improvements to facilities. An oversight board will ensure transparency and accountability in the matter. Never before has it been possible to expect so much from ½ a penny! Many other states have a similar benefit for their community colleges; one of them is Texas.

It is imperative that all our local legislators support this initiative that puts the decision in the hands of voters. To do otherwise would be a great injustice not only to MDC but also to the County as the College trains most of the workforce that makes this community the economic engine of the State.