

Miami Dade College President Implores Education Profession to Enter the 21st Century

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Eduardo Padrón, President of Miami Dade College (MDC), is something of a rock star in education circles. The Cuban émigré and self-described “American by choice” assumed his presidency in 1995 and has taken MDC to a position of national prominence.

He opened the College Board Forum 2012 here in Miami last night with an unmistakable clarion call. “Most of us in education are stuck in the 20th Century,” he told a packed audience of educators and administrators at Miami Beach’s fabled Fontainebleau Hotel. “We’re still working in the past and must ask how do we bring ourselves into the 21st Century?” There were some nodding heads in the audience agreeing with Padrón. One got the sense, however, there were just as many people questioning, doubting or even resisting his premise that education is behind the times. Thus, the tricky crossroads that American education finds itself these days.

He urged audience members to stop blaming one another for the troubles in education. “The colleges blame the high schools who blame the middle schools who blame the elementary schools.” Indeed, so few organizations exist (like the College Board) that could possibly address the problem systematically and holistically with all players around the table. Padrón was optimistic about the College Board’s future in this regard.

Padrón, once named among The Ten Best College Presidents by Time Magazine, said “Every human being should have an opportunity to get an education.” He added, “This wasn’t always so when education served the elites, but that’s not the case anymore.” He sent a good-natured barb toward “politicians who say that college education today is not for everyone; except they’re not talking about their own kids.”

Interestingly, he labeled education “the most important civil rights issue of our time.” Who’s to question that assertion, since education is the gateway to most everything else in life?