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More milestones for our students

Miami Herald Editorial

HeraldEd@MiamiHerald.com



Peter Andrew Bosch / Miami Herald Staff

Jean H. Alexander Thelomat, a team leader for City Year, with Khadyme Joseph (center) and Michael Griffin at Miami Edison Middle School on Dec. 15, 2011.

Since 1960, Miami Dade College has been a beacon of hope for students who couldn't afford to attend a four-year university or simply wanted to stay in South Florida.

Today, with more than 175,000 students attending MDC, it continues to be the largest community college in the nation, earning prestigious national and international awards for being a key entry point for poor and working-class students to earn degrees and enter the middle class, moving on to jobs or a four-year institution.

This year, Taty Rivera, a 2013 graduate of Coral Reef Senior High School, became MDC's two-millionth student. Attending MDC's Kendall

campus on the American Dream scholarship, she hopes to one day be a pediatrician. She had the grades and test scores to apply to other colleges, but her first and only choice was MDC. Her story is shared by many in South Florida, who out of need or convenience chose to attend Miami Dade College.

MDC, which now offers four-year degrees in various areas from teaching to nursing, has earned the respect and trust of this community even in the toughest economic times.

Because when it comes right down to it, MDC has a welcome mat for all who are willing to work hard and get ahead. By law it cannot turn away students, which is a true measure of a college that values every individual's contribution to society.

It is, as MDC President Eduardo Padrón, an economist and graduate of the college, likes to say, "democracy's college" and the "people's college."

Kudos to MDC for this latest milestone.

City Year Miami

One challenge for MDC and every other community college remains: Too many students who enter college arrive unprepared in basic subjects, like reading or math.

Remediation is costly but necessary.

One program that's making a difference for high school students who need mentors and tutoring — if they're to be prepared for MDC and other colleges — is City Year Miami.

Launched in 2008 in Miami-Dade public schools, the nonprofit City Year entered its fifth school term last week, with 203 corps members, young adults who for a meager stipend spend a year helping students at risk of dropping out of school.

In a county where 60 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch, City Year (part of AmeriCorps) is making a true difference to prepare students from elementary school to high school to succeed.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan says City Year fills “a unique need that no one else can meet . . . part of a grand experiment that I think is going to change education in this country forever.”

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