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MIAMI DADE COLLEGE FORUM EXPLORES DEBT FREE COLLEGE



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MIAMI — Once upon a time, students in the U.S. had to pay to attend high school. Today, the idea of paying for a public secondary education is unheard of; and a movement is underway to enact the same opportunity for at least two years of college.

Miami Dade College (MDC) is among community colleges across the country joining Heads Up America, a national initiative to help ensure that students willing to work by getting good grades and being serious about earning a degree or certificate can do so without racking up exorbitant debt.

MDC hosted a roundtable discussion on the topic at its north campus last week that brought together alumni, current students, student leaders and administration. MDC President Eduardo Padron said, “The benefits of this will extend to students, to businesses, to our economy and to our society. Debt free community college will lead to great prosperity for our entire nation.”

The idea is for eligible students to be able to attend college for two years, free of charge, and either transfer those credits to a four-year university or use them towards vocational certificates or degrees.

Eleven other states have already enacted legislation making two years of college free, among them, Tennessee and Oregon. The College Promise Campaign aims to promote the issue, assisting and encouraging states to come up with their own solutions. President Padrón, serves on the CPC National Advisory Board comprised of leaders in business, philanthropy higher education, student organizations, labor, the non-profit sector and government.

A video of President Obama, who supports the effort, was played during the MDC forum.

The premise of America's College Promise has already been implemented in a limited way at MDC; which has provided more than 12,000 high-performing and mostly low-income students with the American Dream Scholarship since its 2011 inception.

Also, since 2002, MDC's Honors College has provided thousands of eligible students with the Honors College Fellows Award, covering the cost of in-state tuition and books. The dual enrollment program allows high performing high school students the opportunity to enroll in college courses at no cost while completing their high school degrees.

For more information on the Heads Up America program, visit www.headsupamerica.us.