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Miami Dade College, FIU tops as places to work

By Perry Stein

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Miami-Dade College, according to the Chronicle of Higher Education, is an exceptional place to work.

The college is one of just 12 two-year colleges nationwide to receive the highest rankings in the Chronicle's annual Great Colleges to Work For survey.

"It means a great deal of pride to us, because we feel that the greatest asset we have is the employees of the college," said Miami Dade College President Eduardo Padrón. "Being recognized for that is a call for celebration."

Also getting high marks: Florida International University, which earned honors in the diversity category for creating a positive workplace for all its employees.

MDC and FIU were the only South Florida schools to make the Chronicle's list, which was released this week.

The Chronicle surveyed 45,000 faculty and staff members from institutions across the nation and identified more than 100 colleges deemed as fostering the best workplace environments.

MDC made the honor roll — an accolade recognizing those institutions that scored the highest across the survey's 12 categories. This is MDC's second year landing on the honor roll and third year being recognized.

The largest college in the nation was recognized for involving faculty in academic-related decisions, creating a welcoming environment for all its employees, providing faculty with resources to advance their careers, recognizing employees for their contributions and having supervisors that make expectations clear to their employees.

MDC was also noted for its employees' overall job satisfaction. The school has 5,900 employees.

"We always treat employees the way we like to be treated ourselves; loyalty is always a two-way process," Padrón said.

As for FIU, the Chronicle reported that the four-year university has a unique relocation program in which it sponsors visa applications for international faculty and helps faculty and administrators find homes, subsidizing costs up to \$50,000 as a perk to attract high-level faculty.

This is the first year FIU was recognized in the survey.

"I think this is another testament to the greatness of FIU and that we truly are a great place to work," said Jaffus Hardrick, vice president of Human Resources at FIU. "It is not only a great place to work, but also to learn and grow."

In a year when higher education in Florida has taken great financial hits, neither MDC nor FIU earned nods in the compensation and benefit category.

Despite the challenging times, both colleges said they are constantly looking to hire new faculty and staff members.

“We are definitely hiring faculty and staff and always putting out new positions,” Hardrick said. “We are still watching how we do, but we are hiring when there is a need.”

The Chronicle reports the salaries of full-time faculty members at MDC at around \$65,000 and a full-time faculty member at \$112,000.

All accredited institutions in the United States are invited to participate in the Great Colleges to Work For survey.

According to the Chronicle, 310 institutions — 245 four-year colleges and universities and 65 two-year colleges — participated in the survey this year, a jump from the 275 that participated last year.

A random sampling of employees at the institutions are surveyed and asked to respond to 60 questions using a five-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The survey also asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with different employee benefits, answer two open-ended questions and complete 15 demographic questions.

Once colleges are classified as two- or four-year institutions, they are further divided into one of three categories based on their enrollment size — small, medium, or large. Recognition in the categories is given to the 10 highest-scoring institutions in each size for four-year colleges, and the four highest-scoring institutions in each size for two-year colleges.

Both MDC and FIU said they plan to continue cultivating a positive workforce for their employees and hope to be honored again next year.

“We are trying to get honor roll status,” Hardrick said. “We are constantly working on trying to get selected and I am very confident that we will be selected next year.”

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