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**BUSINESS & FINANCE**

# MIAMI DADE COLLEGE GRADUATES RECORD NUMBER OF FUTURE BANKERS

SOUTH FLORIDA TIMES- JULY 23, 2015

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**By MARK SELL**

MIAMI — A record 77 students — most of them incoming seniors in Miami-Dade public schools from low- and middle-income families — have graduated from this year's Future Bankers' Camp.

The innovative four-week camp, which ended June 26 and is now in its eighth year, provides hands-on experience for future students interested in financial services industry careers. The camp gives students opportunities to enhance math, communication and financial literacy skills, while completing an internship and receiving industry certification.

The camp is hosted by Miami Dade College and the Center for Financial Training and sponsored by CareerSource South Florida, CNC-Nurturing Hispanic Communities and local institutions. This year, a record 24 institutions participated, up from 15 last year.

Participants include: Ocean Bank, which took in 26 interns this year and provided the original seed money for the program; Banco de Credito e Inversiones (BCI); BankUnited; Banesco; BBVA Compass Bank; City National Bank; Coconut Grove Bank; Community Bank of Florida; Continental National Bank; Espirito Santo Bank; First Bank of Florida; Florida International Bankers Association (FIBA); JetStream Federal Credit Union; Mercantil Commercebank; Morrison, Brown, Argiz & Farra, LLC (MBAF); Ocean Bank; Pacific National Bank; Popular Community Bank; Professional Bank; Regions; Santander; South Florida Banking Institute (SFBI); Sunstate Bank; TD Bank; and U.S. Century Bank.

 "The students keep getting better and better," said Ocean Bank Senior Vice President and CFT board member Cheryl Rees. "We are challenging each of our partners to match Ocean Bank and step up. This internship give students crucial 'hands-on' experience, builds teamwork and communication skills valuable in any career, promotes financial literacy, and changes lives."

For the first time, this year's class included college students, including alumni of previous Bankers' Camps, and added two Customer Service tracks, offering Dual Enrollment for the high schoolers and a three-credit class for MDC students, in addition to the program's bedrock Teller Track. The program included field trips to the Miami office of the Federal Reserve and to BBVA Compass Bank.

CFT Executive Director Connie Laguna expects the program to continue its dramatic growth.

"This year's class has shined, and we plan to build on this year's momentum," Laguna said. "We are confident that institutions will ramp up their participation."

Juan del Busto, who worked his way up from the mailroom to head of the Miami office of the Federal Reserve, wants to take the idea further.

"We need to replicate this in the rest of the country because it works," said del Busto, a member of the boards of both the CFT and Ocean Bank.

Tomara Graham of CareerSource South Florida told the class: "You have been given a great opportunity. Don't take it for granted. Allow this opportunity to become a stepping-stone."

Kevin Arizandieta, a 2013 CFT alumnus who completed the 2015 customer service track at Sunstate Bank, said his experience has strengthened his commitment to enter the financial services industry.

"This has provided me with great experience in customer service and taught me how a bank operates," said Arizandieta, who is working toward a finance degree at Florida State University.

The students are enrolled in Miami-Dade College and nine Miami-Dade Public Schools Academy of Finance programs at Barbara Goleman Senior High School, Coral Gables Senior High School, Coral Reef Senior High School, Hialeah Gardens Senior High School, Mater Academy East Charter Senior High School, Miami Edison Senior High School, Miami Jackson Senior High School, North Miami Beach Senior High School, and William H. Turner Technical Arts High School.

Upon successful completion of the camp, students are eligible to receive the American Bankers Association Bank Teller and Customer Service Representative Certificate. This national industry standard certificate meets the educational requirement for the certification exam offered by the Institute of Certified Bankers. Students who graduate can also work towards an A.S. degree in Financial Services.

The Miami-Dade Public Schools Academy of Finance program is a member of the National Academy Foundation, a national network of career academies to support the development of America's youth toward personal and professional success in high school, higher education and throughout their careers. Sixteen Miami-Dade high schools have Academy of Finance career academies.



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