

Search for college's new president 'delicate balancing act'

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There's a long and varied list of qualities members of a search committee has set out as they try to find the next president of Miami Dade College, and at least one member says it's a daunting task.

The committee hopes to have a new president in place before Eduardo Padron, president since 1995, retires this summer.

According to the search team's website, the ideal candidate must be a "bold leader who is visible, approachable and responsive; an individual with strong track record of ethical behavior and integrity who demonstrates a deep commitment to students, particularly first-generation students, low-income students and students from traditionally underserved populations."

An emphasis on diversity and on preparing students for ethical leadership, global citizenship and engaged service is also important, the search committee said.

The ideal candidate must "have the ability and the desire to understand and integrate into the Miami-Dade community and diverse cultures, demonstrate passion and excitement in delivering a transformational learning experience centered on student needs, and demonstrate a deep and abiding commitment to academic freedom that uphold shared governance and consensus-building," the website said.



"This is probably one of the most important decisions I'll ever make": search team chair Bernie Navarro.
Photo by Marlene Quaroni



Eduardo Padron is stepping down

The committee is looking for someone with a doctoral degree from a regionally accredited institution, with a minimum of 10 years of senior-level management experience, with at least six years in an institution of higher learning, who has "demonstrated leadership and innovative accomplishments in the area of academic and student service programs and/or administrative, financial, and operational areas."

"For our community, the stakes are very high," Bernie Navarro, chair of the search committee and president of Benworth Capital Partners. "We want a lot of things: a great administrator, because we have 165,000 students on eight campuses and each could be its own university. A liaison for the business community and the workforce. An educator who knows Miami, and realizes it's a complex community."

He stresses that it's not about finding a replacement for Dr. Padron. "He's not replaceable and has done a tremendous job. But we need someone who's going to get us to the next level."

The successful candidate would also be able to work with stakeholders in Tallahassee as well as those who are local, and put forth maximum effort for students, faculty and for Miami, he said.

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Mr. Navarro described Miami Dade College as a beacon of hope for the community. “It doesn’t matter where you come from, or what you did in high school. This is the great reboot and a ticket to the middle class. Education is the great equalizer and the cornerstone of the American dream. The successful candidate must not forget that mission, and also our responsibility to provide employers with the employees they need. We want the best for Miami.”

He conceded that the committee might not be able to find everything members want in one person.

“It’s going to be tricky, and a delicate balancing act, but we have a stellar search committee,” Mr. Navarro said. “We will conduct absolutely the best search practices and are committed to being totally transparent. This is probably one of the most important decisions I’ll ever make.”