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Nov 19, 2013 |  
By Juliana Barrera



*The Spanish Royals honor Miami Dade College president Eduardo Padron for helping to preserve the Hispanic legacy in Florida. (AP Photo/J Pat Carter)*

The President of Miami Dade College (MDC), Eduardo J. Padrón, received the prestigious award Juan Ponce de León for the special contributions to the Hispanic heritage preservation in Florida and the United States in commemoration of the 500 years anniversary of Florida.

The Spanish Royal Highnesses Felipe and Letizia gave to Padrón the award instituted by the Spain-Florida Foundation 500 Years during a special dinner attended by hundreds of people at the Freedom Tower, a National Historic Landmark.

## **Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón preserves the Hispanic legacy**



*The Spanish Royals honor Miami Dade College president Eduardo Padron. (Credit: MDC)*

The Spain-Florida Foundation 500 Years unanimously agreed to give the Ponce de Leon award to President Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón, to represent the values and spirit of determination of the Hispanic

legacy in the United States, and for his outstanding contribution to the defense of the education.

Ponce de Leon was the Spanish explorer who landed in Florida in 1513 — nearly a century before the British established Virginia’s Jamestown Settlement.

Monday’s event was sponsored by the Spain-Florida Foundation. The foundation was established in 2008 to commemorate the 500th anniversary of Spain’s first footprint on what would become the United States — and to highlight Spain’s lasting influence in this country. In 2015, the foundation will celebrate 450 years since the founding of Florida’s St. Augustine.

*“Dr. Padrón has been a model of the virtues represented in this award: an outstanding contribution to the*



*The prince and princess presented the Juan Ponce de Leon 500th Anniversary award to Miami Dade College President Eduard Padron for the educator’s efforts to preserve Hispanic heritage in Florida and across the United States..(AP Photo/J Pat Carter)*

*development of the Spanish heritage in Florida,” said Prince Felipe de Borbón, “without the Spanish presence, we could not understand today’s Florida. And we cannot imagine today’s United States without its Spanish legacy.”*

Since 1995, Dr. Eduardo J. Register chairs the institution of the country’s largest university, with an enrollment exceeding 175,000 students and confers more titles to other Hispanic university centers.

It is widely recognized as one of the main leaders of education in the world, and receives frequent invitations to participate in educational policy forums, both in the U.S. and abroad.

Throughout his career, President Padrón has been selected for six American presidents to positions of national prominence.

Recently, President Barack Obama selected him to chair the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans).

The award consists of an original sculpture created for the special occasion by the Spanish artist Gabarron.

The celebrations for the 500 years anniversary of Florida have been carried out throughout the year to commemorate the importance of the contributions of Spain to Florida since the arrival of Juan Ponce de León

to the east coast of the state in 1513.

*Emilio C. Sanchez, President of the 500 Years Spain-Florida Foundation and Editor-in-Chief of VOXXI, said, “Since 1513, Florida became the center for exploration of the southeastern United States and was a key spot for trade between the Caribbean and the rest of America and Europe.”*

“Today Florida is a multicultural state and it is the geographic center of Europe, Latin American and the United States. The Spain-Florida Foundation 500 years wants to take advantage of this momentous anniversary to remember how transcendental this historical Hispanic contribution has been,” Sanchez added.