

# Miami Herald

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## Retired MDC professor Germán Muñoz dies of Lou Gehrig's Disease at 63

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Retired MDC professor German Muñoz died Saturday at 63 after a seven-year battle with ALS.

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Germán Muñoz, a retired professor who headed Miami Dade College's social sciences department and worked at the college since 1977, died Saturday morning after a seven-year struggle with Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 63.

"Germán was truly one of a kind," said Miami Dade College President Eduardo J. Padrón. "He had an amazing ability to not only make those around him better professionals, but, more importantly, better human beings."

Muñoz taught full-time at Miami Dade College for 21 years mostly at the Wolfson Campus, winning multiple teaching awards and writing three textbooks on international relations along the way. He was the social department chair for 13 years.

When he retired in 2011, the college awarded him professor emeritus status, and a year later, his colleagues created an endowed teaching chair in his honor. Muñoz was the chairman of the faculty commission that developed the bylaws of the College Academic and Student Support Council through which the faculty controls the development, approval and review of all academic programs.

"He made a positive impact on countless colleagues and students," said MDC spokesman Juan Mendieta. "He fought ALS for nearly a decade with courage and grace."

Muñoz was born in Santiago, Cuba in 1950 and came to the United States in 1961. He graduated from Belen Jesuit Preparatory, Springhill College in Alabama and got his Master's and Doctrate degrees at the University of Miami.

Diagnosed with ALS in 2006, the disease — a terminal illness of the nerve cells that controls voluntary muscle movement — eventually robbed him of most of his movement.

By the time he retired, he could no longer move his torso or limbs. The only thing he could control were his head and neck, he told the school newspaper, The Reporter.

"I'm blessed I can still chew my food. I can blink and breathe. I can watch TV, see my family," Muñoz said. "I can't move but I can feel."

Muñoz first felt something was wrong in 2005. He started losing his breath easily. And once, when he tried to open a plastic water bottle, he could not gather the strength. When a co-worker opened it with ease, Muñoz said he knew something was terribly wrong.

"I knew what I had. I would Google my symptoms and everything pointed to Lou Gehrig's Disease," Muñoz told the newspaper. "However, I ignored it."

Eventually, the signs became overwhelming. His legs grew weak, and then he lost control of his arms. By 2008, he could no longer walk.

Muñoz is survived by his wife, Piedad; his son, Germán Daniel and daughter, Patricia; his mother, Noelia; two grandchildren, Kevin and Samantha, and friends and relatives.

A wake will be held for Muñoz at 10 a.m. Tuesday at the St. Kevin Catholic Church at 12525 SW 42nd St. It will be followed by a noon Mass.

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