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When tragedy strikes

We know that we can fix what is physically broken. The brick and mortar at Miami Dade College's West Campus will be put back together. What we cannot do, however, is repair the feeling of loss. The best we can do is reach out and shore up those who are most hurt. The heart of this community goes out to the families and loved ones who have lost so much in recent days.

There are lessons in tragedy. We discover that we have more in common than we often recognize; that we are all vulnerable to the worst of moments, and reliant on each other to regain our strength. The humanity that sometimes is pushed to the back burner in the pressure of each day comes to the forefront. And perhaps most important, we find out that hope runs deeper than hurt.

That message of hope came from near and far. Countless expressions have arrived from people across our community and the nation. Doral Mayor Juan Carlos Bermudez and Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez were quickly on site and offering help. Gov. Rick Scott reached out, as did President Obama to offer support. We are truly grateful to all.

Ensuring that the buildings at the West Campus are safe is paramount, and a series of inspections is under way. At best, it will be several weeks before students can return to classes at the campus. MDC personnel are doing everything possible, working around the clock for several days to accommodate our students. It's a logistical nightmare, but the students will be served so they can complete their semester.

Most of these students will be welcomed at MDC's North Campus, where classes will pop up everywhere — in courtyards, in the cafeteria and library, exercise areas, labs and more. Miami-Dade schools Superintendent Alberto Carvalho has been a most generous partner, ensuring that our evening and weekend students can continue their classes at Ronald Reagan Senior High in Doral.

We live in a community that has come through many tragedies and hardships. Each time, regardless of the circumstances, the people of South Florida have found that common link that binds us together and gets us through. The coming days will not be easy for many people — and trying for the family members who have lost loved ones. We send them our best, with the hope that each thought and prayer reaches them and brings a bit of comfort.

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