



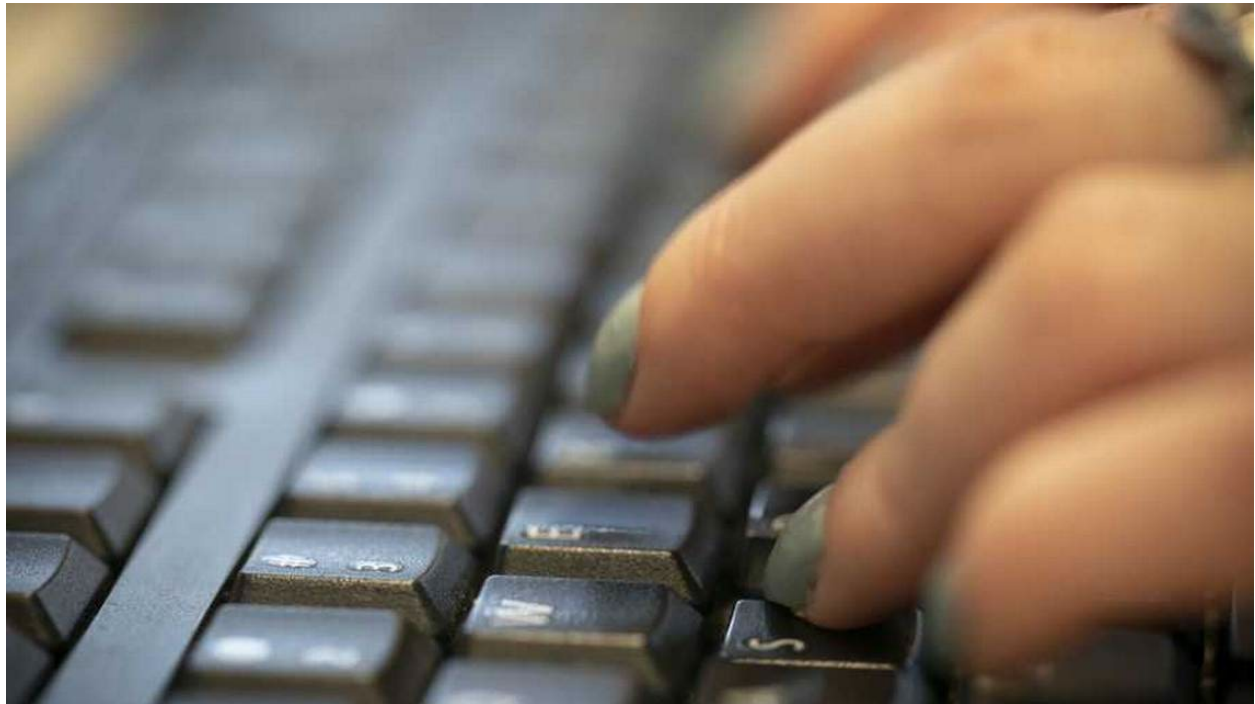
**OPINION AND COMMENTARY**

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# *Miami and Miami Dade College team up to create the tech talent of the future | Opinion*

BY FRANCIS X. SUAREZ AND JEB BUSH

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JENNY KANE AP



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Two years ago, our nation faced the greatest education crisis in the modern era. As the pandemic upended the lives of teachers, students and families, millions of children missed out on learning,

falling months behind especially in reading and mathematics. [McKinsey reported](#) even greater learning losses for minority or low-income students.

Such enormous setbacks demand bold solutions, which is why we're excited about a new education partnership between the city of Miami and Miami Dade College. These partners are preparing to launch Miami Tech Charter School, featuring career-focused programs that will accelerate students into in-demand jobs.

Why tech? Miami has now [grown to be a major tech hub](#) and, as a region, South Florida is the fastest growing tech hub in the nation. In December, more than 35 businesses listed more than 2,700 open positions as part of the Venture Miami Tech Hiring Fair. [And, the average tech salary increased by more than 11.4%.](#)

Growth like that can only be sustained with a growing pipeline of talent.

Miami Tech Charter School responds directly to that need, enabling every one of its students to graduate high school with a two-year college degree — for free. Through the partnership with Miami Dade College, these students will have access to advanced courses that lead to the most in-demand tech jobs, including computer science, cybersecurity, business intelligence/data analytics, cloud computing and others.

The idea for charter schools is not new. In fact, it's been a quarter century since Miami was home to Florida's first one. Today, [44 states](#), Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico and Guam all offer their students access to charter schools.

Florida's education landscape continues to be prime territory for education leadership. We believe in new ideas, bold solutions and unprecedented opportunities for students. This willingness to embrace innovation is rooted deeply in the growing tech industry that's taken hold of our community.

Just as a start-up can begin with an idea, Miami Tech Charter School started as a seed of inspiration and landed in very fertile Florida soil. It's been parent-led, fed by local leaders who support education opportunity and by community leaders who face local problems with bold solutions. It's also fed by a growing number of families who not only demand, but also urgently need, high-quality education for their children to ensure they prosper in a thriving tech economy.

We challenge leaders across the country, mayors and governors alike, to emerge from this pandemic by challenging themselves and seeking bolder solutions for the students and families you serve. There are three ways to do this:

First, listen to your community. This includes parents and entrepreneurs, because the future of education and the way we prepare students for success require a student-centered approach that looks beyond the status quo and at the career opportunities of tomorrow. Listening to your community, parents, families, and educators always pays off.

Second, good leaders start by casting a vision for the future, and great leaders have the intentionality to see the vision through. Miami's tech industry isn't an accident — it is purpose-driven and it's a result of a collaborative, [intentional](#), community-wide effort to invest and build the tech industry in Florida, and it's working.

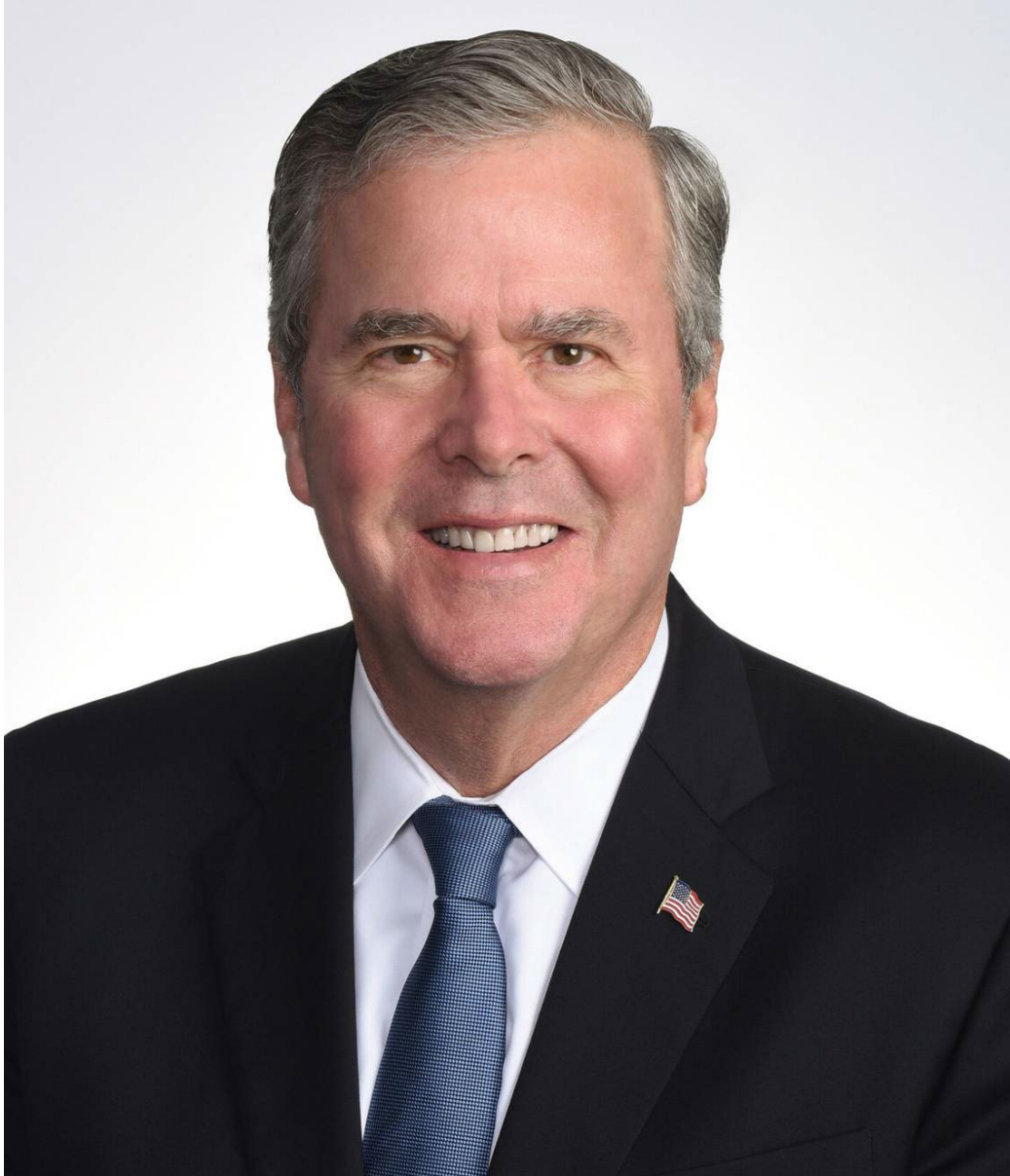
Third, seek out new partners. We are lucky to have Miami Dade College led by President Madeline Pumariega. But whether it's a local college or university, or business leader, if you want unconventional outcomes, look for unlikely or unconventional partners.

We're grateful we have that framework here in Miami and throughout Florida; and we are certain that there are exciting new opportunities to embrace across our country.

*Mayor Francis X. Suarez is mayor of Miami. He is president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Jeb Bush was the 43rd governor of Florida. He is chairman and founder of ExcelinEd.*



Suarez



Bush

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