

Blackstone Charitable Foundation Commits \$5mn to Five New Colleges in Florida

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The Blackstone Charitable Foundation has committed \$5mn over three years to expand LaunchPad, its entrepreneurial skills-building program to help students launch successful companies and careers, at five new colleges, including one Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and three Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in Florida.

The partnership is part of the Blackstone Charitable Foundation's broader \$40mn commitment to expand LaunchPad to higher-ed institutions that have a majority underrepresented population or are serving under-resourced communities. LaunchPad has supported University of Central Florida for the past decade, delivering entrepreneurial skill-building programs to help their students launch successful companies and careers. As part of Blackstone's broader commitment to Florida, Blackstone LaunchPad recently partnered with Miami Dade College, Florida International University, Florida State University, Florida A&M University and Florida Atlantic University to expand its signature program.

"We are thrilled to welcome this new group of Florida LaunchPad schools into our network and community," said Maura Pally, Executive Director of the Blackstone Charitable Foundation. "Blackstone continues to be committed to Florida and to connecting students with professional networks and opportunities to help them build successful companies and careers."

For students at these colleges, LaunchPad provides students with entrepreneurial skills-building content and programs for success in any career path they choose to

pursue. Additionally, students will be able to participate in national programming such as pitch competitions and fellowships where they can build lasting professional relationships.

"Miami's growing entrepreneurial and tech ecosystem calls for transformational investment in the home-grown talent who will fuel that growth," said Miami Dade College President Madeline Pumariaga. "Miami Dade College has a long track-record of enabling entrepreneurship in this community through The Idea Center and this partnership with Blackstone LaunchPad will allow us to further expand our entrepreneurial skills-building across the College. We look forward to having MDC scale its ability to support even more aspiring young entrepreneurs in the years to come. We know they become the backbone of this community."

"We are extremely grateful to the Blackstone Charitable Foundation for providing us with this opportunity to expand the entrepreneurship programs at FIU," said William Hardin, Dean of FIU School of Business. "This grant will enable us to strengthen our commitment to providing our students with the tools they need to assess new enterprise opportunities and start new ventures."

The 2021 initiative to expand Blackstone LaunchPad to higher-ed institutions with majority underrepresented or under-resourced students has brought the program to 22 Hispanic Serving Institutions, 7 HBCUs and 4 community colleges.

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