When Miami Dade College’s hunt for a new president was discarded this past July after a five-month search, the College’s Provost Lenore Rodicio was left as the only remaining candidate. The Board of Trustees will meet on Aug. 29 at Wolfson Campus to decide how the search will continue.

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Who is Lenore Rodicio?
“I am not Eduardo Padrón,” Rodicio emphatically told the Board of Trustees during her finalist interview on July 24, minutes before they rebooted the five-month presidential search process, temporarily leaving her as the lone candidate.

Miami Dade College’s provost continued: “I’ve had the honor of working with him and seeing what he has built at this institution and the legacy that he’s left behind. I don’t think there is anyone in this room that can argue that he has built a remarkable institution over the past 25 years... if I am so honored to be your next president, I would honor that legacy of innovation. But there are a lot of things I would do differently.”

Others aren’t so sure. Trustee Marcell Felipe seemed skeptical when he questioned her during her Board interview.

“How would you balance following in the footsteps of such a great leader while maintaining your own independence and
Catholic Chemist At Forefront Of MDC Presidential Search

...a lot of belief in furthering that vision," Lemons said. "It’s easy for me to understand how a community would be inclined to want to see continuity rather than change. She’s the case that the internal community views the internal candidate in that light.

The Lone Finalist

Rodicio, a devout Catholic who attends St. Mary Cathedral in Littlegoat Hall, is deeply ingrained in the community. Her husband, Sergio, is the business operations manager at the cathedral. They live in a four-bedroom old Spanish-style home in Little Havana. The couple purchased in 1998. It is less than a mile from Eduardo J. Padron Campus.

She has five children—Pio, Maria, Ana and Isabel, the youngest, Gabriela, is five years old.

Rodicio was born on November 28, 1973 in Miami. Her grandparents played a large role in her life. She took a liking to making pastries and cakes, a passion she inherited from them. She added, "The pastime runs parallel with her love for science, both require many of the same ingredients—attention to detail, an ability to think analytically and methodically while remaining calm under pressure."

"I might not practice chemistry on a day-to-day basis, but I’m still a scientist," Rodicio said during her open forum presentation.

Rodicio graduated from St. Brendan High School—a co-ed Roman Catholic school in Westchester—in 1991. At a young age, she was in a parish youth group at St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church in 1993, according to a Florida Catholic article. In 1994, she received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Barry University.

That same year, Rodicio was awarded the award of Regents Graduate Fellowship to attend Westchester University. At a young age, she spent five years working on her doctoral dissertation about ribonucleic RNA sequencing using mass spectroscopy. The years were full of trial and error as she meticulously designed and researched experiments in the lab.

Rodicio said she "wanted very badly to be able to go back to Florida." She said, "She loves her family and the community. She wasn’t going to leave without her Ph.D. She wasn’t going to quit." After earning her Ph.D, in 1999, Rodicio returned to Miami and married. By 2002, she had accepted adjunct positions teaching chemistry at Kendall and the then Internia University Campus. She had no intentions of staying past one semester, but fell "in love with the students," who she described as "special" and "from a wide variety of backgrounds."

That opportunity launched her career at the College. It has included roles as a professor, department chairperson, dean, project director, vice president and most recently—executive vice-president and provost.

As provost, Rodicio manages the College’s internal operations on a day-to-day basis. She oversees the College’s fiscal budget, curriculum and academic programs. She oversees workforce development programs, faculty union negotiations and regulatory compliance for the College in Tallahassee.

"In all my years at Miami Dade College, Lenore Rodicio is the most successful person I’ve ever met," Padrón said in a reference to Diversified Search, the firm that led the faculty to find a new president. "She is the most outstanding Provost I’ve ever had, and I’ve had a number of great ones who have gone on to other college presidencies. She is the best. I used to have a Provost for Academics for a very long time. She’s an extremely dedicated person and has been a key person in helping us grow. She is so capable that she has both responsibilities and is doing a great job.

Rodicio routinely communicates with MDC administration, faculty, students and community leaders. She is often invited to speak about academic excellence. This year, she traveled abroad to the Aspen Institute on behalf of M.A.G.I.C.

"For me, this has been invaluable source of information and knowledge, anything related to academics. She is very stable, someone who is not easily frustrated, and Dr. Rodicio has this very comforting personality that you can trust that she’s seeing a problem that I’m not seeing," Ferraza said. "Everybody is 100 percent aware of her amazing leader and provost because she understands this institution very well."

‘Running The College’

Padrón told the presidential search firm that she not be, he has been “running MDC on a day-to-day basis he handles exter- nal projects.

In recent months, she attended an international cabinet meeting in Israel and has spoken at various national conferences. When Padrón was unable to speak at a recent conference, a private foundation aimed toward increasing student enrollment nation- wide, he recommended Rodicio.

"We didn’t know her at the time," said Debra Humphrey, vice-president of strategic engagement at Lumina Foundation. "She came, and I remember talking to [Lumina Foun- dation CEO and President] as she was speaking. She was brilliant, not just good or better than I had seen Eduardo [Padrón]. We looked at each other, like ‘Why hadn’t we in- vited her in the first place?’"

Rodicio declined multiple requests by The Reporter to be interviewed, some biographical information used in this story is from the Di- versified Search Firm’s candidate profiles.

I Have Something To Say: Lenore Rodicio speaks at a Board of Trustees meeting on March 20, 2018.

Back in Miami

While in Baton Rouge, Rodicio never lost sight of her goal—returning to Miami. She called Ser- gio every day and made periodic trips to her hometown.