



MANNY DIAZ JR.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Accomplished education leader with over 30 years of experience spanning public policy, higher education leadership, and K-20 system reform. Proven ability to lead complex organizations, implement transformative education initiatives, and engage diverse stakeholders. As Florida's Commissioner of Education and COO of a private college, led academic policy, institutional development, and strategic growth. Committed to advancing student access, workforce readiness, and academic excellence.

EDUCATION

Urban Principals Initiative (Certificate Program)

Harvard Graduate School
of Education –
Cambridge, MA | 2006

Master of Education in Educational Leadership

Nova Southeastern University –
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Bachelor of Arts in Human Resources

St. Thomas University –
Miami Gardens, FL

AWARDS & HONORS

- First Recipient of the St. Thomas University Alumni Archbishop Thomas Wenski Award
- Florida Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Advocate – 2013–2019
- Florida Chamber of Commerce Education Advocate of the Year
- Hispanic Heritage Education Leadership Award
- Excellence in Public Service Award – Florida TaxWatch

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Florida Department of Education –

Commissioner of Education

Tallahassee, FL | June 2022 – Present

- Oversees Florida's public education system, including 28 state colleges and nearly 3 million students across K-20 institutions.
- Manages a \$27 billion annual education budget with responsibility for strategic allocation, fiscal oversight, and policy alignment across the state.
- Founded and led the Annual Commissioner's Summit, gathering 28 college presidents and 12 state university presidents to foster collaboration, share best practices, and align academic and workforce priorities across Florida's higher education system.
- Created and hosted the National School Safety Summit in Orlando, Florida, bringing together participants from 20 states to address critical issues in school safety, mental health, and prevention.
- Led statewide reforms in K-12 curriculum, higher education policy, and technical education expansion.
- Partnered with higher education institutions to align degree and certification programs with economic and workforce demands.
- Championed initiatives to expand school choice, strengthen accountability, and improve affordability in postsecondary education.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

Doral College — Chief Operating Officer

Doral, FL / 2013 - 2022

- Directed day-to-day operations, strategic planning, and academic programming for an accredited, dual-enrollment focused private college.
- Led institutional growth, accreditation efforts, and academic partnerships with K-12 charter school networks.
- Expanded online and hybrid offerings, resulting in significant enrollment growth and increased student retention.
- Managed cross-functional teams in academic affairs, student services, and compliance, ensuring operational excellence and innovation.

Florida Senate — State Senator, District 36

Miami-Dade County, FL / 2018 - 2022

- Chair, Senate Education Committee; Vice Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.
- Led education legislation focused on career and technical education, school safety, teacher certification reform, and higher education accountability.
- Oversaw budgetary recommendations and policy development affecting Florida's colleges and universities.
- Worked closely with the State University System on articulation, funding, and performance-based initiatives.

Florida House of Representatives — State Representative, District 103

Miami-Dade County, FL / 2012 - 2018

- Chair, PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee; Member, Education Committee.
- Sponsored legislation advancing charter school autonomy, dual enrollment expansion, and competency-based learning.
- Advocated for data-driven accountability, early college access, and workforce-aligned curriculum pathways.
- Built bipartisan coalitions to pass education reform measures with long-term student impact.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools — Assistant Principal & Educator

Miami, FL / 1994 - 2013

- Served as assistant principal and teacher, leading school improvement planning, curriculum development, and instructional oversight.
- Established partnerships with local colleges to expand dual enrollment opportunities.
- Mentored early-career teachers and promoted evidence-based instructional practices for academic growth.

BOARD SERVICE

Florida State University System Board of Governors — Member

Tallahassee, FL / 2022 - Present

- Provides systemwide governance for Florida's 12 public universities.
- Helps shape strategic direction, accountability measures, and funding models across the higher education landscape.
- Collaborates with institutional leaders and state officials to align academic and economic priorities.

BOARD SERVICE CONTINUED

Florida Council of 100 — Member

Tallahassee, FL | 2022 – Present

- Engage with Florida's top business leaders to drive policies that promote economic growth, workforce development, and educational excellence.
- Actively participates in high-level strategic discussions on business and education initiatives that impact Florida's future.

LEADERSHIP & AFFILIATIONS

- Member, Hoover Institution Education Practitioners Council
- Member, State University System of Florida Collaboration Council
- Advisory Member, Florida College Access Network
- Member, Florida Chamber Foundation Future of Work Task Force
- Keynote Speaker, Harvard University Kennedy School of Government
- Speaker, William F. Buckley Jr. Program at Yale University
- Frequent keynote speaker on education reform, school choice, and higher education pathways

VISION FOR UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

Manny Diaz Jr. would bring a bold, student-centered vision to the University of West Florida, rooted in excellence, innovation, and regional impact. His focus would include:

- Strengthening academic excellence and research capacity
- Expanding workforce-aligned programs and partnerships
- Promoting access, affordability, and student outcomes
- Enhancing the university's role in economic and community development

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Ranked #1 in Education by U.S. News & World Report for two years in a row (2023, 2024) and ranked second (2025).
- Ranked #1 for Higher Education by U.S. News & World Report for nine years in a row. (2025).
- Ranked #1 in Education Freedom by the Heritage Foundation for the third consecutive year (2024).
- Ranked #1 in the Parent Power Index by the Center for Education Reform, reflecting its robust school choice options, including charter schools, private school scholarships and virtual education program (2024)
- Florida has earned the highest score on the 2025 EdChoice Friedman Index, reflecting the state's expansive school choice programs and the availability of Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) for families to use for additional educational services (2025).
- Florida ranked number one for Education Freedom by the ALEC Index of State Education Freedom: A 50 State Guide to Parental Empowerment (2025).
- Hosted the first-ever National Summit on School Safety, bringing together national education leaders, law enforcement officials, policymakers and school safety specialists to learn about Florida's nation-leading approach to School Safety (2025).
- Florida's high school graduation rate rose to 89.7% during the 2023-2024 school year, exceeding the pre-pandemic rate of 86.9% for the 2018-2019 school year.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONTINUED

- Surpassed 500,000 students participating in Florida's school choice scholarship program (2024).
- For the first time, the number of students who have enrolled at a public charter school in Florida crossed the 400,000 mark in the 2024-25 school year.
- During the 2023-24 academic year, Florida experienced record-breaking CTE enrollments, including over 800,000 K-12 Career and Technical Education (CTE) students, 480,000 postsecondary CTE students (2024).
- Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, a total of \$190 million has been appropriated to expand and create workforce development programs through the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program, providing hands-on experience in high-demand fields like health, aerospace, biomedical science, digital video technology, aviation and more (2025).
- Since 2019, FDOE has awarded a total of \$85 million through the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant for the development of new, and operation or expansion of existing, registered apprenticeship or preapprenticeship programs (2025).
- Since 2020, more than \$4.6 billion has been dedicated toward improving teacher pay.
- Awarded \$5 million through the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grow Your Own Teacher Grant (PCOG GYO), to expand Florida's teacher apprenticeship program and strengthen the teacher pipeline by creating pathways for aspiring educators (2025).
- 2024-2025 saw a record \$28.4 billion for K-12 public school funding, including a historic per-student allocation of \$8,959.
- More than 600 middle and high school students competed in the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative (FCDI) State Championship, a first-of-its-kind program fostering civil discourse and civic education. Since its 2019 launch, FCDI has engaged over 3,400 students from more than 400 schools statewide (2024).
- In January 2024, the State Board of Education permanently prohibited Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs in the Florida College System, banning the use of state or federal funds for initiatives based on race or sex preferences.
- Nearly 400 schools throughout the state have earned a Purple Star School of Distinction designation, five school districts have earned the Florida Purple Star School District designation and 12 Florida colleges earned the Collegiate Purple Star Schools of Distinction designation. (2025)

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION



Office of the President
444 Appleyard Dr.
Tallahassee, FL 32304
(850) 201-8660

June 8, 2025

Ms. Rebecca Matthews, Chair
University of West Florida Board of Trustees
11000 University Parkway
Pensacola, FL 32514

Chair Matthews:

Please accept this letter as my enthusiastic support of the selection of Manny Diaz by the University of West Florida trustees as your interim President.

I have had the privilege and pleasure of getting to know him both while he was in the Florida Legislature and in his current role as Commissioner of Education for the State of Florida. His expertise and effectiveness on both education policy and budget issues has been impressive.

He cares deeply about the quality of teaching and learning and has distinguished himself as a thought leader for those of us in higher education who have worked with him. His commitment to scholarship and research will also serve you well. I can say without reservation that he has earned the respect of all twenty-eight college presidents, and I am confident that he will earn the respect of your faculty, staff, and community.

Finding the right person to replace a president is not easy, but I congratulate you and your fellow board members on this choice.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss his qualifications further.

Sincerely,

Jim Murdaugh, Ph.D.
President

NOTES OF SUPPORT



I have had the privilege of serving as the President of Florida SouthWestern State College in Fort Myers since July, 2012. My institution, along with the other 27 state colleges which comprise the Florida College System, reports to the Florida Department of Education via the Commissioner of Education. During the past 13 years I have had the opportunity to work with several Commissioners of the Department of Education. While each brought different talents and skill sets to the position, I have to say that Commissioner Manny Diaz was one of the most engaged and supportive leaders that I have had the pleasure to serve under.

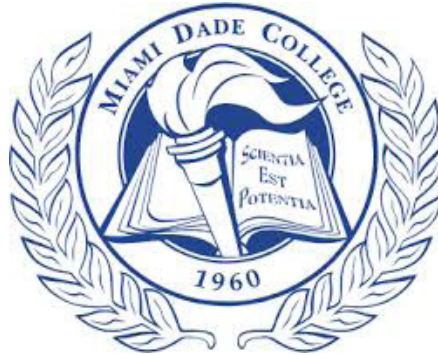
I really came to appreciate Manny Diaz during the aftermath of the catastrophic Hurricane Ian that devastated southwest Florida in September, 2022. FSW was severely impacted by this category 5 event knocking our main campus in Fort Myers offline for over 3 months. Many of our students, employees and their families were displaced as a result of this historic event. I will never forget a personal phone call I received the very next day from Manny asking about me and my family, and how our FSW family was coping. He asked me what he could do to aid in tending to our most immediate needs for power, food and shelter. The result of that phone call was the activation of agencies to come to our Fort Myers campus to provide tractor trailer sized generators, fuel trucks and other essential equipment to aid us in stabilizing our college. His genuine care for us at our critical time of need meant a great deal to me.

During the 2024-25 academic year I have served as the Chair of the Council of Presidents for the FCS. This role has given me the opportunity to work even closer with Commissioner Diaz as we met numerous times to discuss legislative strategies along with system wide priorities. I have come to know Manny as a highly intelligent and thoughtful leader whose first thought is how to improve the lives of the students in our system.

I will be proud to welcome him as a fellow president of a Florida institution of Higher Education, and I am confident that UWF will be better for having him at the helm.

Dr. Jeff S. Allbritten
President
Florida SouthWestern State College

NOTES OF SUPPORT



It is with great enthusiasm that I offer my strong recommendation for Manny Díaz Jr. as the next President of the University of West Florida. Throughout his career, Mr. Díaz has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to educational excellence, innovation, and public service. From his early days as a classroom teacher and administrator in Miami-Dade County to his impactful leadership as Florida’s Commissioner of Education, he has consistently shown an ability to inspire, lead with integrity, and deliver results for students and communities alike.

Manny Díaz brings to UWF a bold vision for the future—one that blends academic rigor with workforce relevance, and tradition with transformation. He understands the evolving needs of the critical role institutions like UWF play in regional economic growth and talent development. With his proven ability to navigate complex systems, build strategic partnerships, and champion excellence in education, I am confident he will lead UWF with distinction and purpose to the mission of UWF. His nomination represents a powerful opportunity for the university to embrace a future of growth, innovation, and impact.

Madeline Pumariega
President, Miami Dade College

NOTES OF SUPPORT



From the classroom to policymaker and now to leading the Florida Department of Education, Commissioner Manny Diaz has distinguished himself in every facet of his career. Becoming the interim president at the University of West Florida is a natural transition for a person who has committed his life to the betterment of education in our state. I've personally witnessed his leadership and believe Commissioner Diaz is the right person to lead UWF into the future.

Mel Ponder
President
Northwest Florida State College