

# Man on a Mission

For 16 years, Jose de la Torre was a star on the faculty of UCLA's Anderson School of Management, one of the country's elite business schools. Then, in 2002, he left Los Angeles to become the first dean of the newly-created and generously endowed Alvah H. Chapman Graduate School of Business at Florida International University.

The 62-year old, Cuban-born De la Torre, who has lectured the world over and authored more than 50 books and articles on international business and strategy, doesn't regret that decision. "This university, like this city, is on the verge of becoming great," he says. "It is wonderful to be part of that process."

WorldCity caught up to De la Torre the day after he returned from a 11-day whirlwind tour of universities in 12 cities in Latin America. We asked him to share his vision and his ambitious plans to transform Chapman into "one of the premier places for the study of international business anywhere in the world."

**WORLD CITY:** You seem to be a man with a mission.

**De la Torre:** When I came here, I was given two charges. One was to bring all the graduate programs under one umbrella. The other was to put Chapman on the map.

**WORLD CITY:** How do you plan to do that?

**De la Torre:** First, we trade on the fact that Miami is a major gateway city in the U.S. Our location is an extraordinarily valuable attribute. Second, we trade on our superb faculty, particularly in international business and international finance.

**WORLD CITY:** How, exactly, do you "trade" on these two strengths?

**De la Torre:** By creating an incredible network of schools that offer dual-degree programs. We have 15 universities – 13 in Latin America, two in Europe – already signed up and we will add five more this year. My goal

is to have at least five partner schools in Europe and three in Asia – in China, Thailand and Singapore. We will end up with a network of schools around the world participating in dual-degree programs with us.

**WORLD CITY:** Are other U.S. B-schools doing the same?

**De la Torre:** We are not the only school with dual-degree programs, but we have taken this on as a major strategic thrust. The University of Texas at Austin has a number of dual-degree programs, as do Tulane and Thunderbird, but no one has 15.

**WORLD CITY:** Why such an emphasis on dual-degree programs?

**De la Torre:** I am convinced that they are the wave of the future for international business education.

**WORLD CITY:** How so?

**De la Torre:** We now have a network that we can sell. We can offer students who enter our program the possibility of obtaining a second degree in Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Nice or, eventually, Tianjin, China.

**WORLD CITY:** Presumably this is also attractive to foreign students?

**De la Torre:** Correct. A Brazilian student, for example, could start at Coppead, the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, complete the first year of an MBA, then come here and do eight months in our MIB (Master of International Business) program and, at the end of that period, receive two degrees. Furthermore, that student might be able to stay after graduation and work for a U.S. company for one year under the Optional Practical Training program.

**WORLD CITY:** That ought to appeal to a lot of companies.

**De la Torre:** Can you imagine being able to come to this campus and hire the best graduates from Coppead (Brazil), IAE (Argentina), ITAM (Mexico) and IESA (Venezuela)? You could hire them for a year, train them and send them back to run the businesses in their home countries.



Jose de la Torre  
Dean  
Chapman Graduate School of  
Business, FIU

**WORLD CITY:** Are the dual-degree programs up and running?

**De la Torre:** We currently have 50 domestic students in our MIB program and 17 dual-degree students. Our goal is to raise the number of international students to 60.

**WORLD CITY:** Sounds like Chapman is already on the map?

**De la Torre:** Two years ago, we were nowhere. But last year, *U.S. News & World Report* ranked our graduate international business program 24th in the nation. And this year, we moved up to 22nd. This is huge. *BusinessWeek* also ranks our full-time MBA program among the top 70. The University of Florida is the only other Florida school on this list.

**WORLD CITY:** You said Miami is poised for greatness. As a recent arrival, how do you account for this city's rise to prominence?

**De la Torre:** Three things have gotten us here – location, globalization and the revolution of freer markets and democratization that has swept Latin America since 1989. But there's another important factor: the dilution of the Cuban influence in this city.

**WORLD CITY:** Can you explain?

**De la Torre:** A few years ago, this city was dominated by a Cuban minority that, to a large extent, was stuck in the past. Now, a

second and third generation of Cubans has combined with a huge migration of Colombians, Venezuelans, Argentines, Brazilians and Salvadoreans, as well as a large influx from Europe. The result is a much more vibrant, diverse and interesting city.

**WORLD CITY:** What is holding the city back?  
**De la Torre:** One thing that is missing is a cultural commitment to civil society by many of these recent arrivals. Shortly after I got there, the Miami symphony orchestra was allowed to die for a lack of \$4 million. That would have been unthinkable in L.A. The irony is that we are building this enormous performing arts center and we don't have a professional symphony orchestra to put in it.

**WORLD CITY:** What else?  
**De la Torre:** Education is one of the biggest challenges. South Florida has the lowest GMAT (MBA entrance exam) scores of any major area in the country. And only 14 percent of people between 24 and 45 have a college degree, also one of the lowest rates of any major urban area.

**WORLD CITY:** Apparently, these failings aren't deterring you. What's the latest project?  
**De la Torre:** The big thing right now is our professional MBA program downtown in conjunction with Macy's. We have taken over the sixth floor of their store, are gutting it and building a state-of-the-art educational center.

**WORLD CITY:** And what's the next phase of this grand scheme?  
**De la Torre:** First, it's critically important that we double the size of our full-time International MBA program from 50 to 100. And, by the time I retire, I want to be no lower than 15 on the *U.S. News* ranking. To get there, we will need a lot of visibility, which means being present at all the international conferences, creating a buzz about what we are doing. Another goal is to have between 30 and 50 *Fortune 500* companies recruiting on campus in two years time. Finally, we want to be one of the few schools in the Southeast with a major Chinese relationship. In fact, starting this year, we are going to offer Chinese to our students in the IMBA program.

# Key Languages

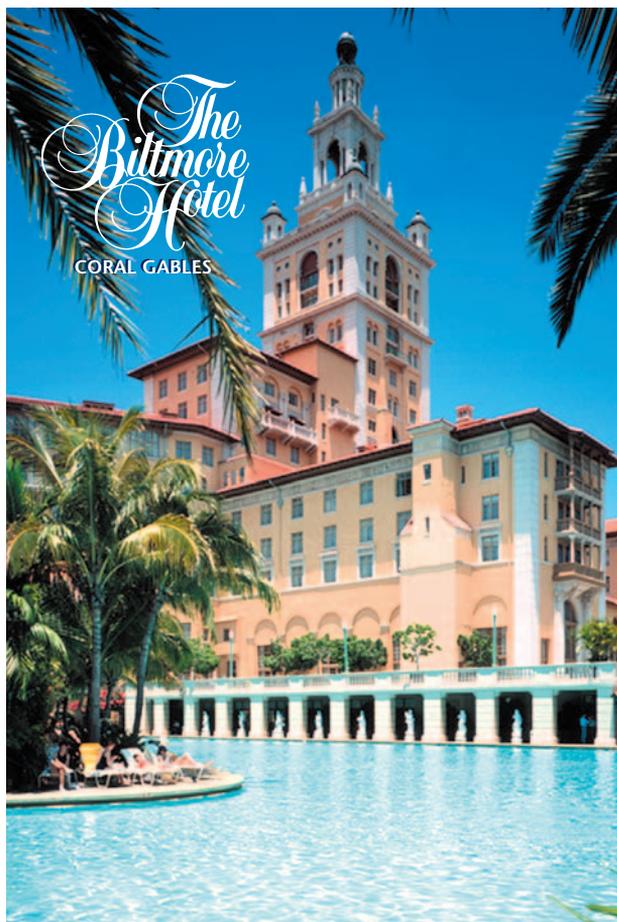
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