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Event connects entrepreneurs and investors

Premium content from South Florida Business Journal by Ashley D. Torres, Reporter

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Ashley D. Torres

Reporter - *South Florida Business Journal*

[Email](#) | [Twitter](#)

Florida International University's Americas Venture Capital Conference, to be held Nov. 16-17, offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to tap venture capital from Latin America.

The event, at the Biltmore Hotel in Coral Gables, aims to connect entrepreneurs with venture capitalists from South Florida and Latin America, acknowledging the synergy between the two regions.

Entrepreneurs "may have the great ideas, but if they don't have the contacts to support the venture, they're just not going to be successful," said conference founder and co-chair [Irma Becerra-Fernandez](#), vice provost for academic affairs at FIU.

Historically, Latin Americans have not been active angel or venture capital investors. Recently, they increased their participation as the region has had significant economic growth. They also have seen successful private equity investment worldwide, and become more aware of South Florida investment opportunities.

"I think the fact that they have money to invest plays a huge role," said [Kevin Levy](#), a **Gunster** shareholder who has represented global technology companies and local entrepreneurial ventures. He said venture capitalists in the U.S. are very interested in South Florida companies with business beyond Florida.

Criteria for presenting companies include an established customer base, work in specific

sectors and a portion of business in Latin America. Twenty companies will present.

Typically, entrepreneurs can receive between \$500,000 and \$10 million from a venture capital firm, which may provide industry expertise, management experience and business contacts. In return, investors can be given an ownership position in the companies they invest in, as well as a portion of its profit.

"It's like a marriage," Becerra-Fernandez said. "I'm not going to claim all the marriages are good, but there are some successful ones."

For information, visit <http://avcc.fiu.edu>.