



# Memorandum

19 West Flagler Street ♦ Suite 220 ♦ Miami, Florida 33130  
Phone: (305) 375-1946 ♦ Fax: (305) 579-2656  
visit our website at [www.miamidadeig.org](http://www.miamidadeig.org)

To: The Honorable Carlos Alvarez, Mayor  
The Honorable Chairperson Bruno A. Barreiro  
Members, Board of County Commissioners

From:  Christopher Mazzella, Inspector General

Date: August 15, 2007

Re: Arrest of County Employee for Defrauding the County's Tuition Reimbursement Program

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Attached is a press release relating to the arrest of an employee of the County's Water & Sewer Department, Marbely Garcia (Garcia). Garcia was arrested in connection with the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG's) continuing investigation into abuses of the County's Tuition Reimbursement Program (the Program). The investigation began in early 2006 at the request of the Human Resources Department (HRD), formerly known as the Employee Relations Department (ERD). To date, the probe has resulted in a Grand Jury report highlighting program deficiencies and the indictment of four other County employees for falsifying documents and receiving reimbursements to which they were not entitled. Additionally, the investigation has identified approximately \$400,000 in overpayments to County employees.

Garcia, the fifth County employee arrested, is alleged to have falsified documents in order to receive reimbursement from the Program. Garcia was charged with Organized Scheme to Defraud, Official Misconduct and Petit Theft. The case is being prosecuted by the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office. The OIG is continuing its investigation.

cc: Mr. George Burgess, County Manager  
Ms. Corinne Brody, Interim Director, Human Resources Department  
Mr. John Renfrow, Director, Water & Sewer Department  
Ms. Cathy Jackson, Director, Audit & Management Services  
Mr. Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor

Clerk of the Board (copy filed)



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL  
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

### **OIG Probe of County's Tuition Reimbursement Program Yields Another Arrest**

Marbely Garcia (Garcia), 23, an employee of Miami-Dade County's Water & Sewer Department, was arrested today as a result of the continuing probe by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) into the County's Tuition Reimbursement Program (the Program). Garcia was charged with one (1) count of Organized Scheme to Defraud, two (2) counts of Official Misconduct and two (2) counts of Petit Theft. According to an arrest warrant signed by a Circuit Court Judge, Garcia (the fifth County employee to be arrested and charged criminally) falsified documents, changed her grades, and omitted reporting grants in order to receive funds from the County's Tuition Reimbursement Program.

The Program, which has been in place since 1963, generously offers County employees 50% reimbursement of their tuition costs, excluding any grants, scholarships or other financial aid, provided the employees achieve a passing grade of C or higher. Early in 2006, the County's Employee Relations Department (ERD), now the Human Resources Department, requested that the OIG look into the Program due to possible employee misconduct in not reporting grants, which resulted in the County overpaying employees. As a result of the OIG's initial investigation, a Grand Jury in November 2006 indicted four County employees who failed to report grants or other financial aid, and who falsified transcripts in order to fraudulently receive reimbursement from the County. The Grand Jury also issued a report in which it identified significant deficiencies in the administration of the Program, which resulted in overpayments to many County employees.

The OIG has continued its effort to identify additional overpayments or other fraud. As a result, Garcia's submissions were examined. According to the arrest warrant, OIG investigators found that the transcripts submitted by Garcia showing passing grades of C or higher did not match the official transcripts. The official transcripts recorded that Garcia received a grade of D in one instance, and in another instance, she withdrew from a course for which she submitted a reimbursement request. The arrest affidavit adds that Garcia also failed to report grants that would have reduced the amount of tuition reimbursement she was entitled to receive from the County. By falsifying documents, Garcia received a total of \$460.78 to which she was not entitled.

Thus far, the OIG has reviewed 450 County employee participants, or 28% of the 1,500 employees participating in the Program during 2005. This review, thus far, has revealed approximately \$400,000 in overpayments. The overpayments have been reported to the County Manager's Office for appropriate action. The County Manager's Office is in the process of obtaining restitution of the amounts overpaid.

In commenting on the arrest, Inspector General Christopher Mazzella indicated that his Office will continue its investigation of this program.

Copies of the arrest affidavit are available at the Office of the Inspector General, 19 West Flagler Street, Suite 220, Miami, Florida, telephone number (305) 375-1946, or at the State Attorney's Office, c/o Ed Griffith, 1350 N.W. 12 Avenue, Miami, Florida, telephone number (305) 547-0535.