

20TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

AAHHE 20 YEARS

INSPIRING FUTURES FOR LATINX COMMUNITIES.

PROGRAM

2025



INSPIRING FUTURES FOR LATINX COMMUNITIES.

**RECONCILING OUR PAST, CHALLENGING THE PRESENT, SHAPING EQUITABLE FUTURES:
ADVANCING THE NEXT 20 YEARS OF LATINX/A/O COMMUNITIES**

AAHHE
20
YEARS

AAHHE

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER
EDUCATION, INC.

2025

Many thanks to
Metropolitan State University of Denver
for hosting the 2025 AAHHE Conference



METROPOLITAN
STATE UNIVERSITY
OF DENVER



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Cristóbal Rodríguez, PhD

Chair, AAHHE Board of Directors (2024 - 2025)
Associate Provost for Equity-Centered Initiatives in Academic Affairs
Western Michigan University

Dear 2025 AAHHE National Conference participants,

Welcome to the 2025 AAHHE national conference hosted by our partner Metropolitan State University of Denver, in Denver, CO. On behalf of the AAHHE Board we are thankful to MSUD President Janine Davidson, PhD, the amazing on campus team, Dr. Michael Benitez, Jeremy VanHooser, and Dr. Manuel del Real for their hospitality in hosting our annual conference.

I offer my sincere appreciation to our conference co-chairs AAHHE Board member Dr. Antonio Duran, Arizona State University, and Dr. Lazaro Camacho, University of Rhode Island, as well as our conference planning committee for their insight in developing a compelling theme and program. Our 2025 AAHHE conference theme is ***“Reconciling Our Past, Challenging the Present, Shaping Equitable Futures: Advancing the Next 20 Years of Latinx/a/o Communities”***.

This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the AAHHE annual conference. AAHHE has come a long way since its inaugural gathering in San Antonio, TX where the conference theme ‘Designing the Future/Diseñando el Futuro: Hispanic Higher Education in the 21st Century’ challenged participants to reflect on how they were building a better tomorrow for Latinx/a/o communities. Twenty years later, our current conference theme plays upon concepts of healing, legacies, and community to encourage attendees to build upon those who have come before us, while challenging each other to further carve out equitable and critical futures. In this, we are looking to embrace intergenerational and interdisciplinary wisdom to move our organization and communities forward. The 2025 AAHHE Conference brings together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers from across academic disciplines to participate in this collective imagining.

WELCOME

The conference planning committee crafted a powerful statement about the significance of this year's theme.

AAHHE is proud to feature our outstanding keynote speakers for 2025 for the Tomás Rivera Lecture, Xóchitl C. Chávez, PhD, Associate Professor at UC Riverside Department of Music and Faculty Advisor for Ballet Folklórico de University of California Riverside; Medical/STEM Distinguished Lecture, Dr. Charles Vela, President and Chief Architect at Afilon Innovation; and our Plenary Session, Michael Benitez, Jr., PhD, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion and Associate Professor of Multicultural Education, School of Education, at Metropolitan State University of Denver.

We want to thank our longtime partners Educational Testing Services (ETS) for their history of support that has been foundational to our success as an organization as we transition to new partnerships. We are thrilled about our new partnership with the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success for our Latinx Student Success Institute. We also want to thank our longtime partners: Sage Journals for the Journal of Hispanics in Higher Education, edited by my **tocayo** Cristóbal Salinas; and the Hispanic Outlook for providing a medium for our academic community. We are thrilled to welcome our new partners, Johns Hopkins University Press, in support of the creative contributions by our academic community. We are appreciative of the support from our many generous conference sponsors, including institutional and corporate partners.

We also congratulate our newly inducted group of Graduate Fellows, Faculty Fellows, and New Leaders Academy Fellows. We are honored to recognize Latinx/a/o excellence at our Annual Awards event which will highlight over a dozen award winners in various categories.

AAHHE is proud to continue our longstanding association with our many institutional members as well as our strategic partners. Our mission to feature emerging and compelling voices within our Latinx/a/o community continues, as do our efforts to cultivate new generations of scholars, policymakers, and leaders for higher education. We are excited that you have joined us as part of the 2025 AAHHE national conference. Welcome, and have a great conference!
In Truth and Service,



Cristóbal Rodríguez, PhD

Chair, Board of Directors



Antonio Durán, PhD

Conference Planning Committee Co-chair
Arizona State University



Lazaro Camacho, PhD

Conference Planning Committee Co-chair
University of Rhode Island

To our 2025 AAHHE Familia,

It is truly our pleasure to welcome you to the 2025 AAHHE National Conference. This year marks a very special milestone for our association, as we will soon be together celebrating our 20th annual conference. During these two decades, AAHHE has been a place where thought leaders who span different roles, institutions, and identities come together to advocate for the collective advancement of Latinx/a/o communities. In doing so, we have devised approaches to challenge individuals to adopt asset-based perspectives on Latinx/a/o people, together with helping to break down barriers that face our communities. The road has not always been easy. It has come with inter- and intra-community strife and reckonings. And yet, it has been our persistence and willingness to grow that has marked AAHHE as a space where many of us come together to ideate and innovate.

This year, with our conference theme, Reconciling our Past, Challenging the Present, Shaping Equitable Futures: Advancing the Next 20 Years of Latinx/a/o Communities, we seek to commemorate the last 20 years while simultaneously looking to the future. In doing so, we ask that attendees come to AAHHE with a willingness to reflect on the past, consider the current moment, and dream of what a more equitable version of higher education can look like for Latinx/a/o people.

The 2025 conference planning committee (CPC) devised this theme as a way to look across the span of our existence with reverence, but more importantly, with criticality. Specifically, the first part of our theme is intended to push members of our organization to look back on the people and acts that led to change for our Latinx/a/o communities—but to also make us acknowledge the places where we have been limited in our thinking, advocacy, and work. This includes recognizing the multiply minoritized individuals who have been erased in our struggles and in our striving toward

progress. Moreover, this aspect of our theme pushes us to acknowledge how we have acquiesced to systems of marginalization (e.g., whiteness, coloniality, heterosexism, trans oppression, ableism), both on our respective campuses, and in our respective organizations, as well as within AAHHE.

The second component of our theme also is intended to encourage us to make meaning of the present moment that we find ourselves in. Our conference will take place after the 2024 election cycle that promises to affect Latinx/a/o people in education and beyond in numerous ways. Furthermore, the discourses and systems surrounding Latinx/a/o people in domains such as the law, education, and more position our communities in precarious positions.

So how do we move forward? The final facet of our theme sets the foundation for us to imagine what more equitable futures can look like for Latinx/a/o people in higher education, especially those with multiply minoritized identities. The next twenty years of Latinx/a/o education will mark significant shifts as we consider pathways, supports, and resources for our communities. Therefore, as we look to the past, we must simultaneously look forward.

With these intentions as a foundation, we invite you to engage in this questioning through the various session formats our conference offers. These formats include plenary sessions, as well as an updated offering of concurrent session types: Art as Activism/Artivista Approaches, Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused), Interactive Workshops/Symposia, Poster Presentations, and Roundtables (Works in Progress). These session types were intentionally designed to be more inclusive of various ways of knowing. This year's conference strands also reflect the same intentionality:

- Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts
- Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Heal and Move Forward
- Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x Diasporas
- Constructing Coalitions and Communities

As a part of our AAHHE familia, we hope you take full advantage of all the opportunities designed to develop the relationships and strategies needed to continue recognizing different forms of knowledge and ways to heal our whole selves with the work we do. Whether it be the 41st annual Tomás Rivera Lecture, AAHHE Outstanding Dissertation Awards Ceremony, 9th annual Cigarrora Family STEM/Medical Lecture, Annual Awards Luncheon, the Graduate Fellows and Faculty Fellows programs, or informal settings of networking and relationship building, we invite you to join in this movement with us.

A sincere thank you to the 2025 Conference Planning Committee members for your commitment to facilitating change and advancing these critical social justice issues. Your dedication has made this conference a reality. Welcome to the 20th AAHHE national conference!

Adelante siempre,
Antonio Duran (he/him/él) and **Lazaro Camacho Jr.** (he/him/él)
2025 AAHHE National Conference Co-Chairs



Janine Davidson, PhD

President
Metropolitan State University of Denver

Dear Colleagues,

I am honored to welcome you to Metropolitan State University of Denver for the 2025 American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education Conference. It is fitting this year's gathering takes place in the city many cite as the birthplace of the American Chicano movement of the 60s and 70s. I hope that over the next three days you will get a taste of the diverse, inclusive community we have created on our campus in the heart of the city. More than 55% of MSU Denver undergraduate students identify themselves as people of color and more than 1 in every 3 identify as Hispanic and Latina/o/x.

For MSU Denver, serving our community goes well beyond the numbers. It is an integral part of our history and our identity. MSU Denver established the State of Colorado's first campus Immigrant Services Program in 1990.

Our Immigrant Service Program, which still serve students today, provides academic and social support to undocumented, DACA, immigrant, and refugee students through academic counseling, language and writing support, scholarship application assistance, and access to campus and community resources.

In 2012, MSU Denver became a leading public advocate for 'Dreamers', when MSU Denver became one of the first in the nation to offer in-state tuition to undocumented students in 2012, without a state mandate. We led efforts to pass Colorado's 2013 ASSET Bill, allowing undocumented students at any institution to pay in-state tuition.

In addition to local and regional recognition, MSU Denver received Hispanic-Serving Institution designation in 2019. Last fall, we proudly received the Seal of Excelencia, a 3-year certification, recognizing its evidence-based commitment to serving Latino students. We are the first and only Colorado institution of higher education to receive the Seal.

As a modified open-access institution, MSU Denver has prepared more than 30,000 Latinx Coloradans for the modern workforce with both undergraduate and graduate degrees. We are thrilled to welcome you to our community and hope you enjoy our campus and the conference.

Best,

Janine Davidson, Ph.D.

President, Metropolitan State University of Denver

LAND AND LABOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FROM MSU DENVER



Manuel Del Real, PhD

Executive Director of HSI Initiatives and Inclusion
Metropolitan State University of Denver

MSU Denver acknowledges the indigenous people and land of Auraria and the broader Denver area and the labor of enslaved and exploited people that built the country. We honor and acknowledge that we are on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Nations. We acknowledge the land and history of this space we are fortunate to gather in today. This area was also the site of trade, hunting, gathering, and healing for many other Native Nations: The Lakota, Ute, Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Shoshone, and others. 48 Tribes have called this land home. We recognize the Indigenous peoples as the original stewards of the land, water, plants, and animals who called this place home. Let us also acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced removal from this territory. We recognize that U.S. public policy has been used to displace Indigenous communities, erode Tribal Nation sovereignty, and forcibly assimilate Native individuals into U.S. society. We respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land on which we gather. We pay our respect to them and give thanks to all Tribal Nations and the ancestors of this place. We also acknowledge the labor of enslaved Africans and their descendants who worked this stolen land for the colonists, and who continue to disproportionately face economic oppression, racism, violence, and exploitation. Lastly, we want to recognize the communities and families of Auraria displaced by the creation of this campus for MSU Denver to have a place that we now call a learning community. We share this acknowledgment to encourage all of us here on the Auraria campus to consider how our work in this space and in our daily lives can address these historic and contemporary atrocities perpetuated against Native people and other marginalized communities.

2025 AAHHE National Conference Metropolitan State University of Denver, Denver, CO Conference At-A-Glance

March 7-8, 2025

*Reconciling Our Past, Challenging the Present, Shaping Equitable Futures:
Advancing the Next 20 Years of Latinx/a/o Communities*

Pre-conference Events ~ In-person Only (all times are in U.S. Mountain Standard Time Zone)

**Friday, March 7, 2025
8:00 AM – 11:00 AM MST**

ETS Latino Student Success Institute presented by Natalicio Institute | Baerreson Ballroom C

Sponsored by



As Hispanics are the nation’s second largest racial/ethnic group, serving them well in higher education is essential to building this country’s workforce and well-being. In this Institute, a nationally engaged group of scholars and administrators based at the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), a leading Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), will facilitate a learning opportunity for leaders committed to advancing Hispanics’ thriving and success in higher education. In sharing effective strategies for Hispanic student success with one another, including those based on HSI Hispanic servingness, participants will leave the Institute with a renewed sense of community, commitment, and understanding of how to enact culturally affirming approaches to elevate their students’ thriving.

Presenters

Dr. Anne-Marie Núñez, Executive Director, **Diana Natalicio** Institute for Hispanic Student Success

Dr. Azuri Gonzalez, UT Regents’ Endowed Distinguished Director, **Diana Natalicio** Institute for Hispanic Student Success

Dr. Gary Edens, Professor of Practice and Retired Vice President for Student Affairs

Dr. Jesus Cisneros, Department Chair, Associate Professor and Doctoral Program Director, Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

Dr. Louie Rodriguez, Vice Provost for Professional Development, Engagement, and Strategic Initiatives

Dr. Erin Doran, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Foundations

Dr. Heather Smith, Associate Vice President for Advising and Student Services

Ms. Jennifer Lujan, Director, Center for Community Engagement (CCE), The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP)

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM MST

640 Zenith | Community College Institute

Moderator

Marissa Vasquez, EdD, San Diego State University

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM MST

Baerreson Ballroom A&B | Latinas and Leadership in Higher Education:
"Navegando Entre Fronteras: Latina-Centered Leadership"

This pre-conference institute centers the unique assets of and opportunities for early- and mid- career Latina leaders in higher education. Discussion will focus on navigating identity challenges, harnessing a mujerista mindset and drawing upon cultural values to embody authentic leadership practices. This institute will be highly interactive, including the application of resonant leadership skills through a review of case scenarios.

Presenters

Patricia Arredondo, EdD, President, Arredondo Advisory Group, Past Chair, AAHHE

Azara Santiago Rivera, PhD, Professor Emerita, Merrimack College, Consultant, Immediate Past Chair, AAHHE

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM MST

On-Site Visit to Homies Unidos Denver

If you are not registered for a pre-conference session, you are invited to attend a site visit to Homies Unidos Denver on Friday, March 7th from 10am-12pm. The address to their office is 518 17th St. Suite 270, Denver, CO 80202. Transportation is on your own.

Up to 25 guests are welcome to attend. Please RSVP to Jasmin Tobar directly at jasminto@usc.ed

Homies Unidos Denver is dedicated to ending violence and promoting peace through comprehensive gang prevention and intervention. They advocate for human rights, support immigrant communities, and empower youth and families to realize their full potential. By providing mentorship, skill-building, and community outreach, they strive to build a safe, just, and healthy society where individuals are supported and resilient. Through their mission, they are committed to creating positive change and fostering a community where every person has the opportunity to thrive

Sponsored by



11:00 AM – 12:00 PM MST

AAHHE Board of Directors & AAHHE Fellows Brunch (by invitation only)

Room: Jordan Student Success Building Room 211

Pre-Conference Attendee Lunch

Room: Jordan Student Success Building Room 209

12:00 PM – 12:40 PM MST

Caucus 1: LGBTQ+ Latinx/a/o Individuals Faculty, Staff, and Community Members

Jordan Student Success Building Room 200

Caucus 2: Afro-Latinx/a/o Faculty, Staff, and Community Members

Jordan Student Success Building Room 202

Caucus 3: Hispanic-Serving Institutions Practitioners, Faculty, and Scholars

Jordan Student Success Building Room 203

Caucus 4: Community-College Practitioners, Faculty, and Scholars

Jordan Student Success Building 204

Caucus 5: Individuals Managing Grants and Philanthropy in Today's Age

Jordan Student Success Building 205

12:50 PM – 1:00 PM MST

Break

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | Welcome Program, Tomas Rivera Lecture & ETS ODC Awards:

Keynote:

Xóchitl C. Chávez, PhD, Associate Professor, UC Riverside Department of Music, Faculty Advisor for Ballet Folklórico de UCR

"..no nos tragará la tierra | the earth will not devour us: Honoring Our Past, Embracing Joy, and Building Collective Power for the Future"

3:00 PM – 3:10 PM MST

Break

3:10 PM – 4:10 PM MST

Concurrent Session IW1-1-1 | Proposing a New Health Model: Merging Curanderismo Latinx Traditional Medicine with Modern Allopathic Medicine.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 200

Concurrent Session IW1-2-1 | Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive Approaches in the Classroom: A Pathway to Healing-Centered Education.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session ES1-3-1 | Catalizadores del Cambio: Advancing Latinx Students to College Completion and Career Achievement.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session IW1-4-1 | From Inclusion to Servingness to Thriving: Envisioning Engineering Where Latin* Students Can Thrive.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session IW1-5-1 | Equity in Action: Workshopping for Transparency in Learning and Teaching.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session GSFP1-6-1 | Featured Session.

Jordan Student Success Building 206

4:10 PM – 4:20 PM MST

Break

4:20 PM – 5:20 PM MST

Concurrent Session ES1-2-2 | The Experiences of Second-Generation Salvadorans in Higher Education:

Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session ES1-3-2 | How does the Hispanic-Serving Institution Designation Influence Institutional Behavior and Resources.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session ES1-4-2 | Transformations in the Many Faces of Chicana Identity.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session ES1-5-2 | Femtorship as a Transformative Practice: How UNM Latina Professors are Femtoring Future Generations in Higher Education.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session GSFP1-6-2 |

Featured Session: Jordan Student Success Building 206

5:20 PM – 5:30 PM MST

Break

5:30 PM – 6:30 PM MST

Concurrent Session ES1-1-3 | College Adjustment and Satisfaction for Latinx Transfer vs. Non-transfer Students at an Elite Public Institution.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 200

Concurrent Session RT1-2-3 | Roundtable: Challenging Monolithic Understandings of Latinx/a/o Communities and Their Needs:

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session ES1-3-3 | A Trauma-Informed Mentorship Guide for Latinx Individuals in Higher Education.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session ES-1-4-3 | How Schools Make Race: Teaching Latinx Racialization in America.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session ES1-5-3 | Using the Altar as a Healing Tool with Formerly Incarcerated Youth. **Room:**

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session JHHE1-6-3 | IHHE Editor Workshop.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 206

6:30 PM – 6:40 PM MST

Break

6:40 PM – 7:40 PM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | 9th Annual Cigarroa Family Medical/STEM Distinguished Lecture

Dr. Charles Vela, President and Chief Architect at Afilon Innovation

“Cultivating Healers for the Latinx/a/o/e Community”

Sponsored by

Cigarroa Family

8:00 PM - 10:00 PM MST

Dine Around

A fun and informal opportunity for attendees to network, learn from their peers, and have conversations around a specific topic over dinner. Reservations will be made at up to 10 restaurants for up to 8 attendees at each restaurant, and a topic of discussion will be led by an AAHHE Board Member. Sign-up sheets will be available at the registration table and space is available on a first come, first served basis. Please note that attendees will need to cover the cost of their own dinner.

Saturday, March 8, 2025

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle Atrium | Networking Cafecito with AAHHE Chairs

9:00 AM - 9:50 AM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | Welcome Program: AAHHE Year In Review & Fellows Recognition

9:50 AM - 10:50 AM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | Plenary Session

Plenary Speaker

Michael Benitez, PhD, Vice President for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Metropolitan State University of Denver

Navigating and Advancing Latinidad in Higher Education During Times of Political, Cultural and Educational Variance

10:50 AM – 11:00 AM MST

Break

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM MST

Concurrent Session ES2-2-4 | Creating Community through Learning: Impact of a Summer Research Program for Undergraduates at a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session IW2-3-4 | Bregando, Construyendo, y Sosteniendo: Shaping and Contributing to Comunidad at a Florida eHSI.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session ES2-4-4 | Cultivating communities of empowerment: How students and departments co-create inclusive STEM environments in Hispanic-serving Institutions.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session ES2-5-4 | The Role of Advocacy Coalitions in Urban HSI Universities Pursuit to Top Tier: Multiple Case Studies.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session ES2-6-4 | Reconciling Selectivity and Inclusivity: UCLA's Transformation into an Emerging HSI.

Jordan Student Success Building 206

12:10 PM – 12:10 PM MST

Break

12:10 PM - 1:00 PM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | Networking Buffet Lunch, Art & Poster Session Preview, Homies Unidos

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | AAHHE Book Awards

Early Career Category

Mid-Career Category

Senior Scholar Category

Edited Volume

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM MST

Break

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM MST

Concurrent Session ODC2-1-5 | ODC 2.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 200

Concurrent Session ES2-2-5 | “You probably have a leg up since you’re Latino”: Micro-aggressions and counter-spaces for Latino men students

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session ES2-3-5 | “It’s important to hold the door open”- Motivations of Latino Men in HESA Programs.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session ES2-4-5 | Striving Towards Latinx Faculty Thriving in Early Career.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session ES2-5-5 | Navigating Barriers: A Duoethnographic Exploration of Latina Superintendents Aspiring to Shape Equitable Futures.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session USDA2-6-5 | USDA Caminos To Success Fellows.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 206

3:30 PM – 3:40 PM MST

Break

3:40 PM – 4:40 PM MST

Concurrent Session ODC2-1-6 | ODC 1.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 200

Concurrent Session ES2-2-6 | Empowering Institutional Agents: Designing HSI Workshops for Sustainable Change and Latine Student Success.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session ES2-3-6 | "Fotos y Recuerdos: Reconciling our Past and Present for a Successful Future through storytelling".

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session ES2-4-6 | Reflexión y acción: Moving equity, inclusion and diversity (EID) from theory to praxis.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session IW2-5-6 | Writing Ourselves into Academia: A Reflective Workshop for Imagining Latinx/a/o Futures.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session USDA2-6-6 | USDA Caminos To Success Fellows.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 206

4:40 PM – 5:40 PM MST

Break

4:50 PM – 5:50 PM MST

Concurrent Session RT2-1-7 | Roundtable: Intentional Institutional Practices to Support Latinx/a/o Student Success.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 200

Concurrent Session IW2-2-7 | Community College Men of Color Initiatives: Examining Practices and Structures that Activate Student Assets.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 202

Concurrent Session IW2-3-7 | Reimagining Love, Care, and Energy Through Spoken Word: A Tool for Healing in Higher Education.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 203

Concurrent Session IW2-4-7 | Healing Through Connection: Supporting Latinx/a/o Students with Care and Intention.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 204

Concurrent Session ES2-5-7 | Navigating Change: Supporting Undocumented Students Amid Shifting Immigration Laws and Educational Barriers.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 205

Concurrent Session ES2-6-7 | Amplifying STEM Impact through State-Based HSI Consortiums.

Room: Jordan Student Success Building 206

5:50 PM – 6:10 PM MST

Break

6:10 PM – 7:00 PM MST

Jordan Student Success Building Lobby | Networking Mixer and Art & Poster Session

Poster Sessions

From Home to Campus: Strengthening Commuter Student Involvement and Belonging

Remapping Our Relationship with Our City: A web-based approach to Critical Place-Based Education

Latina/e women’s Journeys to Top Senior Leadership and Strategies for Sustaining Success

Supporting Latinx/a/o Students with Disabilities in Higher Education

Contradictions and Challenges toward Building Cross-Race Coalitions in HSI’s

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM MST

Tivoli Turnhalle | Awards Dinner & Closing Remarks

Community College Award

Doctoral Student Award

Early Career Award

Mildred Garcia Founders’ Award

Sylvia Hurtado University Faculty Award

William Aguilar Cultural Arts Award

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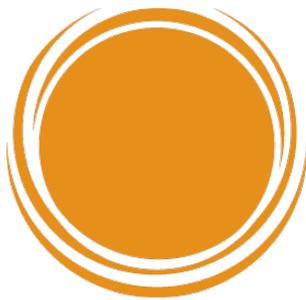


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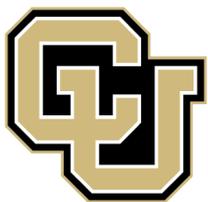
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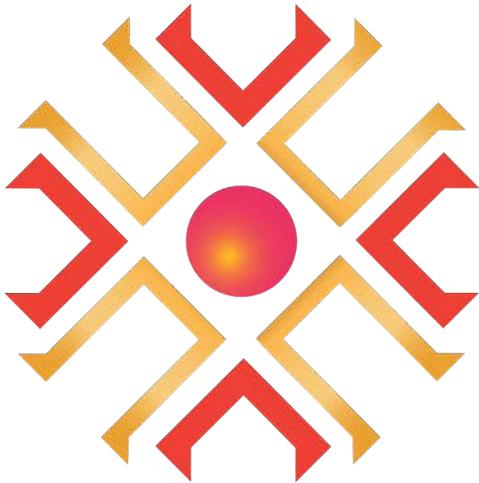


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ABOUT AAHHE

Twenty Years of AAHHE in Review: 2005 – 2025

In its twentieth anniversary, the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) celebrates its initiatives, accomplishments, and advancements with great pride, remaining steadfast in its commitment and acute awareness of the need for significant change in the representation of the Latino community in higher education.

Consider the following in reflecting on the current state of the nation and the demographic and equality-centered impetus for the U.S. educational system to be responsive to the Latino community. The latest data by the National Center for Education Statistics reports (2022):

- 29% of K-12 enrollment in the U.S. is Latino,
- 22% of all undergraduate students in the U.S. is Latino,
- 9% of graduate students in the U.S. is Latino,
- 9% of K-12 teachers are Latino, as are 9% of K-12 principals,
- 6% of higher education faculty are Latino, as are 6% of college presidents.

Moreover, in 2022 the Latino contribution of the total U.S. GDP is 15% at \$3.6 trillion, marking this Latino economy as the 5th largest economy globally, above countries like the UK, France, Canada, Mexico, and Russia. The Latino community contributes greatly to the manufacturing, retail, construction, and administration sectors. Although the U.S. population is 20% Latino, only 2% of elected officials nationwide are Latino, with 11% of the current 435 voting members of the U.S. House of Representatives as Latino, and 6% of the 100 U.S. Senate members are Latino. Mining the Latino economic and political power through education is of great global and nation building interest.

If institutions of higher education are viewed as the pathway to an educated citizenry, critical to sustaining an economic and political democracy, it is imperative that education pathway inequities for Hispanics/Latines in higher education are addressed at the highest levels nationwide. AAHHE is well-positioned to work with institutions of higher education, foundations, business partners, and other collaborative organizations to develop and implement broad, effective change to

address the needed leadership and academic response to a nation with a great need for equality and social justice. Thus, AAHHE is committed to:

- Addressing societal issues as they pertain to a democratic and just society,
- Convening community and forums to inform leadership and public policy reflecting the growing Latino demographics of our nation,
- Preparing more Hispanics/Latines to pursue a career in higher education as scholars, faculty, leaders, and policy makers.

** The terms Hispanic and Latinx/e are used interchangeably, and as a concept or community reference Latino is applied.*

AAHHE's Contributions in Review

The following provides a summary of AAHHE's accomplishments, new initiatives/partnerships, and on-going programs.

AAHHE continues to advance strategic alignment of its Fellows Programs to provide a pipeline of talented Latine scholars and leaders for higher education institutions and industry sectors that serve and support Latino communities.

Mentoring Future Scholars and Leaders

Undergraduate Fellows Program: In 2022, AAHHE launched the inaugural ETS/AAHHE Undergraduate Fellowship Program (UFP) to increase Latine undergraduate students' knowledge and understanding of post-baccalaureate options and career readiness through workshops and professionalization. The program provided strategies to assist fellows in achieving their academic and professional goals, exposed undergraduate student fellows to the importance of research, and built a community and network of Latine mentors and scholars.

Graduate Student Fellows Program (GSFP): Since 1997, over 420 doctoral students from various disciplines have participated in the GSFP which focuses on guidance and mentorship to navigate the complexities of higher education and successfully complete their doctoral degree.

ABOUT AAHHE

Faculty Fellows Program (FFP): Since 2008, over 203 early career faculty from various disciplines have participated in the FFP which focuses on guidance and mentorship to help them navigate the tenure and promotion process, as well as and provide strategies for achieving career goals

Latinx STEM Fellows Program: 146 master's level students in the food and agricultural sciences participated in a nine-year (2012–2020) USDA \$500,000 funded program focused on increasing the doctoral program and workforce pipeline. All participants completed a master's program and 35% enrolled in a doctoral program in California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, North Dakota, Puerto Rico, Texas, Wisconsin and Vermont. In 2024, the USDA Caminos to Success Grant program was reestablished and will be participating in the AAHHE conference.

New Leadership Academy: More than 160 early career administrators from various disciplines have participated in year-long programs focused on developing administrative preparation skills from DEI perspectives. In 2021, the University of Utah partnered with AAHHE to deliver this programming. Previously, AAHHE partnered in this initiative with University of California Berkeley (2011– 2015) and the University of Michigan's National Center for Institutional Diversity (2015 – 2020).

Showcasing and Celebrating Excellence at the AAHHE Annual Conference

- As AAHHE's longest standing lecture series, the Tomás Rivera Lecture highlights thought leaders on critical higher education issues. Featured speakers have included prolific authors, researchers, demographers, CEOs of philanthropic organizations, and activists.

- Since 2017, the Cigarroa Family Medical/STEM Lecture highlights leaders addressing the advances of the Latino population in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The AAHHE Annual Awards Program has recognized and celebrated dozens of faculty, artists, administrators, and Latine advocates.

- Through the AAHHE Book of the Year Award, forty-seven authors have been recognized for their contributions focused on the Latino community and the impact on higher education for Latines.

Promoting Research and Scholarly Leadership

- The Latino Student Success Institute, a pre-conference session focuses on promising practices that address issues of access and success for the Latino population. This year's institute is presented and sponsored by The Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success at the University of Texas at El Paso. This session is also co-sponsored by Educational Testing Service (ETS)..

- The Community College Institute specifically targets promising practices and leadership strategies for faculty and administrators working in community colleges.

- Over the past 17 years, the ETS-sponsored Outstanding Dissertations Competition has recognized 41 doctoral candidates for their outstanding dissertations. The top three winners showcase their dissertations as featured conference sessions.

- Until 2020, AAHHE annually commissioned AAHHE Scholarly Treatises that were presented at the annual conference and were published in the Journal of Hispanic Higher Education. Since 2023, AAHHE showcases the AAHHE "Best Scholarly Paper" Award open to accepted research and scholarly papers that are presented at the AAHHE annual conference.

Continuing Partnerships

- AMC Source became AAHHE's business partner in July 2020. This association management company, based in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, continues to provide resources and guidance for AAHHE business operations and other management services that support the ongoing activities of the organization. Dr. Lucia Gutierrez, of AMC Source, is AAHHE Director of Operations.

- Long-standing partnerships with the Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine and Educational Testing Services (ETS) have helped move AAHHE's mission forward. The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine, a partner since 2007,

ABOUT AAHHE

has published article submissions written by AAHHE members. For seventeen years, ETS, co-sponsored the Outstanding Dissertations Competition and Awards, as well as the Latino Student Success Institute, hosted at the annual conference.

A New Era: 2025 and Beyond

We are proud of the many accomplishments noted. The association will continue to further its mission and impact. While many of our programs have existed since 2005, the AAHHE Board has focused on creating new initiatives and engaging with membership in ways that are responsive to the changes occurring within the academy and the Latino community. Highlights are:

Continuing to Forge New Partnerships

AAHHE continues to establish partnerships to advance its mission and to plan for the future. These partnerships include: The Diana Natalicio Latino Student Success Institute, the Lumina Foundation, TIAA and others yet to come.

Strategic Planning

In 20203, AAHHE engaged in the first step of the strategic planning process by revisiting the vision for the association, identifying areas of focus, and setting goals and metrics. Three focus areas were identified (Source: Shannon, D. (2023). AAHHE Strategic Planning Report, Vista Cove, LLC. Page 5):

- **Professional development** - AAHHE is the lead creator of optimal conditions for life enrichment and learning across Latinidades via diverse educational caminos.

- **Financial expansion** – AAHHE is a financially vital organization that responsibly utilizes its resources to enhance and expand its impact within the Latino higher education community.

- **Organization of belonging** – AAHHE is a welcoming, familial environment for the Latino higher education community cultivating wellness in all the dimensions.

AAHHE's leadership will continue to refine the work in 2024 and 2025.

Advancing Inclusion and Equality

The Board of Directors continues to advance its priority for inclusion and representation of diversity throughout the organization and all areas of programming. Addressing AfroLatinidad and non-binary individuals in Latino higher education research and practice continue to be strategic priorities. Conference themes, strands, and research interrogate campus hiring, inclusion, and retention practices for Afro-Latinx/a/o/e, Asian-Latinx/a/o/e, Indigenous Latinx/é, Trans*, Gender Non-Conforming and other Latino diaspora communities.

Member Participation on AAHHE Committees

The Board of Directors continues outreach efforts to engage more members in new and existing initiatives.

AAHHE Leadership

The Board of Directors continues to give guidance to the evolution of AAHHE. Per the AAHHE Bylaws, there are 20 members, including one Faculty Member -at-Large, one Early Career and two Graduate student-at-large.

AAHHE LEADERSHIP

AAHHE BOARD OF DIRECTORS - OFFICERS



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Associate Provost for Equity-Centered Initiatives in Academic Affairs
Western Michigan University



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Faculty/Administrator Member-at-Large
Associate Professor
San Diego State University



Azara Santiago-Rivera, PhD, AAHHE Past-Chair
Interim Dean, Graduate School of Counseling
Naropa University



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Educational Administration and Policy
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Latin American, Caribbean, and US Latino Studies
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Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies, Social Sciences
Director, Social Policy and Public Service major
University of California, Irvine



**Antonio Durán, PhD,
Early Career Member-at-Large**
Assistant Professor
Arizona State University



David Fuentes, PhD
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College of Education
William Paterson University



Jasmine Haywood
Strategy Director
Lumina Foundation



Carmen Martínez-López, PhD
Dean, School of Business and Professional Careers
Westchester Community College
State University of New York

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AAHHE BOARD OF DIRECTORS - DIRECTORS



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Associate Professor and Senior Policy Fellow
Rowan University



Gloria Martínez-Ramos, PhD
Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Diversity and Gender Studies
Director of Latina/o Studies Program
Texas State University



Monique Posadas, MA
Graduate Student Member-at-Large
ETS/AAHHE Undergraduate Student Fellows Program Chair
Graduate Student Mentorship Program Coordinator, University of California Riverside



Naomi Ramirez, MA
Graduate Student Member-at-Large
PhD student, Department of Education (in progress)
San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University



Mary Ann Villareal, PhD
Vice President, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
University of Utah



Julián Vasquez Heilig, PhD
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Western Michigan University

AAHHE LEADERSHIP

AAHHE BOARD OF DIRECTORS - OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS



Azara Santiago-Rivera, PhD, AAHHE Past-Chair
Interim Dean, Graduate School of Counseling
Naropa University



Carmen Martínez-López, PhD
2018 – 2025
Dean, School of Business and Professional Careers
Westchester Community College
State University of New York



Aurora Kamimura, PhD
2020 – 2024
Assistant Provost for Inclusive Excellence
Lecturer in Education, Arts & Sciences
Washington University in St. Louis



Edith Fernández, PhD
2022 – 2024
Vice President
College and Community Engagement
Nevada State College

SAVE THE DATE

MARCH 27 - 29, 2026

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER
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2025 CONFERENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE

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AAHHE Conference Planning Committee Co-chair
Arizona State University

Lazaro Camacho, PhD,

AAHHE Conference Planning Committee Co-chair
University of Rhode Island

Azara Santiago-Rivera, PhD,

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Northern Illinois University

Jasmin N. Tobar, DSW

California State University, Northridge

José Del Real Viramontes, PhD

University of California, Riverside

Miriam Delgado, PhD candidate

University of California, Riverside

Mitzi Ceballos, PhD candidate

The University of Utah

Ruby Batz, PhD

University of Nevada, Reno

Stacey Speller, MS

Howard University

Pre-conference Agenda ~ In-person Only (all times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone)

The Latino Student Success Institute

Friday, March 7, 2025

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Baerreson Ballroom C

Sponsored by



Co-sponsored by



As Hispanics are the nation's second largest racial/ethnic group, serving them well in higher education is essential to building this country's workforce and well-being. In this Institute, a nationally engaged group of scholars and administrators based at the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), a leading Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), will facilitate a learning opportunity for leaders committed to advancing Hispanics' thriving and success in higher education. In sharing effective strategies for Hispanic student success with one another, including those based on HSI Hispanic servingness, participants will leave the Institute with a renewed sense of community, commitment, and understanding of how to enact culturally affirming approaches to elevate their students' thriving.

Presenters

Dr. Anne-Marie Núñez, Executive Director, Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success.

Dr. Azuri Gonzalez, UT Regents' Endowed Distinguished Director, Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success.

Dr. Gary Edens, Professor of Practice and Retired Vice President for Student Affairs.

Dr. Jesus Cisneros, Department Chair, Associate Professor and Doctoral Program Director, Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations.

Dr. Louie Rodríguez, Vice Provost for Professional Development, Engagement, and Strategic Initiatives.

Dr. Erin Doran, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Foundations.

Dr. Heather Smith, Vice Provost for Advising, Academic Success, and Student Support

Ms. Jennifer Lujan, Director, Center for Community Engagement

THE LATINO STUDENT SUCCESS INSTITUTE PRESENTERS



Anne-Marie Núñez, PhD

Executive Director
Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success
University of Texas at El Paso

Anne-Marie Núñez, PhD is the inaugural executive director of the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success and Distinguished Centennial Professor in Educational Leadership and Foundations at The University of Texas at El Paso. Her award-winning research employs sociological approaches to examine how multiple social identities (e.g., racial, ethnic, class, linguistic) shape educational opportunities. As a national expert on HSIs and inclusive science, she serves as principal investigator of the first ever NSF-funded HSI Center for Evaluation and Research, Network Opportunities to Develop Equitable and Effective Evaluation (NODE), which advances culturally responsive evaluation and research to support HSIs in creating STEM pathways for diverse students. She has also collaborated extensively with the Computing Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (CAHSI), an alliance of over 40 HSIs and other partners, to raise Hispanic attainment in computing fields. As part of this work, Núñez has focused on how HSIs can apply the concept of Hispanic “servingness” to build mutually beneficial partnerships to promote culturally affirming experiences and outcomes for Hispanic students and in computer science and other fields. Widely recognized for her outstanding scholarship and leadership, she is an American Educational Research Association Fellow, National Academy of Education member, and has been recognized in Education Week’s Edu-Scholar Public Influence Rankings as among the top 200 scholars in the U.S. influencing educational practice and policy.



Azuri Gonzalez, EdD

Executive Director
Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research Universities
UT Regents’ Endowed Distinguished Director
Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success
The University of Texas at El Paso

Edith Fernández, PhD, serves concurrently as the executive director for the Alliance for Hispanic Serving Research Universities (HSRU), and the UT Regents’ Endowed Distinguished Director at the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success. Gonzalez has over 20 years of experience in higher education administration, program development, research, and teaching. As a practitioner-scholar she has focused on the institutionalization of public and community engaged scholarship, faculty development, community partnerships, student high impact practices, and the overall alignment of institutional priorities for public impact. She successfully led UTEP’s Elective Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and Reclassification in 2010 and 2020 respectively. Gonzalez’s background also includes an extensive history of nonprofit board service for local, regional and national entities, and through the provision of technical assistance in topic areas such as strategic planning, organizational management, stakeholder development, leadership, and governance. Through the HSRU, she works collaboratively with stakeholders across 22 R1- Hispanic Serving Institutions and private/public governmental agencies to build a multi-institutional network to increase the number of Hispanic doctoral students and Hispanic faculty at HSI/R1 institutions, ultimately in support of social mobility, post-secondary attainment, and the growth in the science and innovation workforce of the future. Through the Diana Natalicio Institute, she is a co-principal investigator for the National Science Foundation’s \$7 million HSI-Network Center for Evaluation Research and Synthesis, primarily overseeing the outreach and capacity-building efforts on evaluation among HSIs for the NSF HSI-Network program. She also serves as principal investigator for the \$9.3 million grant through the Department of Defense STEM Education Program for the Alliance. Gonzalez has been recognized for her service by the El Paso Inc. in 2021 as a Woman of Impact, through the El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce’, Hispanos Triunfadores in 2019, and as a recipient of the 2018 UT Regents’ Outstanding Employee Award.



Gary Edens, EdD

Professor of Practice and Retired Vice President for Student Affairs
University of Texas at El Paso

Anne-Marie Núñez, PhD, is a professor of practice in the Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at The University of Texas at El Paso where he also serves as the Program Coordinator for Higher Education Leadership. Last year, he retired as UTEP's vice president for Student Affairs where he provided administrative leadership to thirty-nine student service departments. As the institution's chief student affairs officer, he was the primary campus leader in developing and implementing the university's enrollment management strategies and has actively worked to improve retention rates and decrease time to degree. Edens graduated from UTEP as a Top Ten Senior with a bachelor's degree in business administration. He went on to earn his master's degree in public administration and doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from The University of Texas at El Paso. His scholarly interests include student leadership development, student transition issues and college access, retention and success factors. In 1998, Edens was recognized for his professional successes with UTEP's highest staff honor – the Distinguished Achievement Award in Service to Students. He is celebrating his 39th year at UTEP.



Jesus Cisneros, PhD

Department Chair
Associate Professor and Doctoral Program Director
Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations
University of Texas, El Paso

Jesús Cisneros, PhD, is chair and professor in the department of Educational Leadership and Foundations at UTEP. His research moves gender, sexuality, and immigration status, and their conceptual margins, to the center of analysis to explore and understand the way politics and identity interact with various axes of inequality. He obtained a bachelor's degree in journalism and mass communications from New Mexico State University; a master's degree in Higher Education Administration from Texas A&M University; and a doctoral degree in Educational Policy and Evaluation from Arizona State University.



Louie Rodríguez, JD

Vice Provost for Professional Development, Engagement, and Strategic Initiatives
University of Texas at El Paso

Louie Rodríguez, JD serves as a member of the provost's leadership team at UTEP, where he oversees campuswide student professional development efforts, career integration into academic affairs, and strategic initiatives on campus and beyond. A native El Pasoan, Rodríguez brings his years of experience in the corporate world in New York City to his work advancing UTEP student success. Prior to UTEP, Rodríguez served as head of diversity and inclusion for global law firm Proskauer Rose LLP, in New York, where he oversaw the firm's diversity committee, affinity groups, and established the overall strategy for diversity, equity, and inclusion. He also worked at non-profit organization SEO (Seizing Every Opportunity) where he oversaw the corporate law internship program and trained, mentored, and placed students from underrepresented backgrounds in competitive internships at some of the world's most prestigious law firms. He began his career as an attorney in the New York office of global law firm Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker, where his practice focused on employment law and intellectual property. He also helped establish the firm's first diversity committee. He holds a bachelor's degree in human resource management from Baylor University, a Juris Doctorate from Columbia Law School, and is a Cornell Certified Diversity Practitioner.



Erin Doran, PhD

Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Foundations
University of Texas at El Paso

Erin Doran, PhD, is an associate professor of Educational Leadership and Foundations and research associate at the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success at the University of Texas at El Paso. An El Paso native, Doran received three degrees at the University of Texas at San Antonio, including an EdD in Educational Leadership. She was a faculty member in the School of Education at Iowa State University prior to UTEP. Her research interests include Latinx college students, community college faculty, and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Doran was named an AAHE Graduate Student Fellow in 2015 and a Faculty Fellow in 2020.



Heather Smith, PhD

Associate Vice President for Advising and Student Services
University of Texas at El Paso

Heather Smith, PhD, is vice provost for Advising, Academic Success, and Student Support at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). An innovative higher education professional, Smith has 25 years of experience in university administration and is dedicated to inspiring and empowering students to believe in the value of higher education and earn college degrees. Smith began her career establishing the first academic center for student-athletes at UTEP, and in 2016, led the design and implementation of UTEP's integrated holistic advising model as part of the institution's vision for enhanced student success. As vice provost, Smith integrated departments and programs dedicated to academic success and student support to collectively advance conditions for student success, increase persistence to degree completion, and positively impact the student experience at UTEP. Smith is active in UT System initiatives for advising, transfer students, and developmental education and is committed to a campus culture that integrates advising, persistence and student support into strategic enrollment planning. Smith earned her PhD in Rhetoric & Composition from UTEP.



Jennifer Lujan

Director, Center for Community Engagement
University of Texas at El Paso

Jennifer M. Lujan was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, and has dedicated 18 years to The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and its Center for Community Engagement (CCE), where she currently serves as Director. In this role, she champions UTEP's academic-based community engagement mission, fostering meaningful connections between students, faculty, staff, and the broader community.

With extensive experience managing grant-funded initiatives, cultivating strategic partnerships, and implementing high-impact practices in student programs, Ms. Lujan is passionate about supporting students from the region, helping them gain valuable experience, and building strong networks across the borderland region.

Beyond her work at UTEP, she recently served as President of the Board of Directors for the Women's Fund of El Paso and currently serves as a Board Member of the Engagement Scholarship Consortium (ESC), a national organization dedicated to promoting institutional engagement through research, collaboration, and best practices in community-based scholarship. She also chairs the Outreach and Engagement Practitioners Network (OEPN) Community of Practice, furthering her commitment to advancing community engagement at a national level.

Ms. Lujan holds both a B.A. and M.Ed. from UTEP and remains dedicated to fostering student success and strengthening community partnerships.

Latiné Excellence in Community Colleges: Strategies for Success

Join us for an inspiring pre-conference dedicated to celebrating and advancing Latiné excellence in community colleges. The CCI will feature insightful panel discussions, community building, and knowledge sharing. We are honored to have Joe Garcia, Chancellor of the Colorado Community College System, as our opening speaker. Our distinguished panelists include Dra. Marielena DeSanctis, President of the Community College of Denver and Dra. Reyna Anaya, Dean of Student Success and Senior Student Affairs Officer at the Community College of Aurora. Additionally, we will hear from a panel of Latiné community college students who will offer insights into their experiences.

By participating in the institute, participants will:

1. Gain valuable perspectives from community college students, understanding their experiences and challenges to better support their academic and personal growth.
2. Hear from institutional leaders on strategies to address and improve outcomes for Latiné students, gaining insights into successful initiatives and programs, particularly within Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).
3. Discover promising practices for building inclusive and supportive educational environments that empower Latiné students, faculty, and staff to thrive.

Moderator

Marissa Vásquez, EdD,

AAHHE Chair-elect
Faculty/Administrator Member-at-Large
Associate Professor
San Diego State University

Presenters

Dr. Marielena DeSanctis,

President, Community College of Denver

Dr. Mordecai Brownlee

President of Community College of Aurora

Reyna Anaya, PhD,

Dean of Student Success and Senior Student Affairs Officer, Community College of Aurora

Dra. Adelina Silva,

Vice Chancellor for Student Success Emeritus for the Alamo Colleges District

AAHHE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTITUTE PRESENTERS



Marissa Vásquez, EdD, AAHHE Chair-elect

Faculty/Administrator Member-at-Large
Associate Professor
San Diego State University

Marissa Vasquez, EdD is an associate professor of Postsecondary Educational Leadership in the Department of Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education at San Diego State University. As a community college scholar, Vasquez uses an anti-deficit lens to understand and interrogate the pre/post transitional experiences of community college and transfer students, particularly first-generation and racially minoritized communities. As the associate director of the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL), she leads efforts to assist community colleges in identifying challenges to equity-centered institutional effectiveness and developing problem-solving strategies and solutions. Vasquez also leads the SEMILLAS Research Team, which seeks to not only further scholarship on community college students but also engage them in research. She serves as co-editor of the Journal of Applied Research in the Community College and is on the editorial board for the Journal of Hispanics in Higher Education. A native of San Diego, Vasquez earned her AA from Southwestern College, BA in English from UC Berkeley, MA in counseling from the University of San Diego, and her EdD in Community College Leadership from San Diego State University.



Marielena DeSanctis, EdS, PhD

President, Community College of Denver

Marielena DeSanctis, EdS, PhD has more than 23 years of experience in education, including classroom teaching, curriculum development, instructional design, learning assessment, and progressive leadership roles in both K-12 and higher education. She served as the provost & senior vice president of Academic Affairs and Student Services for Broward College, Broward College's Central Campus President, High School assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. DeSanctis is an active and passionate advocate for her local, state, and nationwide community. She has served as a committee member and leader of several professional organizations, including her election to the position of State President of the Florida Association of School Administrators; Senate confirmation as a member of the Florida Education Practices Commission; and a Board member of the National Community College Hispanic Council. DeSanctis currently serves as Co-Chair of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) Board on Higher Education and the Workforce; a member of the NASEM Roundtable on Systemic Change in Undergraduate STEM Education; a member of Jobs for the Future Policy Trust Council; a board member of the Downtown Denver Partnership and also serves on their Economic Development Committee; and as a board member of the Colorado Education Initiative. A graduate of the Aspen Presidential Fellowship for Community College Excellence and Leadership Florida, she received the 2016 Hispanic Woman of Distinction, among other honors. DeSanctis served almost six years of experience as an engineer in the manufacturing and construction sector. Her education includes a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology, a master's degree in Math Education from Nova Southeastern University, and an EdS and PhD in Educational Leadership from Florida Atlantic University. Born in South Florida to a mother who emigrated from Cuba, she is fluent in Spanish. Among her accomplishments, she is most proud of her two children — Conner, an engineer, and Allie, a lawyer, and her grandson, Roland.



Dr. Mordecai Brownlee

President of Community College of Aurora

Mordecai Ian Brownlee is the esteemed President of the Community College of Aurora, where his visionary leadership has significantly elevated the institution's profile through strategic innovation and a steadfast commitment to excellence. With a doctorate in educational leadership, his career is distinguished by a passionate dedication to enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes for diverse student populations. At the core of Brownlee's philosophy is a profound belief in education as a transformative force in society. His initiatives often bridge the gap between academic achievements and real-world applications, preparing students not just for jobs, but for impactful careers. Under his leadership, the Community College of Aurora has seen remarkable advancements in academic program development, fundraising, capital advancement, and workforce education tailored to meet the changing dynamics of the global economy and workforce needs. Brownlee is also an advocate for community engagement and collaborative governance. He has successfully forged strong partnerships with business leaders, policymakers, and educational peers, enhancing the role of the college as a community cornerstone that fosters economic development and social enrichment. Respected as much for his academic achievements as for his empathetic leadership style, Brownlee's work continues to inspire students, educators, and community leaders alike to strive for greater achievement and a more inclusive future.



Reyna M. Anaya, PhD

Dean of Student Success
Senior Student Affairs Officer
Community College of Aurora

Reyna M. Anaya, MA, PhD is a student-centered leader with a commitment to equitable and transformative student success. As the senior student affairs officer and dean of Student Success at the Community College of Aurora, she provides leadership that promotes inclusive and proactive student services across the college and Colorado Community College System. Anaya is an active contributor in the field of student affairs administration through her scholarship and involvement in National Association of Student Personnel Administration, REACH Collaborative; Association of Student Conduct Administration; and Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Latinx. Anaya received the 2023 Education Award for the Hispanic Women of Weld County and was selected to participate in the 2023-2024 Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities La Academia de Liderazgo fellowship.



Adelina Silva, PhD

Vice Chancellor for Student Success Emeritus
Alamo Colleges District

Adelina S. Silva, PhD is the vice chancellor for student success for the Alamo Colleges District. She has held several positions in her 45+ year career developing student success programs, including establishing community education centers, returning adult and women's centers, student leadership institutes, and experiential learning and advising models. Silva has presented extensively on leadership, student development, advising, and equity. Her international presentations focus on non-traditional students, student and leadership development, and student equity. She also participated in the Fulbright Scholar Community College Administrator Seminar in Russia and served as a Fulbright Ambassador. Silva taught at Webster University in St. Louis, MO, for 24 years in the Graduate Programs in Business Management and Leadership. She was recognized with the Kemper Award for Excellence in Teaching for Adjunct Faculty at Webster Campuses worldwide. Silva has been recognized for her leadership and contributions. She served two years as the Chair of the Junior/Community College Student Personnel Association of Texas Board of Directors. She has also received recognition as La Prensa's San Antonio Latina Women in Action, Outstanding Young Women in America, San Antonio Women's Chamber Comet Award, and the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame.

AAHHE LATINAS AND LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Friday, March 7, 2025

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM ~ Baerreson Ballroom A&B

Navegando Entre Fronteras: Latina-Centered Leadership

This pre-conference institute centers the unique assets of and opportunities for early- and mid- career Latina leaders in higher education. Discussion will focus on navigating identity challenges, harnessing a *mujerista* mindset and drawing upon cultural values to embody authentic leadership practices. This institute will be highly interactive, including the application of resonant leadership skills through a review of case scenarios.

The objectives of the pre-conference are:

1. Identify awareness about “entre fronteras” challenges.
2. Conduct a self-assessment to identify areas of strength and power gaps.
3. Recognize intersecting identities as sources of strength as well as foci for microaggressions.
4. Describe the *Mujerista* mindset and how values of *Marianismo* can impede women’s personal empowerment.
5. Examine the types of emotional intelligence that can inform one’s interpersonal interactions.
6. Reframe dilemmas and apply resonant leadership skills Speakers.

Outcomes include:

1. Identify 2 specific strategies to capitalize on strengths in their leadership role.
2. Identify 2-3 power gaps and specific ways to address them.
3. Identify 2-3 effective ways of incorporating *mujerista* mindset principles in their leadership role.

Presenters

Patricia Arredondo, EdD,

President, Arredondo Advisory Group, Past Chair, AAHHE.

Azara Santiago Rivera, PhD,

Interim Dean, Graduate School of Counseling, Naropa University,
Immediage Past Chair, AAHHE

AAHHE LATINAS AND LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION PRESENTERS

Patricia Arredondo, EdD
President
Arredondo Advisory Group



Patricia Arredondo, EdD has had a long-term commitment to supporting women’s empowerment and leadership opportunities. Early in her career as a licensed psychologist, she worked exclusively with professional women and graduate students. She identified barriers to women’s confidence, relationship management, and career advancement based on gender socialization and structural barriers in the workplace. Her long career as an academic administrator, researcher, and consultant have provided platforms for disseminating thought leadership on Mujerista principles and practices, inclusive leadership, and women managing chilly climates in organizations. She believes in the power of transformative change. Arredondo is president of the Arredondo Advisory Group and past Chair of the AAHHE Board of Directors. She resides in Phoenix and Mexico City.

AAHHE LATINAS AND LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION PRESENTERS

Azara Santiago-Rivera, PhD, AAHHE Past-Chair

Azara Santiago-Rivera, PhD
Interim Dean, Graduate School of Counseling
Naropa University



Azara Santiago Rivera, PhD, NCC is the interim dean of the Graduate School of Counseling, Naropa University, Boulder, CO. She is also a professor emerita and formally the founding director of the Clinical Mental Health Program at Merrimack College, North Andover, MA. She also served in the role of founding chair of the Department of Counseling, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology (TCSPP), Washington, DC campus. In addition, she was a faculty member at The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WI and the University at Albany, NY. Santiago Rivera served as the dean of academic affairs at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. While serving in this capacity on the Washington, DC campus she collaborated with the institution's leadership to build an infrastructure that supports academic programs and student services. This effort included hiring a diverse faculty and staff and developing recruitment activities and retention strategies. In her role as dean of academic affairs on the Chicago campus major accomplishments included creating partnerships with area universities to potentially serve as pipelines to the graduate programs and creating initiatives to advance early career faculty with a focus on publishing, teaching strategies, and tenure and promotion processes. Santiago Rivera's professional and leadership positions in professional organizations include president of the National Latinx Psychological Association, president of the Latino Mental Health Association of New Jersey, and president of Counselors for Social Justice, a division of the American Counseling Association. She is the founding editor of the Journal of Latinx Psychology and is a Fellow of Divisions 45 and 17 of the American Psychological Association (APA). In 2014, Santiago-Rivera received the APA Presidential Citation for outstanding contribution to the profession. She served as a committee member and chair of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education's Outstanding Dissertation Awards Committee and is currently the past-chair of AAHHE's Board of Directors. Her doctorate degree is in Counseling from Wayne State University, Detroit MI.

PLENARY SESSION AGENDA

All times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone

2025 AAHHE National Conference Metropolitan State University of Denver, Denver, CO Conference At-A-Glance | March 7-8, 2025

Reconciling Our Past, Challenging the Present, Shaping Equitable
Futures: Advancing the Next 20 Years of Latinx/a/o Communities

Friday, March 7, 2025

1:00 PM – 2:50 PM MST - Presiding ~ Cristobal Rodriguez, PhD, Chair, AAHHE Board of Directors

1:00 PM – 1:30 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Welcome & Introduction of Land Acknowledgment

Land Acknowledgement ~ Metropolitan State University of Denver

Introduction

Host Institution Recognition

Welcome by MSUD

Thank you to Partners and Sponsors & Diana Urichich, Director, TIAA Retirement Solutions

Introduction of AAHHE Board of Directors

AAHHE Staff

Acknowledgment of AAHHE Fellows, USDA Caminos to Success Fellows, and The Diana Natalicio Institute

Introduction of Conference Planning Committee Co-chairs

Conference Theme & Thank you ~ AAHHE Conference Planning Committee Co-chairs Antonio Durán, PhD, and Lazaro Camacho, PhD

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Introduction of 41st Annual Tomás Rivera Lecture ~ Azara Santiago, PhD, Immediate Past-chair, AAHHE Board of Directors.

41st Annual Tomás Rivera Lecture

Xóchitl C. Chávez, PhD, Associate Professor, UC Riverside Department of Music, Faculty Advisor for Ballet Folklórico de UCR

Sponsored by



PLENARY SESSION AGENDA

Friday, March 7, 2025

2:30 PM – 2:50 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

AAHHE & ETS Outstanding Dissertation Competition Awards Ceremony

Maria Oropeza-Fujimoto, PhD, Co-Chair, Outstanding Dissertation Competition

Sponsored by



6:40 PM – 7:40 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Introduction of 9th Cigarroa Family Medical / STEM Distinguished Lecture ~ Marissa Vasquez, EdD, AAHHE Board of Directors; Ashley Sadsad, TIAA Senior Consultant, 529 Plan – Education Savings

9th Cigarroa Family Medical / STEM Distinguished Lecture

Charles E. Vela, Engineering Scientist, President and Chief Architect at Afilon Innovation

Sponsored by

Cigarroa Family

Saturday, March 8, 2025

9:00 AM – 10:50 AM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Presiding ~ Cristobal Rodriguez, PhD Chair, AAHHE Board of Directors and Magdalena Martinez, PhD, AAHHE Board of Directors.

Welcome Program

Welcome & Sponsors/Partners acknowledgement

AAHHE Year in Review Presentation

AAHHE Fellows Program ~ AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program Co-chairs Luz Lopez and Stacey Speller;

AAHHE Faculty Fellows Program Co-chairs, Hugo Garcia, PhD Magdalena Martinez, PhD.

Introduction of Incoming AAHHE Fellow Program co-chairs: AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program Co-chairs,

AAHHE Faculty Fellows Program Co-chairs, Hermen Diaz, PhD, and Melissa Navarro, PhD.

9:50 AM – 10:50 AM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Introduction of Plenary Session ~ Marie Mora, PhD, AAHHE Board of Directors.

Plenary Session:

Navigating and Advancing Latinidad in Higher Education During Times of Political, Cultural and Educational Variance

Michael Benitez, Jr, PhD, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion,

Associate Professor of Multicultural Education, School of Education

PLENARY SESSION AGENDA

Saturday, March 8, 2025

12:10 PM – 1:00 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Networking Lunch

Presiding ~ Cristobal Rodriguez, PhD Chair, AAHHE Board of Directors Homies Unidos

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

Presiding ~ Cristobal Rodriguez, PhD, Chair-elect AAHHE Board of Directors

AAHHE Book Awards Ceremony ~ Marissa Vasquez, EdD, AAHHE Board of Directors

Books of the Year Awards ~

Early Career Category: 2025 *How Schools Make Race: Teaching Latinx Racialization in America*.

Laura C. Chávez-Moreno, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of California, Los Angeles.

Mid-Career Category: 2023 *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town*.

Jesús Jesse Esparza, PhD, Associate Professor, Texas Southern University. (online).

Senior Scholar Category: 2024 *Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Mexican Students*.

William Pérez, PhD, Professor, Loyola Marymount University.

Rafael Vasquez, PhD, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

Edited Volume

2023 *Community College and Beyond: Understanding the Transfer Pipeline for Latina/o/x Students*.

José Del Real Viramontes, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of California, Riverside.

Marissa Vasquez, EdD, Associate Director, Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) & Associate Professor, Postsecondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs (PELSA), San Diego State University.

2024 *Latin* Students in Engineering: An Intentional Focus on a Growing Population*.

Lara Pérez-Felkner, PhD, Associate Professor, Florida State University.

Sarah Rodríguez, PhD, Associate Professor, Virginia Tech (online).

Ciera Fluker, PhD, Ohio BWC (online).

PLENARY SESSION AGENDA

Saturday, March 8, 2025

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM MST ~ Tivoli Turnhalle

AAHHE Awards Ceremony Dinner & Closing Remarks

Presiding ~ Cristobal Rodriguez, PhD, AAHHE Board of Directors

Presentation of AAHHE Awards ~ Monique Posadas, MA, AAHHE Board of Directors, Carmen Martinez-López, PhD, AAHHE Board of Directors, and Gloria Martinez-Ramos, PhD, AAHHE Board of Directors.

Alfredo G. de Los Santos, Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award
Olivia A. Graeve, PhD, University of California, San Diego (online).

Sylvia Hurtado University Faculty Award
Idalis Villanueva Alarcón, PhD, University of Florida.

Community College Award
Oswaldo Roberto Caballero, MBA, Lone Star College.

Early Career Award
Angela Pérez-Villa, MA, PhD, Western Michigan University.
Mayra Puente, PhD, University of California, Santa Barbara.

Doctoral Student Award
Veronica Valencia Gonzalez, PhD, University of California, Irvine.
Saul López, Doctoral Candidate, Marquette University.

Outstanding Support of Hispanic Issues Award
Teresa Patricia Feria Arroyo, PhD, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

William Aguilar Cultural Arts Award
Victor Escobedo, Muralist & Artist.
David Ocelotl Garcia, Abstract Imaginism Artist.

Mildred García Founders' Award
Ana Mari Cauce, PhD, University of Washington (online).

Closing Program

Remarks on AAHHE Future Directions

Introduction of AAHHE 2026 ~ Marissa Vasquez, EdD, AAHHE Conference Planning Committee Co-chair, Lazaro Camacho, Jr. PhD, AAHHE Conference Planning Committee Co-chair; Cynthia Villareal, PhD, AAHHE Conference Planning Committee Co-chair.

Presentation of award to Antonio Durán, PhD, 2025 Conference Planning Committee Chair.

See you at 2026 AAHHE at San Diego State University!

AAHHE 41st Annual Tomás Rivera Lecture

Sponsored by



For 41 years, AAHHE has selected a distinguished scholar or national leader to present the Tomás Rivera Lecture in honor of the late Dr. Tomás Rivera, professor, scholar, active author, poet, and former president of the University of California, Riverside.



Tomás Rivera, PhD

Tomás Rivera, PhD, born in Texas to Mexican farm laborers immigrants, with no formal education, received a Bachelor of Science and Master of Education in English and Administration from Southwest Texas State University, and a Master of Arts in Spanish literature and a doctorate in romance language and literature from University of Oklahoma. Rivera studied Spanish culture and civilization at the University of Texas, Austin and in Guadalajara, Mexico. He taught at Sam Houston State University and served on the planning team that built The University of Texas, San Antonio, where he served as chair of the Romance Language Department, associate dean, and vice president. Rivera became the chief executive officer at The University of Texas, El Paso (1978) and the chancellor of the University of California, Riverside (1979). He extensively wrote about Chicano topics and published poems, short prose pieces, and essays on literature and higher education. Rivera documented the struggles of migrant workers; he neither wrote about politics nor viewed his work as political. He served on many boards, including the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the American Association for Higher Education, and the American Council on Education, and served on commissions on higher education under Presidents Carter and Reagan. He was a co-founder and president of the National Council of Chicanos in Higher Education. Rivera was active in a great number of charitable organizations and was the recipient of numerous honors, awards, and recognitions.

2025 AAHHE 41st Annual Tomás Rivera Lecture Presenter

**Friday, March 7, 2025
1:30pm - 2:30pm MST
Room: Turnhalle Theater**

**“..no nos tragará la tierra: the earth will not devour us
Honoring Our Past, Embracing Joy, and Building Collective
Power for the Future”**



Xóchitl C. Chávez, PhD

Associate Professor, UC Riverside Department of Music
Faculty Advisor for Ballet Folklórico de UCR

In this 20th anniversary keynote address, Xóchitl C. Chávez, PhD weaves together intergenerational wisdom and contemporary urgency, drawing profound parallels between Tomás Rivera’s groundbreaking advocacy and today’s critical moment for Latinx/a/o communities in higher education. Through the lens of personal narrative and familial connection to Colorado’s educational justice movements, particularly the 1980s bilingual education struggle, this lecture embodies the conference’s call for reconciliation with our past while boldly challenging our present. As someone who now walks the same campus where Tomás Rivera once led, Chávez bridges historical struggles with contemporary challenges while examining how today’s Latino educators embody and advance their students’ cultural and economic experiences. The address honors our raíces—the ancestors and mentors who guided us toward educational leadership—while confronting the urgent needs of our present moment, including the impacts of anti-DEI legislation and the ongoing struggles for genuine institutional transformation. Central to this narrative is the revolutionary act of choosing joy and cultivating comunidad in the face of adversity. Drawing from her mother’s activism in bilingual education and their shared migrant farmer background, Chávez illuminates how personal histories, and collective celebrations inform our commitment to educational equity. This lecture examines how we can transform spaces of fear into sanctuaries of joy, building networks of support and resistance through shared cultural practices, celebration, and intentional community-building that center those most marginalized within our communities.

Past presenters of the AAHHE Tomás Rivera Lecture:

As AAHHE marks two decades of advancing Hispanic higher education, this lecture serves as both a tribute to past courage and a call to action, asserting that in times of political uncertainty, we must choose growth over silence, joy over fear, and collective power over isolation. The earth will not devour us—instead, we will continue to thrive through the strength of our communities, guided by the wisdom of those who came before us, sustained by the joy we cultivate together, and driven by our commitment to shaping equitable futures for coming generations. Through this lens of intergenerational and interdisciplinary wisdom, Chávez challenges us to imagine and create transformative futures that honor both our ancestors' dreams and our communities' current needs.

Dr. Xóchitl C. Chávez is an associate professor at the University of California, Riverside Department of Music, holding the distinction of being the first tenured Chicana in the UCR department and any UC system music program. She has a PhD in cultural anthropology with a designated emphasis in Latin American and Latino Studies from UC Santa Cruz, complemented by interdisciplinary training in Museum Studies, Ethnomusicology, Folklore, and Social Documentation. As an activist scholar and musician, Chávez's research centers on the practices of accompaniment and sincere collaborative intention. She ethically participates in making music and dance while documenting the process of Mexican Indigenous migrants and Latinos in the United States, focusing on their cross-border efforts to maintain cultural traditions. Chávez's forthcoming book, "La Guelaguetza: Oaxacan Migrant Festivals and the Making of Transborder Indigeneity" (University of Oxford Press, 2025), is the first transborder, multi-sited ethnography of its kind, based on over eight years of fieldwork and performance participation in Guelaguetza festivals in Oaxaca and California. Her research has garnered national recognition and support within the UC system, promoting international collaborative study. Through her work, Chávez continues to bridge academic research with active participation in cultural practices, fostering a deeper understanding of transnational Indigenous experiences and expressions. Her research has been published in both Spanish and English in prestigious venues including *Americas: A Hemispheric Music Journal*, *Desacatos: Revista De Ciencias Sociales*, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, and through esteemed university presses such as the University of Indiana Press, University of California Press, and University of Illinois Press. As a co-investigator with the University of Colorado Boulder's American Music Research Center, she has secured multiple grants, including funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities for "Soundscapes of the People: A Musical Ethnography of Pueblo, Colorado." Chávez's work has been acknowledged by institutions, including the Mexican Consulate in California, the Smithsonian Institution Center for Folklife & Cultural Heritage, the Colorado History Museum's El Pueblo History Museum, and the UCR Office of International Affairs. Chávez has contributed her expertise as a curatorial advisor and guest curator for the Inaugural Molina Family Gallery in the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Latino and is currently collaborating with The Cheech Museum, further demonstrating her commitment to sharing and preserving cultural heritage.

Past presenters of the AAHHE Tomás Rivera Lecture:

Past presenters of the AAHHE Tomás Rivera Lecture:

- 2024 Tanya Kateri Hernandez, PhD, Archibald R. Murray Professor of Law, Fordham University
- 2023 Daisy Gonzalez, PhD
- 2022 Norma Cantú, Professor of Education and Professor of Law, University of Texas at Austin
- 2021 John B. King, Jr., President and CEO of The Education Trust
- 2020 Honorable Wilma Martínez, former U.S. Ambassador to Argentina
- 2019 Abigail Golden-Vásquez, David E. Hayes-Bautista and Marta Tienda
- 2018 Eloy Ortiz Oakley
- 2017 Michele Siqueiros
- 2016 Antonia Hernández
- 2015 Manuel T. Pacheco
- 2014 Yvette Donado
- 2013 Francisco Cigarroa
- 2012 Luis A. Ubinas
- 2011 Rachel F. Morán
- 2010 Charles B. Reed and Jack Scott
- 2009 Marta Tienda
- 2008 Jaime Merisotis
- 2007 Sonia Nazario
- 2006 Michael A. Olivas
- 2005 Raúl Yzaguirre
- 2004 Angela Oh
- 2003 Piedad Robertson
- 2002 Harold L. Hodgkinson
- 2001 Félix Gutiérrez
- 2000 David Hayes-Bautista
- 1999 Jim Cummins
- 1998 Samuel Betances
- 1997 Albert H. Kaufmann
- 1996 Rolando Hinojosa Smith
- 1995 Ronald Takai
- 1994 Norma Cantú
- 1993 Gregory R. Anrig
- 1992 Henry Cisneros
- 1991 Toni Morrison
- 1990 Tomás Arciniega
- 1989 David Hamburg
- 1989 Arturo Madrid
- 1987 Ann Reynolds
- 1986 Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.
- 1985 John Magu

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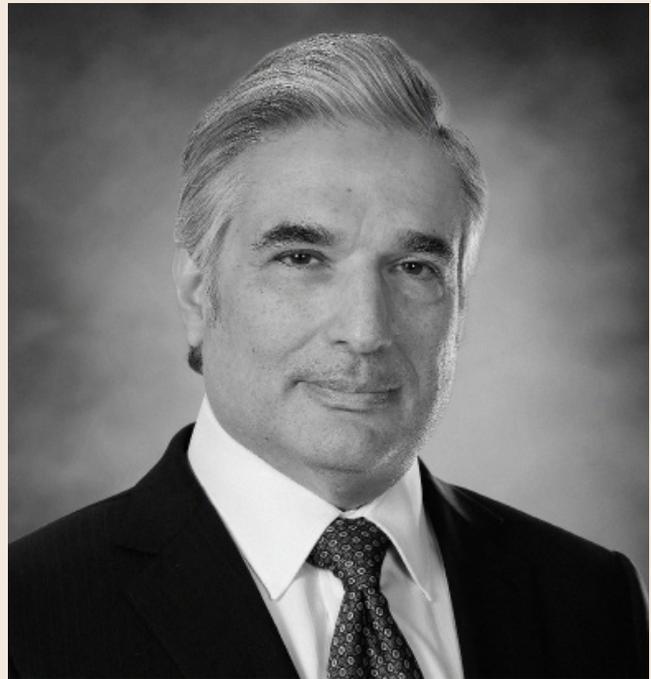
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AAHHE 9th Cigarroa Family Medical/STEM Distinguished Lecture

The AAHHE Cigarroa Family Medical/STEM Distinguished Lecture spotlights a prominent and established scholar or leader in the medical or science disciplines. The lecture is named in honor of the Cigarroa Family of Laredo, Texas and its three generations of medical doctors and active leaders who have served in their communities and in national organizations.

Francisco Cigarroa, MD
Transplant Center, UT Health Science Center
University of Texas, San Antonio



Francisco Cigarroa, MD, born in Laredo, Texas and a third-generation physician, earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Yale University (1979) and a medical degree from The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (1983). He joined the faculty of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (1995), serving as director of pediatric surgery and university president (2000–2009). Cigarroa established a multidisciplinary pediatric transplant program focused on kidney, liver, and intestinal transplants with outstanding outcomes. The first Hispanic to be named chancellor of The University of Texas System (2009), Cigarroa oversaw nine universities and six health institutions. His leadership was critical in the establishment of two medical schools and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, and in the advancement of engineering across the University of Texas System. A member of the American College of Surgery, the Institute of Medicine, the American Board of Surgery, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Cigarroa is also an honorary member of the National Academy of Science in Mexico. He received appointments to the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science and the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans by Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, respectively. He was elected in 2010 to serve on the Yale Corporation, the university's governing board. He served on the National Research Council Committee on Research Universities and the American Academy Commission on the Humanities and Social Sciences. Cigarroa was named the director of Pediatric Transplantation at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in 2015.

2025 AAHHE 9th Cigarroa Family Medical/STEM Distinguished Lecture Presenter

Friday, March 7, 2025

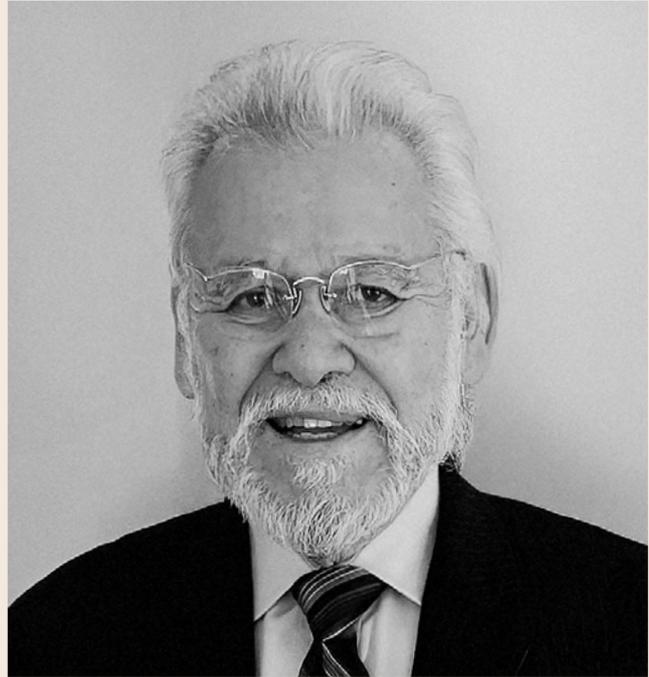
6:40 PM – 7:40 PM

Room: Turnhalle Theater at the Tivoli Student Union

Paradigm for the Development of Strategic Human Capital

Between 1989 and 1991, Charles Vela developed the concept and coined the term STEM while working on the Mapping of the Brain at the National Academy and later at MITRE, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC) founded by MIT, on the modernization of telecommunications in the US (a 10-billion-dollar project). STEM was conceptualized as a methodology for the development of strategic human capital. Its purpose was to prepare young American-Latinos to enter and assume leadership positions in the technical and scientific fields in the United States. In 1992, Vela founded the STEM Institute at the Catholic University of America in Washington. Later STEM was expanded to other universities, including George Washington University, the City University of New York (CUNY), University of Illinois at Chicago, MIT, etc., and the University of El Salvador under the name of “Jóvenes Talento.” In 1997, STEM was accepted by many academics, and, in 2001, the National Science Foundation (NSF) assumed the STEM model to advance US competitiveness in technology and science, and its then-director, Rita Coldwell, adopted the term STEM. Today, STEM has become a universal model practiced in the developed world to advance competitiveness. It has been embraced by developing countries for their economic improvement; and by underdeveloped countries, to enter the path of development. In 2021, China, in its National Scientific Literacy Action Plan (2021-2035), adopted STEM Education as a paradigm for global competitiveness.

Vela’s talk will center on the history of STEM, what is STEM, characteristics of STEM education and STEM innovation, implementation models, future of STEM.



Charles E. Vela
Engineering Scientist
President and Chief Architect at Afilon Innovation

Charles Vela was born in Central America and migrated to the United States at the age of 14. First, he lived in the Latino Mission District in San Francisco and later moved to the outer Mission, but continued to attend the Mission District Junior high, Horace Mann and attended Mission High School. Vela is best known for having conceived, between 1990-1992, the methodology and philosophy of Science, Technology Engineering and Math (STEM) as an educational concept to increase the number of Latinos in science and engineering, and to create the future technical and scientific leadership in the US. STEM integrates the disciplines into an educational body of knowledge. In 1992, Vela coined the term STEM and established the STEM Institute in the metropolitan Washington DC area. STEM is revolutionizing science and technology education in the world, particularly in the US, UK, China, Australia, Canada, some African and Latin American countries. During the Covid pandemic, he led a team that developed a strategy and operational plan for an effective Covid vaccination in the United States. The team brought together scientists and engineers specialized in mathematical optimization, artificial intelligence, transportation and logistics; medical doctors specialized in public and military health including disease management; and a brigadier general, former Deputy Undersecretary Secretary of Defense for Logistic specialized in military operations involving many people, facilities, suppliers, destinations in a dynamic complex environment. The strategy was presented to the White House, members of the US Congress, and the state of Maryland and led to the implementation of the first unrestricted street vaccination in the USA. This strategy was later adopted throughout the United States and internationally. Vela has worked in technical and scientific management and engineering positions for large-scale, high-performance, mission-critical enterprise systems at leading US research & development institutions, including the National Academy of Sciences; MITRE, formed by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); the Illinois Institute of Technology Research Institute (IITRI); and Noblis, formed by MITRE. Charles was the founding President and Chief Scientist of Expertech Solutions, a company dedicated to strategic consulting for the US government.

Past presenters of the AAHHE Cigarroa Family Medical/STEM Distinguished Lecture:

- 2024 Denise Martínez, MD
- 2023 Bryan Leyva, MD
- 2022 Jessica Esquivel, PhD
- 2021 Alfredo Quiñonez-Hinojosa, MD
- 2020 Frances Colón
- 2019 Olivia A. Graeve
- 2018 Jose Hernández
- 2017 Francisco Cigarroa, MD



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2025 AAHHE PLENARY SESSION

Saturday, March 8, 2025

9:50 AM – 10:50 AM

Room: Turnhalle Theater at the Tivoli Student Union

Navigating and Advancing Latinidad in Higher Education During Times of Political, Cultural and Educational Variance



Michael Benitez, Jr., PhD

Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion
Associate Professor of Multicultural Education, School of Education
Metropolitan State University of Denver

A leading scholar-practitioner and bold national voice on Hispanic/Latino/a/x identities and culture, Dr. Benitez touches on the ways in which ‘cultura’ and politics intersect among and between Latina/o/x/es in education systems. Dr. Benitez takes us on a journey aimed at rupturing existing understandings and cultural practices grounded in dominant spaces and offers newer critical understandings and insight about how Latina/o/x/e ‘gente’ experience, navigate, and negotiate their multifaceted and nuanced identities in higher education for a nimble and liberatory future. Benitez reminds us as purpose driven educators, that ‘it is about who and how we serve.’ In doing so, he offers strategies and tactics on ways campus community members can engage equitable and culturally relevant servingness in policy and practice for the times.

Michael Benitez, PhD is a nationally acclaimed educator in higher education, often called upon by colleges and universities, community organizations and corporations nationwide for his deep knowledge, practice, innovative equity and inclusion-based strategies and approaches to address some of higher education’s most pressing systemic issues and challenges. Over the past two decades, Benitez has served higher education in different capacities, including academic and student affairs; diversity, equity and inclusion; and teaching. He brings deep knowledge and experience working in and leading areas in student success, organizational leadership and culture, intercultural development, race and ethnicity, policy and practice, inclusive leadership and pedagogy, and institutional equity, and has authored book chapters and articles on identity development, cultural centers and ethnic studies, hip hop culture, institutional research and campus climates, and faculty development. Benitez has been featured in educational documentaries, contributed to online magazines, scholarly databases, books, and peer reviewed journals, is often invited by media outlets to conversations on issues of significance, and collaborates with leading national scholars and practitioners. Benitez has assumed roles at several institutions throughout his career, including Penn State University, Dickinson College, Lafayette College, Grinnell College, and the University of Puget Sound. He completed both his BS and MEd at the Pennsylvania State University (PSU), where he gained interest in pursuing doctoral studies as a TRIO student and McNair Scholar, his PhD at Iowa State University, and has been recognized with multiple leadership and scholarly awards throughout his career, including the Iowa State University College of Human Sciences Alumni Achievement Award, and most recently, the 2024 CoCEAL (Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Latinxs) M. Ontivero JEDI Impact Practice Award. Benitez joined MSU Denver in 2019 as vice president for Diversity and Inclusion, where he also serves as an Associate Professor of Multicultural Education at the School of Education. He also serves on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE), and is highly engaged with the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE).

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Featured Graduate Student Sessions

All times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone

Friday, March 7, 2025

3:10 PM – 4:10 PM

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Camplifying First-Generation Latinx Voices: An Asset-Based Approach to College Access



Ariana Ordonez

Joint Doctoral Program/Educational Leadership
University of California, San Diego and California State University, San Marcos

Historical barriers have persistently hindered Latinx students' academic success, resulting in higher dropout rates and lower college attainment compared to their peers (Chlup et al., 2021; Clark et al., 2013; Marrero Arbelo, 2016; Milner, 2016; Nelson & Guerra, 2014; Parker et al., 2021; Patrick et al., 2023; Rutter et al., 2020; Vela et al., 2014). Many Latinx students identify as first-generation, lack college knowledge, and rely heavily on their school counselors for college and career readiness support. Although school counselors are trained and uniquely positioned to provide college and career readiness support and resources (ASCA, 2019), research highlights the effectiveness of school counselors varies due to implicit and explicit biases, with many lacking cultural awareness and sensitivity toward the specific needs of Latinx students (Betters-Bubon et al., 2022; Brion, 2019). This lack of cultural understanding

manifests in harmful school counseling practices that undermine Latinx students' potential (Clark et al., 2013; Cook et al., 2021; Marrero Arbelo, 2016; Parker & Ray, 2017; Patrick et al., 2023; Rutter et al., 2020; Vela et al., 2014).). Hence, this research study aims to amplify first-generation Latinx students' voices regarding their high school counseling experiences, emphasizing the need for school counselors to embrace an asset-based framework that recognizes and elevates the unique strengths and backgrounds of Latinx students through a lens of cultural proficiency (Lindsey et al., 1999; Welborn et al., 2022).

Culturally Responsive AI: Centering Afro-Latine Mental Health Experiences for Equitable AI Design & Development



Melanece Wesley

Social Work
Howard University

This study investigates the ethical use of artificial intelligence (AI) in mental health interventions, focusing on Afro-Latine populations. AI mental health tools, though promising in enhancing accessibility and care, often reflect biases rooted in limited representation and homogeneity in datasets. This research adopts a qualitative approach to explore Afro-Latine individuals' mental health experiences and perspectives on AI tools. By conducting in-depth interviews, this study aims to identify cultural and contextual factors essential for developing equitable and culturally responsive AI systems. The anticipated findings will inform the creation of ethical guidelines and contribute to reducing disparities in AI-driven mental health care. This work seeks to amplify the voices of Afro-Latine communities, ensuring their inclusion in AI discourse, and ultimately foster the development of technologies that are both equitable and effective. This presentation will discuss the study's objectives, theoretical frameworks, and expected

implications for practice and policy.

All times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone

Friday, March 7, 2025

3:10 PM – 4:10 PM

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Dear Higher Education: An Epistolary Exploration of the Postsecondary Experiences and Desires of Formerly Incarcerated



Cydney Y. Caradonna

Educational Leadership and Policy
University of Utah

As the incarceration of Women of Color grows alongside college enrollment during incarceration, there is little research-based information regarding Formerly Incarcerated Women of Color's postsecondary educational experiences or trajectories post-release. My study seeks to address this critical knowledge gap concerning the postsecondary experiences and desires of a growing student population whose engagement is critical for positively influencing their reentry pathways. I engage a Decolonial Feminist Framing and Methodology to explore the experiences of Formerly Incarcerated Women of Color nationwide who engage with higher education, and their desires for postsecondary education's future and betterment. My methods include: 90-minute dialogues and prompted epistolary writing addressed to

higher education itself. My study is guided by two primary questions: Q1) In what ways do Formerly Incarcerated Women of Color describe their experiences with engaging postsecondary education post-release? Q2) What written recommendations do Formerly Incarcerated Women of Color have for the future of higher education?

Friday, March 7, 2025

4:20 PM – 5:20 PM

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Vitamin D may enhance the effects of preterm labor drugs through its anti-inflammatory properties



Irene Richardson

Biochemistry
University of Nevada - Reno

Preterm birth, occurring before 37 weeks of gestation, affects approximately 10% of U.S. births and is the leading cause of neonatal morbidity and mortality. Preterm infants face increased risks of immunological disorders, cognitive deficits, and other health disparities. Tocolytics are drugs given to pregnant women to halt labor; however, there are no FDA-approved tocolytics. Excessive inflammation, particularly involving immune-modulating cytokines like interleukin-6 (IL-6), is a key driver of labor through upregulation of proteins like the oxytocin receptor (OXTR), which initiates and maintains contractions of the uterus during labor. Our research shows IL-6 increases OXTR expression, while our novel small molecule, BL567, returns its expression to normal levels. We hypothesize BL567, combined with known anti-inflammatory properties of vitamin D, will work in concert to attenuate inflammation-driven uterine contractions, paving

the way for targeted tocolytic therapies.

All times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone

Friday, March 7, 2025

4:20 PM – 5:20 PM

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Central American mothering practices and re-claiming identity in an era of anti-immigrant sentiment



Joselin Castillo

American Studies
University of New Mexico

In recent decades, mass family separations and the violent militarization of the United States border have intensified the portrayal of Central Americans as a ‘threat’. Public opinion surrounding immigration often mirrors conversations around citizenship and who merits belonging. Immigration policy and the news media have framed Central Americans as “illegal” and undeserving of basic human rights, including the dehumanizing conditions faced in detention centers while seeking asylum. Central American mothers and fathers have been criticized for exposing children to the dangers of migration, with little recognition of their vital roles as producers of knowledge and community. My research explores how Central American communities understand identity and foster belonging through Central American mothering

practices despite the systematically embedded policies of exclusion.

Más Allá de la Etiqueta: Latinas Reconceptualizing Feminism



Lucia Quezada

Counseling Psychology
University of Georgia

Latinx feminist identity remains underexplored in psychology, particularly regarding the intersection of cultural values with feminist attitudes and behaviors. This study marks the initial phase of developing a Latiné feminist identity scale to reflect how Latiné women conceptualize feminism. Grounded in Chicana Feminist Theory, culturally relevant methodologies like pláticas and testimonios were used in qualitative focus groups. Findings reveal how religion, family dynamics, and socio-economic conditions shape feminist identity, addressing gaps in scales that lack cultural specificity. This work provides insights into how Latiné women navigate feminist values within their lived experiences and contributes to feminist identity development literature. It promotes cultural validity in psychological research and offers a framework for clinicians, researchers, and educators to assess feminist attitudes and create interventions that

address the unique needs of Latiné women, ultimately fostering holistic well-being within Latiné communities.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

The 2025 AAHHE National Conference theme ***Reconciling Our Past, Challenging the Present, Shaping Equitable Futures: Advancing the Next 20 Years of Latinx/a/o Communities*** marks a pivotal point in AAHHE's history: the 20th anniversary of our annual conference. Our conference theme plays upon concepts of healing, legacies, and community to encourage attendees to build upon those who have come before us, while challenging each other to further carve out equitable and critical futures. We are looking to embrace intergenerational and interdisciplinary wisdom to move our organization and communities forward, and to bring together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers from across academic disciplines to participate in this collective imagining.

You will find our conference programming thoroughly engaging in four different conference strands:

1. Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts
2. Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Heal and Move Forward
3. Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x Diasporas
4. Constructing Coalitions and Communities

Enjoy any of our 60 conference sessions presented as plenary sessions, awards, lectures, concurrent sessions in Art as Activism/Artivista Approaches, Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused), Interactive Workshops/Symposia, Poster Presentations, or Roundtables (Works in Progress).

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY,
MARCH 7, 2025

All times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone

3:10 PM - 4:10 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

IW-1-1-1 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | *Proposing a New Health Model: Merging Curanderismo Latinx Traditional Medicine with Modern Allopathic Medicine*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Mario Del Angel Guevara, PhD
The University of New Mexico

This workshop will offer information on the past, present and future merging of traditional and modern medicine. This workshop will provide tools for participants to incorporate a culturally responsive approach to health by learning more about traditional medicine concepts that have been part of the Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx/Mexican culture for hundreds of years. This workshop is suitable for all audiences and particularly useful for professionals in modern health care professions including mental/behavioral health.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Analyze the creation of a new health model that is culturally responsive by merging methods and concepts of Curanderismo traditional medicine with modern medicine.
2. Observe the diverse methods and concepts used in Curanderismo traditional medicine that are being reclaimed by the Latinx population in the United States.
3. Obtain information of the many intensive training and learning opportunities online and face-to-face on Curanderismo traditional medicine.

3:10 PM - 4:10 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

IW-1-2-1 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | *Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive Approaches in the Classroom: A Pathway to Healing-Centered Education.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Jasmin Tobar
California State University Northridge

In the contemporary classroom, educators are increasingly encountering students who have experienced trauma, particularly within marginalized and immigrant communities. Traditional educational frameworks often fail to address the complex needs of these students, leading to disengagement and negative academic outcomes. This presentation highlights the intersection of trauma-informed and culturally responsive pedagogies as critical tools for fostering a healing-centered educational environment. Drawing on trauma theory and culturally responsive teaching practices, this session will examine how integrating these approaches can cultivate a safe, empowering classroom space where students learn and heal. By recognizing students' cultural contexts and lived experiences, educators can provide more relevant, inclusive, and compassionate instruction that honors the whole student. This session will offer practical strategies for educators, such as creating supportive relationships, fostering resilience through curriculum, and implementing mindfulness and reflective practices that align with students' cultural backgrounds. Case studies from Central American Studies and other underserved populations will be explored, highlighting the impact of culturally adapted trauma-informed frameworks. These frameworks have demonstrated improved student engagement, emotional regulation, and academic performance. The session will conclude with a call to action for educational institutions to prioritize healing-centered approaches as part of their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This presentation is essential for educators, administrators, and policymakers seeking to transform classrooms into spaces where students can thrive academically, emotionally, and culturally.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain a foundational understanding of trauma-informed education and culturally responsive teaching, including the core principles and their relevance in addressing the needs of students from marginalized and trauma-impacted communities.
2. Learn to recognize trauma responses in students and apply specific trauma-informed and healing-centered strategies in the classroom, such as fostering emotional safety, building trust, and promoting resilience through mindful and reflective practices.
3. Equipped with practical tools for integrating culturally responsive interventions that honor students' cultural identities and lived experiences, facilitating greater student engagement and academic success.
4. Examine case studies, including those focused on Central American Studies, to evaluate the effectiveness of culturally adapted trauma-informed interventions in improving student outcomes.
5. Leave with actionable steps to advocate for and implement trauma-informed, healing-centered, and culturally responsive frameworks within their own educational institutions, fostering long-term equity and inclusion.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

3:10 PM - 4:10 PM

Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x Diasporas

ES-1-3-1 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Catalizadores del Cambio: Advancing Latinx Students to College Completion and Career Achievement*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Cruz Casiano, EdD
Lone Star College

Oswaldo Caballero, MBA
Lone Star College

This educational session explores how Lone Star College improved completion rates for Latinx/a/o students in workforce programs through a Learn-and-Earn (L&E) framework that can be replicated at other institutions for various programs of study. Participants will discover strategies for integrating work-based learning, holistic student support, and global learning credentials, and leave with actionable plans to replicate these models, fostering equitable career pathways and success for Latinx/a/o students.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain insight into how the Learn-and-Earn model integrates work-based learning with academic programs to improve completion rates for Latinx/a/o students.
2. Learn about effective strategies for recruiting, retaining, and supporting Latinx/a/o students in workforce education through holistic student services and employer partnerships.
3. Compare two implementation models—dual credit and postsecondary traditional students—under the Learn-and-Earn framework and assess their impact on student success.
4. Leave with strategies and action plans for replicating the Learn-and-Earn model at their own institutions to enhance workforce education outcomes for Latinx/a/o students.
5. Explore how embedding global learning credentials can provide students with a competitive advantage in the workforce.

3:10 PM - 4:10 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

IW-1-4-1 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | *From Inclusion to Servingness to Thriving: Envisioning Engineering Where Latin* Students Can Thrive*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Bianca Rincon, PhD
University of Nevada-Las Vegas

Elsa Gonzalez, PhD
Texas A&M University

Lara Perez-Felkner, PhD
Florida State University

This workshop session engages a community of innovative and intersectionally diverse scholars (by stage, institution, discipline, identities inclusive and beyond Latinidad). We take an intentionally nuanced and intersectional approach to Latina/e/o/x engineering experiences and potential avenues for structural change. Five panelists and authors in Latin* Engineering Students (Rutgers UP, 2024) share their insights drawn from work published in their book chapters and extant work. Implications attend to students, faculty, departments, administration, and policy.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Understand real and actionable implications, indeed, the educational possibilities—even in challenging political and legal climates—to facilitate equity-focused change in Latin* students' pathways through engineering education and the workforce.
2. Understand how the panel seeks to explain and engage around what is possible for true inclusion and, indeed, thriving for Latin* Students in Engineering.
3. Understand that our call to action focuses on undoing structural exclusion of Latin* students from engineering, both within and across institutional types and contexts.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

3:10 PM - 4:10 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

IW-1-5-1 | *Interactive Workshops/Symposia* | *Equity in Action: Workshopping for Transparency in Learning and Teaching*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Amanda Fierro Scukanec, EdD
Mt. San Jacinto College

Christina Kennedy, MA
Copper Mountain College

This workshop highlights the need for culturally responsive teaching, pedagogy, and practice. Attendees will self-reflect on how their backgrounds influence their practices, ideologies, and perspectives in their higher education roles. This session includes an interactive, collaborative focus where participants identify methods to connect in their daily interactions with students and colleagues. Regardless of the participant's role in higher education, they will leave the session with actionable strategies to implement within their role on their campus.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Reflect on their cultural backgrounds and investigate how their experiences inform and shape their practices, methods, and ideologies.
2. Participants will engage in a workshop where they focus on modifying one of their assignments, handouts, or methods to be more culturally responsive.
3. Participants will generate ways to integrate culturally responsive practices in their specific area of higher education.

4:20 PM - 5:20 PM

Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x Diasporas

ES-1-2-2 | *Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused)* | *The Experiences of Second-Generation Salvadorans in Higher Education*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Jessica Flores, MA Ed, PhD Student
University of Colorado Boulder

Beyond the first generation of Salvadorans fleeing their country during the Salvadoran Civil War 1980-1992, little research has explored the experiences of the second generation. Although Salvadorans represent one of the largest Latinx subgroups, they are among the populations least studied in degree attainment. This educational session explores the experiences of second-generation Salvadorans in degree attainment, with a particular emphasis on understanding how their familial experiences, migration, and trauma have impacted their educational trajectories.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Better understand the historical relationship between the United States and El Salvador.
2. Understand the experiences that second-generation Salvadoran students have in higher education.
3. Understand the impact that familial experiences of migration and trauma have on Salvadoran students' educational trajectories.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

4:20 PM - 5:20 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

ES-1-3-2 | *Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused)* | *How does the Hispanic-Serving Institution Designation Influence Institutional Behavior and Resources*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Adalberto Castrejón, PhD Student
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Hispanic-Serving Institutions provide an important role in supporting the success of Latino college students; however, it is difficult to know if HSIs are truly serving Latino students. Our study is guided by the theory of racialized organizations, and we leverage a difference-in-differences (DiD) to address our research questions: What is the effect of an institution being designated as a HSI on: the enrollment of Latino, African American/Black, and White students? And student service expenses?

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Understand the history of how HSIs were implemented into federal policy.
2. Compare the effects of the Hispanic-Serving Institution designation on several variables of interest.
3. Evaluate the federal definition of HSIs.

4:20 PM - 5:20 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-1-4-2 | *Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused)* | *Transformations in the Many Faces of Chicana Identity*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Cynthia Garcia, MA
University of New Mexico

Dominique Rodríguez, MA
University of New Mexico

Lee Ann Llamas, MS
University of New Mexico

Our Chicana/o/x identity is shaped by our roots and evolving experiences. This panel explores the critical aspects of our culture, including religion, spirituality, and the impact of “Las Tres Madres” on education. Garcia examines how “La Chicana” curriculum influences contemporary students, while Llamas highlights the intergenerational wisdom surrounding Our Lady of Guadalupe. Rodríguez discusses Brujería and Curanderismo as liberatory practices challenging hegemonic power. Together, these elements foster our resilience against patriarchal societies, driving us to transform the future for generations to come.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain insight into the historical and cultural roots of Chicana identity and how these influences shape contemporary experiences for our future transformations.
2. Explore key figures and symbols.
3. Gain intergenerational wisdom through las Tres Madres and their role in preserving that wisdom and cultural continuity within our community.
4. Envision future transformations by encouraging participants to reflect on how reclaiming cultural legacies can inform and inspire actions for social transformation for future generations.
5. Attendees will have a deeper understanding of the complexities of Chicana identity and the ways in which culture, identity, education and tradition intersect to inform both personal and communal resilience.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

4:20 PM - 5:20 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

ES-1-5-2 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Femtorship as a Transformative Practice: How UNM Latina Professors are Femtoring Future Generations in Higher Education*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Maria G. Vielma, PhD Student
University of Colorado, Boulder

Oral histories from bilingual Latina professors at the University of New Mexico reflect how representational mentorship not only supported them in their educational journeys but also helped to shape their own mentorship practices as faculty, ultimately building confianza with students (Vielma, 2023). This paper furthers my analysis to demonstrate how these Latina professors are engaging in transformative practices of femtorship that are Intergenerational, Transformative, Authentic, and Empowering, supporting future generations of Latinas in higher education.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Be introduced to the recent literature that situates femtorship as a concept and practice for Chicana/Latinas in higher education.
2. Learn about the characteristics of femtorship as Intergenerational, Transformative, Authentic, and Empowering.
3. Apply the characteristics of femtorship within the context of femtorship practices described by UNM Latina professors.
4. Recognize how femtorship practices are contingent to colonial practices and in combat with hierarchies that mean to oppress the mindbodyspirit of Latinas and WoC faculty.
5. Identify how femtorship is laying the groundwork for a different futurity away from oppressive, colonial frameworks of mentorship, to liberatory femtorship practices that lead us towards sobrevivencia.

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x Diasporas

ES-1-1-3 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *College Adjustment and Satisfaction for Latinx Transfer vs. Non-transfer Students at an Elite Public Institution*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Arlyn Y. Moreno Luna, PhD
University of California, Los Angeles

This paper used survey data to examine Latinx college satisfaction comprehensively. Employing an intersectional and multidimensional approach, I introduce new tools for understanding college satisfaction, including academic and community, student well-being and resources, and ethnoracial diversity satisfaction. The results have significant implications for Latinx college experiences, as I found that academic, community, and student well-being were all positively associated with students' college adjustment. Additionally, first-generation students had lower mean college satisfaction than their non-first-generation peers.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Explore the literature on Latinx college adjustment and satisfaction.
2. Gain insight into new frameworks and tools for studying Latinx college satisfaction and adjustment.
3. Examine research on Latinx college adjustment and satisfaction at a leading public institution.
4. Assess institutional needs to enhance Latinx students' adjustment and satisfaction.
5. Formulate strategies to promote equitable outcomes for Latinx students.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

RT-1-2-3 | *Round Table: Challenging Monolithic Understandings of Latinx/a/o Communities and Their Needs* | *Undocutalks: Healing and Empowering Dreamers through Interactive Support Circles*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Helen Urpi Wagner Coello, PhD
Florida International University

Undocutalks nurtures the emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of undergraduate Dreamers through interactive, community-centered sessions. Participants engage in activities like card games and dream boards, while having conversations guided by prompts on how their status has affected their identity, community, education, and emotional health. These sessions focus on reflection, healing, and collective care in a supportive space. By centering their voices, Undocutalks strengthens resilience, builds solidarity, and promotes well-being within these often overlooked Latinx/a/o communities.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain insights into the unique challenges and experiences faced by undocumented and DACAmented students, particularly how their status impacts identity, education, and emotional well-being.
2. Explore effective strategies for creating supportive, community-driven spaces that encourage open dialogue, reflection, and healing.
3. Learn how to implement interactive, culturally-responsive activities that encourage student engagement and emotional resilience.
4. Leave with strategies to build solidarity and promote well-being within Latinx/a/o communities through collective care practices.

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

RT-1-2-3 | *Round Table: Challenging Monolithic Understandings of Latinx/a/o Communities and Their Needs* | *Decolonizing Latinidad in AAHHE: Confronting Colonial Legacies to Build a Liberatory Future.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Mitzi Ceballos, PhD
University of Utah

Jasmin Tobar, DSW
University of Southern California

Stacey Speller, PhD
Howard University

Armando Lizarraga, PhD
University of Texas

Luz Burgos López, PhD
University of Connecticut

This roundtable aims to critically examine settler colonialism's enduring influence within Mexican-centric notions of Latinidad that dominate AAHHE. We will explore how these colonial frameworks marginalize Afro-Latine and Indigenous narratives and discuss decolonial strategies to dismantle white supremacist structures within AAHHE. Grounded in bell hooks' concept of love as nurturing spiritual growth, we will envision a radically inclusive future for AAHHE, focusing on accountability, mutual respect, and centering marginalized voices in the next 20 years.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Recognize settler colonialism's endurance.
2. Challenge white supremacist operations in Latinidad.
3. Embrace decoloniality to unroot settler colonialism.
4. Build AAHHE's future through Love.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

RT-1-2-3 | Round Table: Challenging Monolithic Understandings of Latinx/a/o Communities and Their Needs | *Comuni3n through Counternarratives: Navigating Latinidad, Blackness, and Belonging within HBCUs*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Jessica Stamp

Higher Education Leadership & Policy Studies
Howard University

Stacey Speller, PhD

Howard University

This roundtable critically explores the intersections of Latinidad, Blackness, and diasporic identities within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Using the concept of *comuni3n*, a mode of collective storytelling grounded in ancestral memory, four Latine scholars will share personal narratives to illuminate unique positionalities in Black spaces. By employing Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Afrolatinidades framework, we challenge anti-Blackness within Latinidad and misconceptions about HBCUs, offering new perspectives for equity, belonging, and inclusive excellence in higher education.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Deepen the understanding of Latinidad and Blackness intersections: Participants will explore how Latinidad, Blackness, and Afro-Latine identities intersect within HBCUs and the broader educational landscape, challenging monolithic perceptions of these identities.
2. Critically examine narratives about HBCUs: Attendees will learn to deconstruct dominant narratives that portray HBCUs as inferior to PWIs and that erase the presence and contributions of Latine students in these spaces.
3. Engage with *comuni3n* as a framework: Participants will gain insight into the concept of *comuni3n*, a deeper form of collective storytelling and memory, and how it can be applied to foster inclusive and culturally responsive educational practices.
4. Foster actionable strategies for equity: Participants will leave with strategies to create more inclusive policies and practices at HBCUs and other higher education institutions, aimed at better supporting Latine students, particularly those navigating Afro-Latine identities.

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

ES-1-3-3 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *A Trauma-Informed Mentorship Guide for Latinx Individuals in Higher Education*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Zonia Teresa Huerta, MA

Texas Woman's University

Rosario Olguin-Aguirre, MA

Texas Woman's University

Azucena Verdin, PhD

Texas Woman's University

Latinx students, faculty, and staff face numerous harmful experiences in mentoring relationships in higher education. This presentation critiques existing mentorship structures for reinforcing perfectionism and whiteness, which alienate Latinx students, faculty, and staff. Participants will explore the impact of cultural dissonance and epistemic oppression, highlighting the need for trauma-informed, culturally attuned mentorship. A shared guidebook will outline qualities of effective mentors and strategies for fostering supportive, equitable mentorship relationships that respect and honor Latinx identities.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Identify and describe common pitfalls and misattunements in the mentorship experiences of Latinx students.
2. Recognize and understand characteristics of trauma-informed mentorship that are culturally relevant/appropriate for Latinx mentors/mentees.
3. Discuss guidelines for mentors and mentees to implement during their mentor search.
4. Receive and integrate available resources for students seeking mentorship/engaging in self-advocacy at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) and/or structurally unsupportive institutions.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-1-4-3 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *How Schools Make Race: Teaching Latinx Racialization in America.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Laura Chavez-Moreno, PhD
University of California Los Angeles

This presentation discusses how schools teach about race vis-à-vis the Latinx group. Drawing from a qualitative study, I show how a bilingual-education program positions Latinidad in relation to Blackness, Whiteness, Indigeneity, and Asianness. I argue that the program, intentionally or unintentionally, contributes to the racialization of Latinxs by reinforcing the Spanish language as the signature boundary that delineates the Latinx racial group/category. I will offer contributions connecting Latinx racialization, ethnic studies, and bilingual education.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Consider insights on how schools make race and the teaching of Latinx racialization in contemporary schools.
2. Expand the dialogue on the Latinx racial group/category in relation to Blackness, Whiteness, Indigeneity, and Asianness.
3. Learn from a qualitative study on how a bilingual-education program reinforces and delineates the Latinx group.
4. Discuss connections of Latinx racialization, ethnic studies, and bilingual education.
5. Engage with the audience on the implications for educators, school communities, and Hispanic serving institutions.

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

ES-1-5-3 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Using the Altar as a Healing Tool with Formerly Incarcerated Youth*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Danielle N. Aguilar, MEd
University of Colorado Boulder

This session will provide information regarding the realities of formerly incarcerated youth. We will then delve into using a Latinx cultural artifact, the altar/ofrenda, as a healing tool to be used with formerly incarcerated youth.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Understand an introduction of how a cultural celebration, such as the altar/ofrenda, can be a healing tool for marginalized communities.
2. Learn about the realities of formerly incarcerated youth. After the presentation, attendees will be able to identify barriers to formerly incarcerated youth.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 2025

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

1-6-3 | *JHHE Editor Workshop | Advancing Latinx/a/o Communities: Publishing in the Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Cristóbal Salinas Jr., PhD
Editor
Florida Atlantic University

Marissa Vasquez, EdD
Editorial Board Member
San Diego State University

Cristóbal Rodríguez, PhD
Editorial Board Member
Western Michigan University

Marc Johnston-Guerrero, PhD
Editorial Board Member
University of Denver

This session is intended primarily for aspiring authors who want to publish in the Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, a peer-reviewed journal. More specifically, the audience will have the opportunity to engage and learn from the editor and editorial board members. This session will be a valuable resource to help faculty, graduate students, scholars, and practitioners discuss with the editor the demystifying of the publication process in higher education journals. In addition, the editor will share the updated aims and scope of JHHE.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain a clear understanding of the publication process for the Journal of Hispanic Higher Education (JHHE), including submission guidelines, peer review, and editorial decision-making.
2. Learn how to align their research with the updated aims and scope of JHHE, ensuring their work fits the journal's mission and audience.
3. Engage in meaningful discussions with the editor and editorial board members, receiving valuable insights and strategies for successfully publishing in higher education journals.

8:00 PM - 10:00 PM MST

Dine Around

A fun and informal opportunity for attendees to network, learn from their peers, and have conversations around a specific topic over dinner. Reservations will be made at up to 10 restaurants for up to 8 attendees each, and a topic of discussion will be led by an AAHHE Board Member. Sign-up sheets will be available at the registration table and space is available on a first come, first served basis. Please note that attendees will need to cover the cost of their own dinner.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

All times are in U.S. Mountain Time Zone

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

Session Type: Interactive Workshops

ES-2-2-4 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Creating Community through Learning: Impact of a Summer Research Program for Undergraduates at a Hispanic-Serving Institution.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Fátima Andrade Martínez, MA
University of California, Santa Barbara

Jackie Valenzuela, MA
University of California, Santa Barbara

Anissa Stewart, PhD
University of California, Santa Barbara

This study examines the impact of a 10-week summer research program for undergraduates at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Using ethnographic and social learning frameworks, we analyze how students construct knowledge through mentored projects and curriculum engagement. Findings from surveys and reflections reveal enhanced academic and professional skills. The study contributes to literature on undergraduate research experiences for underrepresented groups in social sciences, with implications for designing inclusive programs that connect research to students' lives and communities.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Introduce the curriculum of one summer research program funded through an HSI grant.
2. Provide testimonies from a director, graduate, and undergraduate students about the summer program.
3. Share strategies for how Latinx/a/o communities can better serve others as a collective.

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

IW-2-3-4 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | *Bregando, Construyendo, y Sosteniendo: Shaping and Contributing to Comunidad at a Florida eHSI*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Lara Perez Felkner, PhD
Florida State University

Sindy Chapa, PhD
Florida State University

Ladanya Ramirez Surmeier, PhD
Florida State University

Faye Jones, PhD
Florida State University

Janel Acosta, PhD
Florida State University

This panel will underscore the invaluable work and expertise of scholars at Florida State University, an Emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (eHSI). Including current/former student and faculty perspectives, each panelist's work on Latin* students will be highlighted, as well as their collective efforts across their communities. This panel will address navigating the challenges of working in a state actively implementing anti-DEI policies while simultaneously working in an institution on the brink of obtaining an HSI designation.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain insight into the panelists' work at various career levels, which range in discipline yet maintain a synergistic energy that centers Latin* student success.
2. Learn tools on how to navigate political climates that are anti-DEI from a place of love and care while also working towards dismantling systems of oppression and exclusion.
3. Develop an understanding of the unique challenges that come with working at an emerging HSI that is historically white and reflect on tools that can be utilized to foster a sense of belonging and create communities for Latin* students, Latin* faculty, and Latin* staff.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

ES 2-4-4 | *Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | Cultivating communities of empowerment: How students and departments co-create inclusive STEM environments in Hispanic-serving Institutions*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Edwin Perez, PhD
University of Texas at El Paso

Lauren Shook, PhD
University of Texas at El Paso

Anne-Marie Núñez, PhD
University of Texas at El Paso

Sonia I. Hernández Frausto, MA
University of Texas at El Paso

Inequitable outcomes for students from Black, Latinx, and Indigenous backgrounds are an enduring challenge in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Addressing these longstanding challenges will require us to move toward organizationally focused approaches which cultivate inclusive STEM environments and cultures. This session advances the concept of “communities of empowerment” as a mechanism by which departments and students co-create environments that allow students to thrive in STEM, thereby shaping more equitable futures.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Learn about the importance of moving away from student-level approaches that are rooted in a deficit mindset toward an organizational mindset that seeks to create inclusive environments and cultures.
2. Participants will learn about “communities of empowerment” as an organizationally focused approach whereby inclusive environments and cultures are co-constructed by departments and students.
3. Participants will be informed of strategies to create communities of empowerment and reflect on how they can cultivate communities of empowerment on their own campuses to work toward more equitable organizational cultures.

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

ES-2-5-4 | *Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | The Role of Advocacy Coalitions in Urban HSI Universities Pursuit to Top Tier: Multiple Case Studies.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Magdalena Martinez, PhD
Rowan University

Using case study methods, I employ the advocacy coalition framework to examine five urban HSI universities, their metros, and their pursuit to the top tier. I discuss key findings and how a focus on urban universities can help researchers understand their changing role beyond academia.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Learn about on-going scholarly research that aims to understand how HSI institutional leaders balance tensions created by pursuing R1 status.
2. Provide feedback on the use of the conceptual framework for policy change.
3. discuss how coalitions in other domains may help shape a more just higher education landscape.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-2-6-4 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Reconciling Selectivity and Inclusivity: UCLA's Transformation into an Emerging HSI.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Elizabeth Gonzalez, PhD
UCLA

Marialexia Zaragoza, MEd
UCLA

This session examines how UCLA is integrating its dual identities as a selective institution and an emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). Grounded in the Theory of Racialized Organizations and Inclusive Excellence, this presentation focuses on UCLA's transformation in affordability, student success, and faculty representation, highlighting deep changes in financial aid, establishment of a Latinx Success Center, and committed to increasing Latinx faculty representation.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Identify the conflicting identities of their institutions and the ways this impacts the daily lived experiences of students, staff and faculty.
2. Learn about the ways UCLA has begun to transform practices and policies in affordability, student success, and faculty representation.
3. Develop strategies to transform policies and practices that will help students, staff, and faculty align the conflicting identities of their institution.

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

2-1-5 | *Outstanding Dissertation Competition Second Place Winner.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Edwin Jose Perez, PhD

Title of Dissertation: *The Life Cycle of STEM Intervention Programs: From Adoption to Institutionalization*

Degree Discipline: Education

Degree Granting Institution: University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Using a multiple case study approach and organizational theory, this study tracks the life cycle of the Chancellor's Science Scholars program at UNC-Chapel Hill and the Millennium Scholars Program at Penn State (University Park) two STEM intervention programs (SIPs) modeled after the nationally successful Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This study provides important practical and theoretical implications regarding implementing, adapting, sustaining, and institutionalizing SIPs seeking to cultivate inclusive science environments.

Edwin Perez, PhD is a postdoctoral scholar at the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success at the University of Texas, El Paso. Dr. Perez is the son of immigrants from Oaxaca, Mexico and comes from a first-generation and low-income background. These identities have been central in shaping his experiences through higher education, serving as both challenges and motivators to work toward transforming our institutions into environments where students who have been historically excluded from higher education can thrive. Dr. Perez received a B.A. in Political Science from the University of California, Merced and an MEd in Student Affairs from the University of California, Los Angeles. Most recently, he received a PhD from the Higher Education and Organizational Change program at the University of California, Los Angeles. His dissertation "The Life Cycle of STEM Intervention Programs: From Adoption to Institutionalization" used a multiple case study approach and organizational theory to examine how STEM intervention programs that seek to create inclusive science environments are implemented, adapted, sustained, and institutionalized within higher education institutions. His research interests focus on examining and developing the organizational dynamics and conditions that allow the creation of equitable higher education institutions.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

2:30 PM - 3:30 PM

Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x Diasporas

ES-2-2-5 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) |
"You probably have a leg up since you're Latino": Micro-aggressions and counter-spaces for Latino men students

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Cristóbal Salinas Jr., PhD
Florida Atlantic University

Marissa Vasquez, EdD
San Diego State University

Latin* students consistently encounter hostile campus racial climates, racial microaggressions, and additional racial stressors distinct from those experienced by their White peers, which contribute to doubts about their academic self-concept, retention at their institution, prospects for graduation, and sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Through a campus racial climate framework, we analyze Latino men college students' interviews to understand how they experience higher education. Analysis revealed that Latino men college students experienced implicit and overt micro-aggressions from different members of the 4-year university (e.g., peers, faculty), requiring the students to depend on counter-spaces in student organizations to foster a positive campus racial climate.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

5. Understand the unique challenges faced by Latino men in higher education, including hostile campus racial climates through the presence of microaggressions.
6. Recognize the importance of counter spaces in student organizations for fostering a positive campus racial climate and supporting Latino men's resilience and perseverance.
7. Identify the role of higher education institutions in creating and maintaining supportive spaces for Latino men, enhancing their sense of belonging and social connectedness.
8. Reflect on institutional practices and policies that can address and mitigate the negative impacts of microaggressions and hostile racial climates on Latino men's college experiences.

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

ES-2-3-5 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) |
"It's important to hold the door open" - Motivations of Latino Men in HESA Programs

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Hermen Díaz, PhD
Buffalo State University

Lazaro Camacho, Jr., PhD
University of Rhode Island

This narrative inquiry study examined the lived experiences of Latino men enrolled in higher education/student affairs administration master's graduate programs. Participant experiences were analyzed through the Socio-Ecological Outcomes Model. Findings show how social identities and intrinsic motivations inform the professional motivations to disrupt barriers for Latinx students, goals to support Latinx college students through advocacy and mentorship, and the disconnect between their professional development needs and the HESA curriculum.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Participants will be introduced to the socio-ecological variables that influence academic success and motivations for Latino graduate students.
2. Participants will be able to identify important graduate curricular and programmatic considerations that inform the success and motivations of Latino graduate students.
3. Participants will be able to identify how HESA programs can bridge the gap (faculty, staff, and Latino men) with the intention to better serve the intersections of identities of Latino men.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

ES-2-4-5 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Striving Towards Latinx Faculty Thriving in Early Career.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Joana Granados, MEd, PhD Student
UCLA

Sylvia Hurtado, PhD
UCLA

The Striving Towards Thriving in Early Careers project addresses early-career faculty needs before coming up for tenure/promotion. Using interviews with Latinx faculty and campus administrators, analyzing tenure data, and implementing workshops, we are developing an intervention model toward successful achievement of 4th-year reviews. This project not only builds on existing efforts to improve retention, promotion, and success in research, teaching, and service but also challenges current structures and builds networks that empower diverse faculty to thrive.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Develop an understanding of the structural barriers faced by early-career Latinx faculty within academic institutions, particularly in relation to tenure and promotion processes.
2. Explore evidence from the STTEC project to assess existing career development practices within their institutions, identifying areas for reform to best support the retention and advancement of Latinx faculty, and will be invited to share examples of successful practices they have encountered.
3. Understand strategies for creating collaborative learning communities within their institutions that enhance mentorship and professional growth, while also sharing their experiences and expertise to foster collective learning and support for underrepresented faculty.

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-2-5-5 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Navigating Barriers: A Duoethnographic Exploration of Latina Superintendents Aspiring to Shape Equitable Futures.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Griselda Galindo-Vargas, PhD Applicant
Texas State University

This study explores the challenges Latinas face in aspiring to superintendency within PreK-12 public schools. Using duoethnography and testimonios, it examines the intersections of race, gender, and leadership in predominantly white, male-dominated spaces. Highlighting personal narratives, the research addresses historical and contemporary barriers, while showcasing strategies for overcoming institutional obstacles. In alignment with the 2025 AAHHE theme, it reconciles the past, confronts current inequities, and envisions a more equitable future for Latina leaders.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Understand the historical and contemporary challenges Latina superintendents face.
2. Attendees will engage with duoethnography and testimonios as methodological tools for uncovering marginalized voices.
3. The session will provide strategies to foster more inclusive leadership pathways and promote systemic change in educational leadership.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

2-6-5 | USDA Fellows Caminos for Success Graduate Fellows Presentation

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Funded by the USDA, Caminos for Success is a collaboration between AAHHE and Texas State University, a Hispanic Serving Institution that is pursuing Carnegie R1 status. Caminos fellows are graduate students in STEM fields at Texas State University. This session features STEM-related projects of the Caminos fellows.

Session Organizers: Gloria Martinez-Ramos, PhD, Texas State University and Bob E. Vásquez, PhD, Texas State University.

Nayeli Medina

Texas State University
Identifying Barriers to Access Food Among College Students

Liva Jensen

Texas State University
Bobcat Bounty Cupboards: Barriers and Targets for Addressing Food Insecurity on the Texas State Campus

Alyna Cox

Texas State University
Bobcat Bounty: How a Food Panty Can Affect Food Insecurity Among International Students

Natalie Powell

Texas State University
Feed 'Em Up Cats: How Bobcat Bounty Influences Participant Carotenoid Levels

Cassandra Swanson

Texas State University
Characterizing the Effects of Vitamin D Deficiency Across the Gut-Liver Axis in the Context of Obesity: An In Vivo Study

Elizabeth Orman

Texas State University
Participating and Engaging in Community Based Research: The Case of The CORE Four Youth Needs Survey

Diane Nunez

Texas State University
Complex Borders, Complex (Im)mobilities: Migration to the Rio Grande Valley

Nicole Anguiano

Texas State University
Reverse Gentrification: Empowering Neighborhoods and People through Direct Property Investment

3:40 PM - 4:40 PM

2-1-6 | Outstanding Dissertation Competition First Place Winner Session .

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

María Javiera De los Ríos Escobar, PhD

Title of Dissertation: Understanding Persistence through University Climate Assessment: First-year Students' Experiences at Chilean Universities and their Plans of Re-enrolling For The Next Academic Term
Degree Discipline: Higher Education
Degree Granting Institution: The Pennsylvania State University

This dissertation examines first-year students' perception of university climate in Chile, and its impact on their plans to re-enroll, using the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey. Findings reveal disparities among social identity groups, with working-class and indigenous students reporting lower validation, sense of mattering, and higher microaggressions. By introducing a culturally adapted mattering scale, this research provides valuable insights into student belonging potentially relevant to Chile, Latin America, and Latinx communities in the U.S.

María Javiera De los Ríos Escobar, PhD, rooted in a family tradition of educators devoted to public education, is a higher education researcher with a deep commitment to fostering equity and inclusion in academic environments. She serves as an advisor to the Cabinet of the Superintendencia de Educación Superior de Chile, where she contributes to policy development and oversight to ensure quality in higher education institutions. She holds a PhD and Master's in Higher Education from The Pennsylvania State University, where she was a Fulbright scholar, and a bachelor's degree in political science from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at international academic conferences. De los Ríos Escobar's research explores the intersection of institutional climate, student persistence, and educational equity, with a focus on supporting underrepresented student populations. Her work has been shaped by a rich academic journey and the mentorship of inspiring educators. At Penn State, she contributed to projects funded by the National Science Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, advancing efforts to create more inclusive STEM environments.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

3:40 PM - 4:40 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

ES-2-2-6 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Empowering Institutional Agents: Designing HSI Workshops for Sustainable Change and Latine Student Success.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Jonathan Alcantar, PhD
University of Northern Colorado

This session highlights the need for institutional culture change to support Latine student success at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). It presents the HSI 101 and 201 workshops at the University of Northern Colorado, aimed at empowering faculty, staff, administrators, and students to build institutional capacity for serving Latine students. Attendees will explore strategies to maintain HSI momentum, address challenges, and design workshops tailored to their institution's specific needs and resources to drive effective transformational change.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Identify key components necessary for cultivating institutional culture change to support Latine students at HSIs.
2. Develop strategies to design and implement HSI-focused workshops at their institution.
3. Analyze common barriers and limitations faced in maintaining momentum after HSI designation.
4. Apply workshop training methods to empower faculty, staff, administrators, and students in fostering Latine student success.
5. Customize workshop sessions based on the unique needs, communities, and resources of their institution.

3:40 PM - 4:40 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-2-3-6 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Fotos y Recuerdos: Reconciling our Past and Present for a Successful Future through storytelling*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Alma Sanchez, MA
CSUSM

Elsie Solis, EdD
CSUSM

This presentation addresses the unique challenges faced by the Latinx community in higher education, focusing on the pervasive issue of impostor syndrome and its impact on academic achievement and belonging. The presentation employs Latino Critical Race Theory and Counter Storytelling as theoretical frameworks. Participants will engage in reflective activities, including U-Journaling and storytelling. By sharing their stories, participants can confront feelings of self-doubt and build resilience within their academic journeys.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Increase participants' understanding of best practices for Latinx/a/o communities in overcoming impostor syndrome in higher education.
2. Engage in reflective activities, and discussion as recommendations of practice-based initiatives, U-Journaling practice.
3. Use their personal story to empower their past, present, and future selves through storytelling

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

3:40 PM - 4:40 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-2-4-6 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | *Reflexión y acción: Moving equity, inclusion and diversity (EID) from theory to praxis.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Judith Flores Carmona, PhD
New Mexico State University

Susana Ibarra Johnson, PhD
New Mexico State University

Teresa María Linda Scholz, PhD
New Mexico State University

Mariana Ortega, ABD
New Mexico State University

Many of us are asking this question: What if we are faced with anti-EID legislation—how would we continue centering “serving” BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students at an HSI/MSI? The audience will identify mechanisms that center servingness for BIPOC students enrolled in the university and community college system. Grounded in LatCrit and zeroing in on culturally linguistic and responsive pedagogies, we will delve into sharing our work to systemically enact an EID praxis.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Develop a vision for conceptualizing our notion of “servingness” in theory and in practice.
2. Assess and identify curricula that are culturally and linguistically relevant and sustaining.
3. Collaborate with identified and established EID College Directors across the university or university system.
4. Identify mechanisms of collaboration with institutional partners to educate about practices of “servingness.”

3:40 PM - 4:40 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

IW-2-5-6 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | *Writing Ourselves into Academia: A Reflective Workshop for Imagining Latinx/a/o Futures*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Benjamin J. Villarreal, EdD
New Mexico Highlands University

This interactive workshop for educators will engage attendees in writing-intensive activities scaffolded to consider the conference theme and workshop strand, reflect on the challenges Latinx/as/os face in academia now, and imagine the futures they want to build for themselves and the learners they work with. The workshop will also provide space and resources for attendees to consider how to adapt these activities for their own learners.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Engage educators in reflective, writing-intensive activities to imagine an academic future of which they are an integral part.
2. Provide a model of culturally responsive facilitation.
3. Provide time and resources for adapting the workshop for use with attendees’ own learners.
4. Create space for ongoing discussion and collaboration.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

3:40 PM - 4:40 PM

2-6-6 | USDA Fellows Caminos for Success Graduate Fellows Presentations

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 206

Funded by the USDA, Caminos for Success is a collaboration between AAHHE and Texas State University, a Hispanic Serving Institution that is pursuing Carnegie R1 status. Caminos fellows are graduate students in STEM fields at Texas State University. This session features STEM-related projects of the Caminos fellows.

Session Organizers: Gloria Martinez-Ramos, PhD, Texas State University, and Bob E. Vásquez, PhD, Texas State University.

Emily Gonzalez

Texas State University
Assessing the Risk Factors and Burden of Liver Cancer Among Latinos in Texas: A Scoping Review

Julia Ruth

Texas State University
Worms, Wine, and Wicked Problems

Brock Burford

Texas State University
Turning Water to Wine: an analysis of Texas wine industry water efficiency

Annelise Holguin

Texas State University
Deforestation and Water Quality: Sustainability Challenges in the Agave Sector in Oaxaca, Mexico

Amanda Barney

Texas State University
Local Environmental Responses to Regional Climatic Changes During the Holocene: A Case Study from Palmetto State Park, Texas

Canyon Tillmon

Texas State University
The Impact of Temperature on Artificial Roost Selection by Brazilian Free-Tail and Evening Bats

Arami Rosales

Texas State University
Leveraging Artificial Intelligence: The Application of Machine Learning in Precision Agriculture (a review)

Rigoberto Mayorga-Luna

Texas State University
Charge Transfer Through Individual DNA Molecules, Measured by Mechanically-Detected Electric Charge Sensing

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

RT-2-1-7 | Round Table: Intentional Institutional Practices to Support Latinx/a/o Student Success | El Respeto Al Derecho Ajeno [A Conseguir Una Doctorado] Es La Paz. Respect for The Rights of Others [To Get A Phd] is Peace.

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Amanda Rodríguez-Newhall, MSW, PhD
California Polytechnic State University, Pomona

Nicolaus Espitia, MSW, PhD
Oakland University

Despite comprising the largest ethnic group in the United States, Latinx individuals are woefully underrepresented in spaces of higher education (Curiel, 2023). This lack of representation is in part due to the barriers students face once they enter spaces of higher education (Gutiérrez et al., 2019). Currently only .2% of Latinx college graduates go on to earn their PhDs contributing to a lack of Latinx faculty within higher education (Curiel, 2023). The lack of Latinx representation among college and university settings can make it more difficult for Latinx students to find supportive mentors (Curiel, 2023). This paper stems from a conference workshop that utilized pláticas facilitated by presenters that enabled attendees to process their feelings of exclusion within higher education. These pláticas were used to develop a set of counternarratives that can help foster a sense of belonging in higher education for Latinx students, as well as a series of best practices for those mentoring Latinx students.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Develop new narratives that demonstrate how Latinx students belong in higher education programs and highlight the strength in their experiences.
2. Detail coping strategies for Latinx students to process feelings of exclusion they may experience in spaces of higher education.
3. Build community: Latinx students are not alone. There is a strong network of Latinx scholars willing to help students navigate spaces of higher education.
4. Contribute to a social support network that attendees will be able to access after the conference.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

Session Type: Innovations in Practice and Scholarship

RT-2-1-7 | Round Table: Intentional Institutional Practices to Support Latinx/a/o Student Success | Resilience and Innovation: Navigating Legislative Updates as a Borderland Health-Related, Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Alyssa C. Benavides, PhD, MPA

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso

Christiane Herber-Valdez, EdD

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso

Andrea E. Thompson, MIOP

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso

The session will explore how a Borderland Hispanic-Serving Institution is navigating recent legislative restrictions that limit certain inclusion practices. The discussion focuses on the institution's innovative strategies for complying with state policies while maintaining its mission to serve diverse Border populations. By leveraging federal Title V grants and internal coalitions, the institution continues to promote culturally responsive healthcare training and practices, offering insights for resilience in similar socio-political climates.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Explore strategies TTUHSC EP has implemented to comply with state policies while preserving its core mission to serve Borderland populations.
2. Discuss the role of federal grants in maintaining student support systems in an environment where other financial support may be limited.
3. Share insights on how institutions in similar socio-political climates can continue to embrace students' identities and provide culturally responsive education.
4. Generate collaborative dialogue on long-term implications of such policy shifts and how higher education institutions can proactively build resilience in their student, campus, and community recognition efforts.

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

Session Type: Innovations in Practice and Scholarship

RT-2-1-7 | Round Table: Intentional Institutional Practices to Support Latinx/a/o Student Success | Community Colleges Abroad: Creating a Global Community through the Fulbright Scholar Program

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Adelina Silva, PhD

Alamo Community College District

Keegan Scott, MA

Institute of International Education

For over 75 years, the Fulbright Program has provided students, faculty and staff fully funded opportunities to teach, study, conduct research, and participate in seminars abroad as well as host international visitors on campus. In this discussion, Dr. Adelina Silva from Alamo Colleges District will share her story of navigating the application as well as how Fulbright benefitted her career, and her institution's goals for global engagement. Ultimately, attendees will be able to connect with Dr. Silva who can provide insight and wisdom into a competitive application and a successful Fulbright Scholar experience, laying the groundwork for greater internationalization for Community Colleges in the United States.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Recognize how a Fulbright Scholar award can further a scholar's career, research, and teaching objectives, as well as internationalize their institution.
2. Learn about Fulbright Scholar opportunities and understand the necessary application components.
3. Gain a better understanding of how to create a competitive application.
4. Leverage Fulbright opportunities to create global coalitions within their field of interest.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

RT-2-1-7 | *Round Table: Intentional Institutional Practices to Support Latinx/a/o Student Success | Relationship Building Between University Faculty and Hispanic Graduate Students: Do DEIB Initiatives Improve Retention Rates?*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 200

Jennifer Banegas, MA, PhD Student
Pepperdine University

Lizeth Sandoval, MA, PhD Student
Pepperdine University

This research proposal investigates the impact of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives on Hispanic graduate student retention rates. It examines faculty-student relationships and the importance of diverse representation, aiming to foster a sense of belonging among Hispanic students. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, incorporating interviews with Hispanic graduate students and surveys of Hispanic faculty to evaluate DEIB initiatives. Expected outcomes include identifying barriers to retention, assessing DEIB's influence on graduation rates, and enhancing faculty-student relationships.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Assess the effectiveness of existing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) initiatives in supporting Hispanic graduate student retention.
2. Identify and discuss challenges faced by Hispanic graduate students in higher education, informed by qualitative data from student interviews.
3. Collaborate in identifying actionable strategies and initiatives to enhance the retention of Hispanic graduate students.

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward.

IW-2-2-7 | *Interactive Workshops/Symposia | Community College Men of Color Initiatives: Examining Practices and Structures that Activate Student Assets.*

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 202

Joseph Romero-Reyes, PhD
Iowa State University

This qualitative multi-site case study explored the perspectives of educators affiliated with community college men of color initiatives. Using the Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) framework to identify student assets, the findings show that educators recognized various qualities that comprise students' aspirational, social, navigational, and resistant capital. Consequently, they implemented unique strategies to create the conditions and context within the initiative that activated students' CCW to support and strengthen their vertical transfer aspirations and pathways.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Identify ways to apply community cultural wealth within student affairs or in the classroom to support Latino men.
2. Inform participants about the practices of educators such as faculty, staff, academic counselors, and directors to support the vertical transfer aspirations of Latino men.
3. Inform participants about how these initiatives created the conditions and context to support Latino men's vertical transfer aspirations and strengthen their vertical transfer pathways.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

IW-2-3-7 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | Reimagining Love, Care, and Energy Through Spoken Word: A Tool for Healing in Higher Education.

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 203

Gabriel Pulido, PhD
University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse

Spoken word can be a transformative tool for healing, specifically for the Latinx higher education community. This workshop invites participants to engage in the expressive art of spoken word to process trauma and foster resilience. Through creative exploration, we aim to reclaim cultural narratives and envision a future where healing is both personal and collective. Participants will leave equipped with strategies for using spoken word as a vehicle for self-care and community empowerment.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain an understanding of the historical and cultural significance of oral traditions in Latinx cultures, and how spoken word builds upon these traditions to foster emotional and communal healing. They will leave with an appreciation for the power of storytelling as a tool for reclaiming narratives and addressing personal and collective trauma.
2. Through guided writing prompts and group discussions, Reflect on how love and care have been navigated within the context of higher education. They will explore how these concepts can be reclaimed as radical acts of self-preservation and community empowerment, especially for marginalized groups.
3. Have an introduction to the basics of spoken word poetry, including writing techniques and performance strategies. They will practice crafting and performing their own spoken word pieces, using these creative expressions as a vehicle for processing emotions, advocating for change, and building resilience.
4. Learn how to incorporate spoken word into their daily practices as a tool for self-care, emotional expression, and community building. This objective emphasizes the ongoing, transformative potential of spoken word to foster healing beyond the workshop setting.
5. Provided with strategies for using spoken word in educational settings to facilitate conversations on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participants will be equipped to guide students in using spoken word as a method for expressing their experiences, building community, and advocating for systemic change in higher education.

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward

IW-2-4-7 | Interactive Workshops/Symposia | Healing Through Connection: Supporting Latinx/a/o Students with Care and Intention.

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 204

Marisol Garza, PhD
CCCSE

Elizabeth Rodríguez, EdD
Laredo College

Latinx/a/o community college students report significant mental health challenges that threaten their dream of a college education. Over 20% of Latinx/a/o students meet the criteria for either a depressive or anxiety disorder in college, underscoring the need for healing. This session will delve into how love, care, and energy can be re-imagined in educational spaces to better support Latinx/a/o students. Participants will explore their role in creating healing spaces by reflecting on their institutional practices.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Examine emerging data about Latinx/a/o mental health and wellbeing in college.
2. Through student testimonios, participants will understand more about students' lived experiences with mental health and wellbeing in college.
3. Evaluate their personal or institutional practices to identify the extent to which they support Latinx/a/o mental health and wellbeing.
4. Acquire knowledge about nurturing healing environments through Laredo College's examples of successful initiatives.
5. Leverage insights to develop a plan for nurturing care and healing at their institutions.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

4:50 PM - 5:50 PM

Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts

ES-2-5-7 | Educational Sessions (Scholarship- or Practice-Focused) | Navigating Change: Supporting Undocumented Students Amid Shifting Immigration Laws and Educational Barriers.

Jordan Student Success Building, Room 205

Hector Galvan, MA
University of Michigan

Jodi Berry, PhD Candidate
University of Michigan

This session explores the challenges undocumented students face in higher education, shaped by changing immigration laws. It examines the impact of DACA, current legislative shifts like Biden's new policy pertaining to the usage of employment-based visas, and the usage of D3 waivers to streamline reentry into the United States for Dreamers and undocumented college graduates. The session highlights innovative solutions like inclusive internship programs and provides actionable strategies for supporting undocumented students. Participants will gain insights into evolving policies and practical approaches for fostering an inclusive, supportive campus environment.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Analyze the historical and current legal landscape, including DACA, employment-based visas, and D3 waivers, and how it affects undocumented students' access to legal residency and career opportunities.
2. Recognize the financial, professional, and emotional challenges undocumented students encounter in pursuing higher education and professional development.
3. Learn about creative solutions, such as inclusive internship and fellowship programs, designed to provide undocumented students with professional experience and financial support.
4. Develop strategies to help undocumented students understand and navigate evolving immigration policies, ensuring they can make informed decisions about their educational and career paths.
5. Create an Inclusive Campus Environment: Implement best practices that promote a more inclusive and supportive campus culture for undocumented students, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.

6:10 PM - 7:00 PM

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Constructing Coalitions and Communities

Poster Presentations | Contradictions and Challenges toward Building Cross-Race Coalitions in HSI's.

Jordan Student Success Building Lobby

Maria Oropeza Fujimoto, PhD
California State University Los Angeles

Eugene Oropeza Fujimoto, PhD
California State University Fullerton

Building effective coalitions across racial boundaries continues to challenge many engaged in transforming educational institutions. Hispanic Serving Institutions are no exception. Graduate programs in HSI's provide a rich context from which to examine this process as future educational leaders grapple with collaborating toward common goals. This session presents possibilities of progress in this area by challenging anti-Blackness in HSI's through the lens of the abolition movement in the U.S.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Reflect on anti-Blackness as a socialization process that is often enacted in horizontal hostilities across BIPOC groups.
2. Understand that being radically inclusive requires us to reflect, before we can think and act differently.
3. Recognize that uncertainty, resistance, and hostility can be part of the process for understanding, change, and liberation.
4. Understand the difference between being an ally and working in solidarity with another group.
5. Demonstrate practices used in Educational Leadership programs with masters and doctoral students to help students reflect and imagine a different reality.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

6:10 PM - 7:00 PM

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

*Foregrounding the Epistemic Contributions of the Intersections of Latina/o/x
Diasporas*

*Poster Presentations | Supporting Latinx/a/o Students with Disabilities in
Higher Education*

Jordan Student Success Building Lobby

Nancy Mendoza, PhD
Ohio State University

Angela Tovar
Ohio State University

Juliana Pinzon Garzon
Ohio State University

Latinx/a/o students with disabilities navigate a complex landscape of systematic barriers. These barriers compounded with cultural factors and stigmas can exacerbate feelings of marginalization and disempowerment, impacting students' academic performance, college experience, and degree attainment. The purpose of this roundtable is to engage in a dialogue around the experiences of Latinx/a/o students with disabilities in higher education and innovative ideas on ensuring these students are receiving an equitable opportunity to obtain a degree.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Identify 3-5 barriers experienced by Latinx/a/o students with disabilities.
2. Identify 1-2 strategies for supporting Latinx/a/o students with disabilities.
3. Identify 1-2 current higher education supports that may be used to support Latinx/a/o students with disabilities.
4. Identify a collaborator (if interested) to further the work of supporting Latinx/a/o students with disabilities.

6:10 PM - 7:00 PM

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

*Wrestling with Past, Present, and Future Sociopolitical & Historical Contexts
Poster Presentations | Remapping Our Relationship with Our City: A web-
based approach to Critical Place-Based Education.*

Jordan Student Success Building Lobby

Saul López, MA
Marquette University

How do emerging Hispanic Serving institutions engage with the community in ways that center and value the often-overlooked histories of communities of color? Through this poster, I highlight a web-based pedagogical ecosystem that centers and amplifies local histories for educators and students to use in the classroom. The MKE Roots Ecosystem is an interactive tool that holds important implications for institutions seeking to challenge deficit minded narratives through the inclusion of local and institutional experts.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain insight into the ways that a center at an emerging HSI understands and operationalizes "servingness", particularly as it pertains to working with community stakeholders, creating programs for educators, and crafting curricular materials.
2. Better understand how critical place-based education informs and influences how we understand and map our local context.
3. Discuss opportunities to implement web-based mapping tools as a vehicle for discussion and place-based activities for both educators and students to better understand the systemic structures impacting the different communities of color in the same city.

CONFERENCE AGENDA

Concurrent Sessions

SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2025

6:10 PM - 7:00 PM

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

*Re-Imagining Love, Care, and Energies to Move Forward
Latina/e women's Journeys to Top Senior Leadership and Strategies
for Sustaining Success*

Jordan Student Success Building Lobby

Sandra Bertram Grant, PhD
University of Denver

This qualitative study explored the testimonios of eight Latina/es regarding their professional development, decision-making process, pursuit, and persistence in leadership. Testimonio (Huber, 2009) guided this study, using the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994; Lent & Brown, 2013) and Critical Latinx Theory (Bernal, 2002) as frameworks. This research offers recommendations from Latina/es with the hope to inspire and equalize opportunities so that all people can advance in their careers, regardless of their identities.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Discuss women-centered perspectives to promote and sustain a more diverse generation of leaders.
2. Recognize the benefits of using a culturally conscious lens to support and mentor future leaders in the field.
3. Identify the personal, environmental, and cultural factors that influence ascension and persistence of Latina/e women in leadership.

6:10 PM - 7:00 PM

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

*Constructing Coalitions and Communities
From Home to Campus: Strengthening Commuter Student Involvement and
Belonging*

Jordan Student Success Building Lobby

Monica Gonzalez Herrera, MA
UC San Diego

Through an asset-based approach, this study explored enhancing first-year commuter student engagement and sense of belonging at a private, faith-based university. Using McNiff and Whitehead's reflect-plan-act-exhibit model, students engaged in identity, community, and leadership activities. Findings highlight the benefits of role modeling, the creation of a 'third space,' and fostering connections. Practitioners should embrace the commuter identity, improve the visibility of commuter-specific programs, and foster community through dedicated spaces and peer mentoring to strengthen co-curricular involvement.

At the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Gain insight into the challenges and opportunities commuter students, particularly Latinx/a/o and first-generation students, face in higher education, including the impact of social isolation and navigating multiple identities.
2. Learn about the concept of a 'third space'—a hybrid environment that blends home, academic, and personal life—and its role in fostering a sense of belonging and community for commuter students.
3. Explore how role modeling and peer mentorship programs can provide challenging yet supportive environments for commuter students, promoting both personal and academic growth.
4. Leave with actionable strategies for creating commuter-targeted programming that enhances student engagement, focusing on visibility, accessibility, and inclusivity.
5. Learn how to apply an asset-based approach to commuter student engagement, focusing on the strengths and existing community ties of students rather than focusing on deficits.

2025 AAHHE Books of the Year Awards

Presented at the national conference, the annual AAHHE Books of the Year Awards acknowledge and honor the power of the written word that shares the Hispanic experience, and to celebrate Hispanic culture, history and research excellence. The authors' accomplishments are at the highest levels of literature and scholarship. No other higher education organization provides this significant award.

In 2025, AAHHE celebrates authors in its Early Career, Mid-career, Senior Scholar and Edited Volumes categories.

2025 Book of the Year Award – Early Career Category Authors

2025 *How Schools Make Race: Teaching Latinx Racialization in America*. Harvard Education Press.
Laura C. Chávez-Moreno, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of California, Los Angeles.

2025 Book of the Year Award – Mid-Career Category Authors

2023 *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town*. University of Oklahoma Press.
Jesús Jesse Esparza, PhD, Associate Professor, Texas Southern University.

2025 Book of the Year Award – Senior Scholar

2024 *Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Mexican Americans*. Multilingual Matters.
William Pérez, PhD, Professor, Loyola Marymount University.
Rafael Vasquez, PhD, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

2025 Book of the Year Award – Edited Volume Category Authors

2023 *Community College and Beyond: Understanding the Transfer Pipeline for Latina/o/x Students*. Information Age Publishing.
José del Real Viramontes, PhD, Assistant Professor, University of California, Riverside.
Marissa Vasquez, EdD, Associate Director, Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) & Associate Professor, Postsecondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs (PELSA), San Diego State University.

2024 *Latin* Students in Engineering: An Intentional Focus on a Growing Population*. Rutgers University Press.

Lara Pérez-Felkner, PhD, Associate Professor, Florida State University.
Sara Rodríguez, PhD, Associate Professor, Virginia Tech.
Ciera Fluker, PhD, Ohio BWC.

List of past recipients of AAHHE Books of the Year Awards:

2024 Martín Alberto Gonzalez, PhD, *Why you always so political?: The experiences and resiliencies of Mexican/Mexican American/Xicanx students in higher education*, 2023, Early Career Category.

Bernadine Hernández, PhD, *Border Bodies: Racialized Sexuality, Sexual Capital, and Violence in the Nineteenth Century Borderlands*, 2022, Mid-Career Category.

Natalia Molina, PhD, *A Place at the Nayarit: How a Mexican Restaurant in Los Angeles Nourished its Community*, 2022, Senior Scholar Category.

Marialuisa Di Stefano, Alberto Esquinca, PhD, and Idalis Villanueva Alarcón, *Integrando STEAM: A guide for elementary bilingual and dual language programs*, 2022, Edited Volume Category.

2023 Stephany Cuevas, EdE, *Apoyo Sacrificial: How Undocumented Latinx Parents Get Their Children to College*, 2021, Early Career Category.

Francisco Galarte, PhD, *Brown Trans Figurations: Rethinking Race, Gender and Sexuality in Chicanx and Latinx Studies*, 2021, Mid-Career Category.

Jessica Lavariega Monfordi, PhD, and Adam McGlynn, PhD, *Proving Patriotismo Latino Military Recruitment, Service, and Belonging in the US*, 2021, Senior Scholar Category.

Roberto Brischetto, PhD and J. Richard Avena, PhD, *Mexican American Civil Rights in Texas*, 2021, Edited Volume Category.

2022 Elsa Gonzalez, PhD, Frank Fernandez, PhD, and Miranda Wilson, *An Asset-Based Approach to Advancing Latina Students in STEM: Increasing Resilience, Participation, and Success*, Edited Volume Category.

Nichole García, PhD, Cristóbal Salinas, PhD, and Jesus Cisneros, PhD, *Studying Latinx/a/o Students in Higher Education: A Critical Analysis of Concepts, Theory, and Methodologies*, Edited Volume Category.

Laura Enriquez, PhD, *Of Love and Papers: How Immigration Policy Affects Romance and Family*, Early Career Category.

2021 Emir Estrada, PhD, *Kids at Work: Latinx Families Selling Food on the Streets of Los Angeles*, Early Career Category.

Gilberto Conchas, PhD and Nancy Acevedo, PhD, *The Chicano/o/x Dream: Hope, Resistance, and Educational Success*, Senior Scholars Category.

Vasti Torres, PhD, Ebelia Hernandez, PhD and Sylvia Martínez, PhD, *Understanding the LatinX Experience*, Senior Scholars Category.

Susan Paik, PhD, Stacy Kula, PhD, Jeremiah González, PhD and Verónica González, PhD, *High Achieving Latino Students*, Edited Volume Category.

2020 Gina A. García, PhD, *Becoming Hispanic Serving Institutions: Opportunities for Colleges and Universities*.

2019 Alberto Ledesma, *Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer: Undocumented Vignettes From a Pre-American Life*.

2018 Gary F. Keller, *New Directions: Assessment and Preparation of Hispanic College Students & Moving Forward: Policies, Planning, and Promoting Access of Hispanic College Students*.

2017 Aida Hurtado & Mrinal Sinha, *Beyond Machismo* 2010 Gustavo Arellano *¡Ask a Mexican!*

2016 Dolores Inés Casillas, *Sounds of Belonging: U.S. Spanish-language Radio and Public Advocacy*.

2015 Alicia Gaspar de Alba, *[Un]Framing the "Bad Woman": Sor Juana, Malinche, Coyolxauhquiand Other Rebels with a Cause*.

2014 Felicity Amaya Schaeffer, *Love and Empire: Cybermarriage and Citizenship across the Americas*.

2013 Arturo Madrid, *In the Country of Empty Crosses: The Story of a Hispano Protestant Family in Catholic New Mexico*.

2012 Rubén Martínez, *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail*.

2011 David Montejano, *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966–1981*.

2010 Gustavo Arellano, *¡Ask a Mexican!*

2009 Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*.

2008 Mirta Ojito, *Finding Mañana*.

2007 Sonia Nazario, *Enrique's Journey*.

2006 Jeanett Castellanos and Alberta M. Gloria, *The Latina/o Pathway to the PhD: Abriendo Caminos*.

Early Career Category Author

2025 *How Schools Make Race: Teaching Latinx Racialization in America.* Harvard Education Press.



Laura C. Chávez-Moreno, PhD,
Assistant Professor, University of California, Los Angeles

Laura C. Chávez-Moreno, PhD is an award-winning scholar, qualitative social scientist, and assistant professor in the Departments of Chicana/o & Central American Studies and Education at the University of California, Los Angeles. She earned her PhD in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education. Chávez-Moreno's research has been published in top-tier academic journals and recognized with prestigious awards from organizations such as the American Educational Research Association, AAHHE, and the National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation. In 2023, she received the Alan C. Purves Award from the National Council of Teachers of English for her article, "The continuum of racial literacies: Teacher practices countering whitestream bilingual education," published in *Research in the Teaching of English*. This annual award honors the article deemed most significant in advancing the field. Chávez-Moreno has taught at all levels of schooling, from elementary and secondary to tertiary and older-adult education. Her five years as a high school Spanish teacher in the School District of Philadelphia included writing district curriculum and serving on boards of community organizations. Chávez-Moreno's book, *How Schools Make Race: Teaching Latinx Racialization in America*, published by Harvard Education Press, is now available and has been featured in several podcasts and media, including the New Books Network and Forbes.

Mid-Career Category Author

2023 *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town.* University of Oklahoma Press.



Jesús Jesse Esparza, PhD,
Associate Professor, Texas Southern University.

Jesus Jesse Esparza, PhD is an associate professor of History at Texas Southern University in Houston. His area of expertise is on the history of Latinos in the United States, with a focus on civil rights activism. He is the author of *Raza Schools: The Fight for Latino Educational Autonomy in a West Texas Borderlands Town* (OU Press, 2023), a significant work that explores the rise and fall of a unique school system established by Mexican Americans along the Texas borderlands during the Jim Crow era. Esparza earned his PhD from the University of Houston and has previously held academic positions at Houston Community College, Lone Star College, and Texas A&M University. His leadership roles include serving as the Interim Chair of the Department of History at TSU, Board President of the Texas Oral History Association (TOHA), and President of the Collective of Progressive Educators (COPE), a nonprofit dedicated to uncovering, preserving, and promoting the history of US Latinos.

Senior Scholar Author

2024 Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Mexican Americans. Multilingual Matters. William Pérez, PhD, Professor, Loyola Marymount University.



William Pérez, PhD,
Professor, Loyola Marymount University.

William Pérez, PhD, an immigrant from El Salvador and first-generation college graduate, is a professor and Department Chair in the School of Education at Loyola Marymount University. He's also Co-PI of the Loyola Marymount World Languages Project. His research focuses on the civic engagement, multilingualism, and academic resilience of immigrant, undocumented, indigenous, and deported students in the U.S. and Mexico. He has received various awards for his community-engaged research from the American Educational Research Association, the Association for the Study of Higher Education, the American Educational Studies Association, the Fulbright Scholars Program and most recently, the 2023 LMU Award for Excellence in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The impact of his scholarship has been recognized by Education

Week's annual ranking of the top university-based scholars in the US who are doing the most to influence educational policy and practice. He received his BA from Pomona College and his PhD from Stanford University, where he was also awarded the Distinguished Scholar Alumni Award.



Rafael Vásquez, PhD
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

Rafael Vásquez, PhD is a second-generation Zapotec from Guëzh Bac (Tlacolula de Matamoros, Oaxaca) and chief behavioral science research analyst for Los Angeles County, managing health prevention research and evaluation. He obtained his PhD in Education from Claremont Graduate University where he also received the Mullin "Dream and Believe" Award. He was a Social Justice, Culture, and (In)Security fellow with the Departments of Native American Studies and Chicana/o Studies at UC Davis and Fulbright Scholar at the Benito Juárez Autonomous University of Oaxaca in Mexico. His research focuses on the relationship between ethnic and racial marginalization, academic persistence, community engagement, and youth identity. His co-authored

book, "Culturally Responsive Schooling for Indigenous Mexican Students" uncovers how Indigenous students develop their social identities and how these interact with their non-Indigenous Mexican peers and teachers. Some of his other publications appear in the Association of Mexican American Educators Journal and Oxford University Press. He is also a community engaged scholar who collaborates with Indigenous migrant organizations. He is vice president of the Board of Directors for the Mixteco Indígena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) in Oxnard, California. Vásquez has been quoted in various media outlets including the New York Times and La Opinión.

Edited Volume Category Authors

2023 Community College and Beyond: Understanding the Transfer Pipeline for Latina/o/x Students. Information Age Publishing.



José del Real Viramontes, PhD,

Assistant Professor, University of California, Riverside.

José del Real Viramontes, PhD is a proud first-generation immigrant from Jerez, Zacatecas, Mexico, and assistant professor in the Higher Education Administration and Policy Program at the School of Education at the University of California, Riverside. He was an assistant professor in the Higher Education/Community College Leadership Program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Del Real Viramontes holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a specialization in Cultural Studies in Education from the University of Texas at Austin. He focuses on the transfer policies, practices, and programs of four-year universities for Latinx community college transfer students. He co-authored the 2025 AAHHE Edited Volume Book of the Year, *Community College and Beyond: Understanding the Transfer Pipeline for Latina/o/x Students*, which

provides much-needed theoretical and empirical data on the experiences of Latina/o/x students who enter postsecondary education through the community college. The book brings together research highlighting the experiences of Latina/o/x students during the pre-and post-transfer process to ensure that higher education institutions develop transfer policies and programming that support the specific needs of Latina/o/x students.



Marissa Vasquez, EdD,

Associate Director, Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) & Associate Professor, Postsecondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs (PELSA), San Diego State University.

Marissa Vasquez, EdD is an associate professor of Postsecondary Educational Leadership in the Department of Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education at San Diego State University. As a community college scholar, Vasquez uses an anti-deficit lens to understand and interrogate the pre/post transitional experiences of community college and transfer students, particularly first-generation and racially minoritized communities. As the associate director of the Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL), she leads efforts to assist community colleges in identifying challenges to equity-centered institutional effectiveness and developing problem-solving strategies and solutions. Vasquez also leads the SEMILLAS Research Team, which seeks to not only further scholarship on community college students, but

also engage them in research. She serves as co-Editor of the *Journal of Applied Research in the Community College* and is on the editorial board for the *Journal of Hispanics in Higher Education*. A native of San Diego, Vasquez earned her AA from Southwestern College, BA in English from UC Berkeley, MA in counseling from the University of San Diego, and her EdD in Community College Leadership from San Diego State University.

Edited Volume Category Authors

2024 Latin* Students in Engineering: An Intentional Focus on a Growing Population. Rutgers University Press.



Lara Pérez-Felkner, PhD,
Associate Professor, Florida State University.

Lara Pérez-Felkner, PhD is a professor of Higher Education and Sociology in the Higher Education Program within the Anne Spencer Daves College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at Florida State University. Her research uses developmental and sociological perspectives to investigate the mechanisms that shape racial-ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic disparities in post-secondary educational attainment and entry to scientific career fields. Published work includes over 50 peer-reviewed published articles and chapters across disciplines in major journals and edited volumes. She has also published multiple monographs and books, including *Latin* Students in Engineering* (Rutgers University Press). She is the associate editor of *Research in Higher Education* and serves on the editorial boards of *Journal of Higher Education*,

Journal of Postsecondary Success, and *Sociology of Education*. Her research has been supported by external funders including the Gates, Sloan, Spencer, and WT Grant Foundations, and especially the National Science Foundation. Broader impact communication of her work has included various media outlets as well as policy briefs and engagement with districts, STEM departments, and other communities of interest. Pérez-Felkner has professional experience in Academic and Student Affairs at FSU as well as at prior institutions, including the University of Chicago, Prep for Prep, and Wesleyan University. She has won a series of awards for excellence in teaching, advising, and mentoring.



Sarah L. Rodriguez, PhD
PhD, Associate Professor, Virginia Tech.

Sarah L. Rodriguez, PhD serves as an associate professor of Engineering Education and an affiliate faculty member with the Higher Education Program at Virginia Tech. Her engineering education research agenda centers upon engineering and computing identity development of historically marginalized populations at higher education institutions. She has published 55 peer-reviewed articles within engineering education and more broad-based higher education and interdisciplinary spaces, such as: *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, *Engineering Studies*, *Journal of Hispanics in Higher Education*, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, and *Community College Review*. In addition to *Latin* Students in Engineering*, Rodriguez is also author of the upcoming book *Supporting Latinas in Engineering and Computing: A Chicana Feminist Approach*. She was recently awarded the Rising Star in Diversity Award with

the Collaborative Network for Engineering and Computing Diversity (CoNECD) as well as the Betty Vetter Award for Research with the Women in Engineering Proactive Network (WEPAN).

A long-time member of the AAHHE Familia, Rodriguez was an AAHHE Graduate Fellow as well as a Faculty Fellow during her career.

Edited Volume Category Authors

2024 Latin* Students in Engineering: An Intentional Focus on a Growing Population. Rutgers University Press.



Ciera Fluker, PhD

Ohio BWC.

Ciera Fluker, PhD is a technology-based training developer with the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation in the Computer Education and Technology Department. She graduated from the Higher Education Program at Florida State University in 2023 where her research explored policy and institutional strategies for improving Black and Latino students' pathways through higher education and STEM fields. Through her mixed methods research she centers Black and Latino students' voices while underscoring their resiliency and success. In addition to education research, Ciera is a skilled training consultant with over 10 years of experience leading the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of adult education programs. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration with a specialization in

human resources from The Ohio State University, and a master's degree in adult learning and development from Cleveland State University.

2025 Books the Year Awards Selection Committee

Marissa Vasquez, EdD, Chair

Associate Director, Community College Equity
Assessment Lab (CCEAL)
Associate Professor Postsecondary Educational
Leadership and Student Affairs (PELSA)
San Diego State University

Guadalupe Saldivar, AAHHE Editor

Business Career Specialist
University of California, Riverside

Amber M. Gonzalez, PhD

Undergraduate Studies in Education, College of
Education, Academic Affairs, California State University,
Sacramento
CSU, Sacramento

Marcella Runell, EdD

Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students
Mount Holyoke College

Rubi Gonzales, PhD

Postdoctoral Research Associate
Division of Public Health Sciences
Washington University in St Louis School of Medicine

Martin Alberto Gonzalez, PhD

Assistant Professor
Chicano/Latino Studies – Liberal Arts & Sciences
Portland State University

Veronica Gonzalez, PhD

Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of South Carolina

Julie Vanegas, PhD

Assistant Professor
Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Texas, Rio Grande Valley

Amanda Danielle Rodríguez-Newhall, PhD

Assistant Professor
Sociology Department
California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

Ángel de Jesús González, EdD

Assistant Professor
Higher Education Administration and Leadership
Fresno State University

Maria Espino, PhD

Research Analyst
Center for the Transformation of Schools
University of California, Los Angeles

Alma Flores, PhD

Assistant Professor
Undergraduate Studies in Education
Sacramento State University

Naomi Ramirez, MA, PhD

Lecturer
Department of Child and Family Development
San Diego State University

Rodrigo Aguayo

Doctoral Student
Program of Higher Education Leadership and Policy
University of Texas at Austin

Anthony Villarreal, PhD

Faculty Scholar
San Diego State University

Joseph Romero-Reyes, PhD

Assistant Professor
School of Education
Iowa State University

Wendy Ochoa, PhD

Assistant Professor Department of Child and Family
Development San Diego State University

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows

The AAHHE Faculty Fellows Program (FFP) prepares Latina/o/x faculty for successful careers in academia and beyond by increasing the number of tenured and promoted Latina/o/x faculty. The program aims to a) provide strategies to assist tenure-track faculty in achieving their scholarly and career goals; b) build community and network with other Latina/o/x faculty; and c) develop future leaders who are dedicated to uplifting their communities.



Magdalena Martínez, PhD

AAHHE Faculty Fellowship Program, Co-chair
Associate Professor
Rowan University

Magdalena Martínez, PhD is an associate professor and senior policy fellow at Rowan University in New Jersey. Her areas of expertise include public policy process, leadership, and access and equity for underrepresented student populations. Martínez holds a PhD from the University of Michigan, a master's degree from Harvard University and a bachelor's degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



Hugo A. García, PhD

AAHHE Faculty Fellowship Program, Co-chair
Associate Professor
Texas Tech University

Hugo A. García, PhD is an associate professor at Texas Tech University. He obtained his BA in international relations from UC-San Diego, MEd in higher education administration and student affairs from the University of Southern California, and a PhD in Education with an emphasis in higher education from Claremont Graduate University. His research interests pertain to access in higher education, retention of underrepresented students at two- and four-year postsecondary institutions, international higher education, social issues in higher education, and P-20 education pipeline. Specifically, his work focuses on conducting research on community colleges and their impact on underrepresented students' academic success, student transition to community colleges and four-year institutions, institutional responses to globalization and the internationalization of higher education, and educational outcomes for students of color throughout the educational pipeline.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Hermen Díaz III, PhD

Assistant Professor
Buffalo State University – SUNY

Hermen Díaz III, PhD, is an assistant professor in the Higher Education Administration Department at SUNY-Buffalo State University. He has over a decade of experience as a scholar-practitioner in higher education administration and student affairs. His scholarly interests center on the experiences of Latino men and students of color at institutions of higher education. As a teacher and facilitator, he focuses on creating a collaborative and co-constructed learning environment that empowers aspiring/current campus leaders and administrators. He received a BA in Psychology from Grand Valley State University, a MS in Student Personnel Administration from the SUNY Buffalo State College and a PhD in Higher Education Leadership from Colorado State University.



Melissa Navarro, PhD

Associate Professor of Bilingual STEM Education
San Diego State University, College of Education, Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education

Melissa A. Navarro Martell, PhD, is an award-winning researcher, academic senator, and associate-tenured professor in the Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education at San Diego State University. Her research and teaching have advanced the field of bilingual science education with numerous publications detailing how to prepare critically conscious multilingual educators. She holds a California teaching credential and is a former 4th and 8th-grade social-justice math and science Spanish/English dual-language teacher.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Cristóbal Rodríguez, PhD

AAHHE Board of Directors Liaison, Faculty Fellowship Program
Associate Provost, Equity-Centered Initiatives, Academic Affairs
Western Michigan University

Cristóbal Rodríguez, PhD is the associate provost for Equity-Centered Initiatives in Academic Affairs at Western Michigan University. Being born and raised in the Texas Borderlands of El Paso under hard-working immigrant parents from Mexico, and studying in Germany as a U.S. Congress-German Bundestag scholar has shaped the world views and research of Rodríguez, along with his PhD studies in Education Policy and Planning with a portfolio in Mexican American Studies at The University of Texas at Austin. Rodríguez' research highlights the need for systemic equity and culturally responsive leadership and policy across the education system. Rodríguez was recognized with the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Faculty Honors and was honored as the 2019 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow with the Intercultural Development

Research Association to collaborate on school finance, equity, and college readiness for Black and Latina/o/x students. Prior to his current role since 2021, Rodríguez spent 5 years as an assistant professor at New Mexico State University, his BA and MA alma mater and Hispanic Serving Institution; with an additional 7 blessed years thereafter at Howard University in Washington, DC, a top Historically Black College/University, as an associate professor and as the director of Graduate Studies of the School of Education. Rodríguez was appointed by President Biden to serve on the President's Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics and Latinos.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Angélica Amezcua, PhD

Assistant Professor, Spanish
Director of the Spanish Heritage Language Program
University of Washington

Angélica Amezcua, PhD is an assistant professor, Spanish and the director of the Spanish Heritage Language Program at the University of Washington. Amezcua holds a BA in Chicana/o Studies and another B.A. in Spanish from California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She earned her Master's in Chicana/o Studies also from CSUN and a PhD in Spanish with a focus on Spanish Heritage Language Education and Research from Arizona State University. Her research examines how university Spanish heritage language courses can play an important role in promoting the use of Spanish in the United States, counteracting the devaluation of minority languages, and contributing to narrowing the Latinx student achievement gap.



Nora Cisneros, PhD

Assistant Professor
Ethnic Studies
CSU Bakersfield

Nora Cisneros, PhD is an assistant professor of Ethnic Studies at CSU Bakersfield. Born in Durango, Mexico, and raised in Inglewood, CA, Cisneros is a proud immigrant and former first-generation college student. She earned her B.A. in Psychology, and an MA and PhD in Social Sciences & Education, with a specialization in Race & Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Her scholarship draws from Chicana feminist studies to unsettle educational (in)equity and uplift Latinx educational pathways. Cisneros is committed to the teaching of intergenerational writers and change-makers in culturally and linguistically diverse spaces. Her scholarship has been featured in peer-reviewed journals, such as *The Journal of Educational Foundations* and *Feminist Formations*, among others. She is the co-editor of the handbook *Like a Path in Tall Grasses: Race*

and *Refusal in Higher Education* (2024). As a fierce mother-scholar, writing, watching anime, and jogging are how she rages against the machine.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Nicolaus Espitia, MSW, PhD

Assistant Professor
Social Work
Oakland University

Nicolaus Espitia, MSW, PhD is an assistant professor of social work at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. He is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research interests intersect political participation, race, ethnicity, immigration, social policy, community organizing, and community-based participatory research methods. More specifically his research has focused on how undocumented Latinx populations define and engage in political participation and how institutions of higher education can be more inclusive of undocumented populations. The goal of his research is to gain a better understanding of how undocumented Latinx populations make sense of the current political context and engage with the social institutions in their communities. Espitia is

dedicated to community-based research and a committed to helping communities engage with policy to create more inclusive public spaces. Espitia earned his PhD in the joint social work and sociology program at the University of Michigan. Before completing his PhD, he also completed his MA, MSW, and BA at the University of Michigan. His dissertation focused on the political participation of undocumented Latinx Immigrants in the Midwest. He has practice experience as a policy consultant, policy advocate, community organizer, and program evaluator.

Jovana Gomez, EdD

Assistant Professor
Spanish
Eastern New Mexico University

Jovana Gomez, EdD

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Ángel de Jesus González, PhD

Assistant Professor
Higher Education Administration and Leadership
California State University, Fresno

Ángel de Jesus González, PhD is an assistant professor of Higher Education Administration and Leadership at California State University, Fresno. As a first-generation, Latinx, queer, joto scholar son to immigrant parents, their work is informed by post-structuralist paradigms rooted in Xicana/Latina feminist epistemologies. Gonzalez's scholarship interrogates power relations within higher education systems embedded with cisheteropatriarchy and compulsory genderism by examining how these racialized structures engage minoritized peoples broadly and Queer and/or Trans People of Color (QTPOC) specifically across varying roles within organizational contexts to unearth how structural inequities are maintained and reproduced via policy formulations and implementation.

As a critical researcher, González grounds their work in theoretical framings such as intersectionality and jotería studies and employs methodological pursuits including queer pláticas, testimonio, queer chisme, and critical policy analysis to name a few. González has extensive research experience having served as Postdoctoral Scholar in the Pullias Center for Higher Education at the University of Southern California (USC) Rossier School of Education and a Graduate Research Fellow for the American Council on Education. Their foundational research has been published in many leading academic journals such as Innovative Higher Education (IHE) and the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education (IJQSE). They earned a BA from Whittier College in Environmental Science and Spanish, an MA in Post-Secondary Educational Leadership and Student Affairs, and EdD in Community College Leadership from San



Susana Hernández, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology
Program Coordinator, Counseling Student Affairs M.Ed. Program
Northern Arizona University

Susana Hernández, PhD is an assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and program coordinator for the Counseling Student Affairs MEd program at Northern Arizona University. Hernández's student and professional experiences within higher education as a first-generation Latina shapes and informs her teaching and research. Her research interests are centered on using critical and non-deficit frameworks to study how higher education state and institutional policies may create hostile campus environments for racially and ethnically minoritized students and faculty. More recently, her research has examined developmental education reform, technology at HSIs, and campus carry policies. Hernández has a PhD in Educational Administration with an emphasis in Higher Education Administration from Texas A&M University. She also has her

BA in Criminal Justice from the University of Wyoming and MEd in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Iowa State University.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Rocío Mendoza, PhD

Assistant Professor
Department of Leadership and Higher Education
University of Redlands

Rocío Mendoza, PhD is an assistant professor in the Department of Leadership and Higher Education at the University of Redlands. She researches Latinx student experiences in higher education and the structures and contexts shaping their outcomes; students of color in STEM; Latinx student experiences in undergraduate research and faculty research mentors of color. These interests are deeply personal as she began studying collegiate experiences 20 years ago as a McNair Scholar at California State University, Fullerton where she earned a BA in Sociology and Human Services. Mendoza also holds an MEd in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Washington and a PhD in Education from Claremont Graduate University. She has over 15 years of experience working in academic support/training programs, including

TRiO Programs, Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP) and undergraduate research programs that support first-generation, low-income students of color. Her approaches to teaching, research and service are shaped by her experiences growing up in the city of La Puente, California, as the eldest daughter of immigrants from Mexico, as a first-generation queer Chicana scholar, and most recently, as a mamá. Mendoza is also a former AAHHE Student Graduate Fellow.



Natalie Muñoz, PhD

Assistant Professor, Social Work
College of Arts and Sciences
Rutgers University Newark

Natalie Muñoz, PhD is a dynamic AfroLatina assistant professor within the College of Arts and Sciences at Rutgers University Newark's Social Work Department. With a dedication to fostering inclusivity and promoting social justice, Muñoz has emerged as a pivotal figure in advancing the retention and success of underserved students in higher education. Her academic journey is marked by a commitment to empowering Black and Latinx communities. A proud double alumna of Stony Brook University, Muñoz earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and her master's in social work. She furthered her academic pursuits by obtaining her PhD from Howard University, where her passion for equity and advocacy flourished. Muñoz's research interests center around AfroLatine identity development, mental health equity, and educational justice. Notably, her

dissertation, "Soy de Aquí y de Allá: Exploring how HBCUs contribute to ethnic/racial identity and mental health of AfroLatino (a,e,x) college students," earned her recognition as a second-place finalist for Outstanding Dissertation of the Year by the AAHHE.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Marco A. Murillo, PhD

Assistant Professor, Education
School of Education and Counseling Psychology
Santa Clara University

Marco A. Murillo, PhD is an assistant professor of Education in the School of Education and Counseling Psychology at Santa Clara University. Murillo's research focuses on the college preparation, persistence, and completion of racially minoritized students, with an emphasis on Latinx and immigrant-origin students. His work is grounded in three research areas: (1) college preparation, choice, and outcomes, (2) community college pathways, and (3) immigration policy and educational opportunities. Murillo's overall research goal is to inform both theoretical and empirical understandings of traditionally underserved students in the educational system.

Murillo is a first-generation college graduate and the child of Mexican immigrants who grew up in the San Diego/Tijuana Borderlands. Prior to joining Santa Clara University, he served as Postdoctoral scholar at UC Los Angeles and UC Berkeley. He earned his BA in Political science and History from the University of California, San Diego and a PhD in Education (Urban schooling) from the University of California, Los Angeles.



Jose Ortiz, PhD

Assistant Professor
Foundations and Social Advocacy
State University of New York at Cortland

Jose Ortiz, PhD is an assistant professor in the Foundations and Social Advocacy department at the State University of New York at Cortland (SUNY Cortland). Ortiz earned his PhD in Educational Foundations, Policy and Practice at the University of Colorado Boulder where he examined how Latine students used a form of narrative known as testimonio to reflect on their lived experiences. In his dissertation, Ortiz revealed how an examination of lived experiences can lead one to explore and understand how their emotions are shaped by social and political forces present in U.S. society. His research findings have important implications on ways educators can diversify Social and Emotional Learning strategies to better serve Latine students. In his time at SUNY Cortland, Ortiz has developed a research agenda focusing on developing culturally relevant social and emotional

learning models; designing and implementing DEI initiatives; and preparing the next generation of K-12 teachers to be agents of change within their school community. Ortiz is committed to educational equity, social justice, and improving the experiences of Latine students.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Mayra Puente, PhD

Assistant Professor, Higher Education
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
University of California, Santa Barbara

Mayra Puente, PhD is a 2024-2025 Ford Foundation postdoctoral fellow and an assistant professor of higher education in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She earned her PhD in education at UC San Diego and her BA in political science with a concentration in race, ethnicity, and politics at UCLA. She also double minored in education studies and Chicana/o studies as an undergrad. Puente's various degrees and concentrations have shaped her transdisciplinary approach to higher education research. She is particularly concerned with college access, choice, transition, retention, and success issues for rural Latinx students and other institutionally marginalized student groups and communities. Puente draws on frameworks

like Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory, Critical Race Spatial Analysis, and Chicana Feminisms to address these pressing educational issues and enact social, racial, and spatial justice. Puente's passion for higher education access and equity is driven by the educational barriers she faced as a first-generation college student from a Mexican migrant farm working family and her professional experiences as a higher education advocate in California's San Joaquin Valley for rural Latinx students and communities.



Amanda Rodríguez-Newhall, PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor
Social Work and Sociology
California Polytechnic State University, Pomona

Amanda Rodríguez-Newhall, PhD is an assistant professor of Social Work and Sociology at California Polytechnic State University, Pomona. She is a community researcher who prioritizes partnering with communities to identify and address problems deemed salient by community members themselves. She utilizes community based and participatory research methods to support community empowered action and solution. She has extensive experience working with youth and focused her dissertation on the youth civic engagement and social justice action that stemmed from the University of Michigan's Summer Youth Dialogues Program on Race & Ethnicity in Metropolitan Detroit. She is a Faculty Fellow with Cal Poly's Center for Community Engagement where she is developing a service-learning course that will support Cal Poly students as they research and

address issues of environmental injustice in their communities. Rodríguez-Newhall holds a BA in Psychology and Sociology from Amherst College, and an MSW and a PhD in Social Work and Psychology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Carolyn S. F. Silva, PhD

Assistant Professor
Elementary Education
University of Nevada, Reno

Carolyn S. F. Silva, PhD is an assistant professor of Elementary Education at the University of Nevada, Reno. She holds a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a certificate in Latin American Studies from the University of Florida, an MA in Political History from the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, and a BA in History from the Universidade do Grande Rio. Her scholarship speaks to the foundations of race, ethnicity, and diversity across transnational educational contexts. Silva's research employs qualitative and archival methods to map the historical and contemporary presence of Afro-Latine/x immigrants in the U.S. Specifically, she investigates the historical and lived experiences of Latinx and Afro-Latinx students in both K-12 and higher education. Her work

aims to unpack how monolithic racial discourses, such as dominant notions of Latinidad, influence non-Brown Latino identification. Her research seeks to understand how non-dominant Latine/x students negotiate their multidimensional identities and navigate racialization in educational spaces, while envisioning a curriculum that reflects Afro-Latine/x historical and contemporary experiences. Her research has been published in leading academic journals such as *Educational Researcher*, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies Journal*, and *Race, Ethnicity, and Education*.



Julie P. Vanegas, PhD

Assistant Professor, Chemistry
Department of Physics and Astronomy
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Julie P. Vanegas, PhD is an assistant professor of Chemistry and an "Emerging researcher in Nanoscience" within the Department of Physics and Astronomy at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV). Her academic profile and research endeavors are showcased on her dedicated website, <https://www.nanoworldvanegaslab.tech/>. Currently, she is chair-elect 2024-2025 for the American Chemical Society (ACS) South Texas Section, underscoring her leadership and influence in the chemical sciences community. Vanegas spearheads a dynamic research group comprising 15 students, two participating in UTRGV's innovative PhD program in Materials Science and Engineering (MSE) and three master's students enrolled in the Vaquero Pathway program. Her team includes undergraduate students engaged in the NSF-PREM program in collaboration with

the School of Engineering, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of her research. As a co-principal investigator, Vanegas is involved in the Coastal Restoration NFS Convergence Accelerator Track E, making her one of the 21 researchers contributing to this significant initiative at UTRGV. Her accolades include the prestigious Rising Stars Award from the UT System, alongside securing several seed grants from UTRGV and the Department of Energy to enhance her laboratory's capabilities. Vanegas is deeply passionate about sustainability and recycling, leading projects focused on recycling glass, non-functional solar panels, and obsolete technology for metal extraction. These projects are a testament to her commitment to environmental conservation and pave the way for advancements in energy regeneration.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Christian Vazquez, PhD, MSW

Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
The University of Texas at Arlington

Christian Vazquez, PhD, MSW is an assistant professor of Social Work at The University of Texas at Arlington, a Hispanic-Serving Institution and an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution. His research focuses on social determinants and behavioral changes associated with health equity among Latinos, as it relates to obesity, diabetes, and eHealth. Vazquez has worked as a social work practitioner in Child and Adult Protective Services. This direct practice experience inspired him to focus on the role cultural and economic diversities play in accelerating long-term health disparities among individuals in high-risk environments. Vazquez works with community organizations to address prevention and treatment of obesity and diabetes, as well as

work to increase eHealth utilization through increasing eHealth literacy. Vazquez is funded by a NIH/NIA K01 Career Development Award to develop and implement an eHealth literacy intervention for older adult Spanish-speakers. He also has two federal-flow through pilot grants from a NIA-funded center at the University of Michigan (NIMLAS) and a NIDDK-funded center at Pennington Biomedical Research Center (LAUNCHED). Vazquez earned his PhD in Social Work from The University of Texas at Austin, a MSW from the University of Michigan, and a BA in Sociology from the University of California at Santa Barbara.



Karina I. Vielma, PhD

Assistant Professor, Engineering Education
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Karina I. Vielma, PhD was the first in her family to attend and graduate from college. She began her higher education career at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where she was many times the only Latina in her courses. Because of her experiences as an undergraduate student at MIT, she decided to dedicate her career to helping answer tough questions about equity and inclusion for women and marginalized students in engineering, science, and mathematics. She pursued a master's degree at Harvard University and a doctoral degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Throughout her career, she worked in higher education administrative roles and as a public-school educator. Now, as an assistant professor of Engineering Education, she designs workshops and courses that help STEM faculty and graduate students gain confidence in teaching

best practices that center on student learning and develop positive student identities and self-efficacy. Her research seeks to find ways to positively learn from the intersectional experiences of low-income and first-generation college students in engineering and use quantitative data in critical ways to inform the unintended impacts of socially constructed and structural barriers for marginalized students.

2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellows



Melanie Zollner, EdD

Assistant Professor
Management
New Mexico Highlands University

Melanie Zollner, EdD is an assistant professor of Management at New Mexico Highlands University [NMHU] a Hispanic Serving Institution in rural New Mexico. Zollner was born and raised in Lima, Perú. She spent a few childhood years in Venezuela. Later as a young adult she lived in Bolivia, before attending college full time in New Mexico. These experiences have taught Zollner to be open to cultural diversity and a world view of education and learning.

Zollner obtained her doctoral degree in Educational Leadership from the University of New Mexico in 2019. Zollner's interests are in understanding and serving the needs of minority, first-generation, and adult learners. Her research emphasis is higher education, international students and the history of Hispanic and Latina women's education in rural areas in the United States and Perú. Zollner serves her institution and the state of New Mexico, as SHRM NM State Board member and faculty advisor for NMHU SHRM Chapter. Zollner has served as NMHU's Department of Business Administration Ethics Champion. Through her advisement her students have been recognized by the Society for Human Resources Management [SHRM] and won awards in Business Ethics Competitions.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program

The AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program (GSFP) prepares Latinx/a/o doctoral scholars for successful careers in academia and along the way provide support to Latinx/a/o scholars interested in pursuing careers within administration and policy in postsecondary education. The program provides strategies to assist scholars in achieving their educational and professional goals, provide constructive feedback on graduate student fellows' research, and build community and network with other Latinx/a/o scholars.



Luz Burgos-López, PhD

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellowship Program, Co-chair
Graduate Student/Assistant Dean of Students
University of Connecticut-Storrs

Luz Burgos-López, PhD is a Queer white-Puerto Rican who is passionate about racial justice and equity in education. Burgos-López is a scholar-practitioner in the Learning, Leadership, and Educational Policy doctoral program with a concentration in Higher Education, Racial Justice, and Decolonization. In addition, she is pursuing a certificate in Intersectional Indigeneity, Race, Ethnicity, and Politics at the University of Connecticut-Storrs. Burgos-López' research critically examines the role of knowledge production in the construction of the meta-narratives of Latinidad in higher education. Specifically, she examines how scholars operationalize and (mis)use racial classifications in the study of the experiences of racially minoritized communities. As a white-Puerto Rican, she is

interested in unpacking how whiteness is (de)racialized within Latine/a/x/o and Puerto Rican identity and narratives. Burgos-López has an MS in Counselor Education from Central Connecticut State University and a BA in African American Studies from Wesleyan University. Burgos-López has over 13 years of experience in higher education and currently serves as an assistant dean of Students in the Dean of Students Office at UConn.



Stacey Speller, PhD Candidate

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellowship Program, Co-chair
Higher Education Leadership & Policy Studies
Howard University

Stacey Speller is an HBCU Nuyorican higher education scholar-practitioner devoted to challenging anti-Black narratives and advocating for equitable legislation that supports HBCUs with dual designations as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Her research focuses on the policies and practices at HBCUs that enhance educational outcomes for Afrolatine/Latine students. With over a decade of experience in higher education, Speller has served in admissions, retention and student success, student activities, athletics, and diversity and community engagement. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology and a Master of Science in Transformative Leadership from her alma mama, Bethune-Cookman University. Speller is the founder of HBCUorgullo, a mission-driven organization committed to bridging the gap between Historically Black Colleges and Universities

(HBCUs) and Latinidad. The organization focuses on fostering inclusion, retention, and success for AfroLatine and Latine students and alumni within the HBCU ecosystem.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program



Armando Lizarraga, PhD Candidate

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program Social Media Co-chair
Higher Education Leadership and Policy
University of Texas, Austin

Armando Lizarraga, a native of Inglewood, California is a doctoral candidate at The University of Texas at Austin. He has held various positions, including peer mentor, instructor in a women's carceral facility, policy analyst, and research assistant. Lizarraga's research focuses on the intersection of incarceration and higher education, specifically examining students' financial aid opportunities for postsecondary education during incarceration. Lizarraga earned an Associate of Arts in general studies from El Camino College, a Bachelor of Arts in Chicana/o studies and sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Master of Arts in higher and postsecondary education from Teachers College, Columbia University.



Ariana L. Garcia

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program Social Media Co-chair
Higher Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Ariana L. Garcia is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education at the University of Las Vegas, Nevada. Through research, teaching, and as a higher education professional, Garcia is passionate about advocating for inclusive practices and institutional change. Her current research focuses on equity in graduate education. Her dissertation explores how Latinx graduate students experience basic needs and the resources they utilize to navigate graduate school.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program



Mitzi Ceballos, PhD candidate

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program Alumni, Co-chair
Higher Education and Student Affairs
University of Utah

Mitzi Ceballos is a PhD candidate in Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Utah. Ceballos' research examines the mutation of settler colonialism to white supremacy, and white supremacy's impacts on Latinx organizational logics, memories, and communities. Specifically, she works with institutional and informal archives and decolonial theories to re-examine how settler colonialism is maintained by Latinx communities. She has been a first-year-writing instructor for five years and has taught at 4-year and 2-year institutions. Ceballos has a bachelor's degree in English from Boise State University and a Master's degree in English from Washington State University.



Claudia Chiang-López, PhD Candidate

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program Alumni, Co-chair
Cultural Studies, International Education, and Multicultural Education
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Claudia Chiang-Lopez is a Queer disabled first-generation scholar and Asian-Latinx immigrant. They are a Multicultural Education PhD student at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, researching the relationship between abolition and DisCrit. They are a Point Foundation scholar, and an Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Holmes Scholar.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program



Gabriel Pulido, PhD

AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows Program, Recruitment Coordinator
Higher Education
University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

Gabriel Pulido, PhD was born and raised in Sacramento, California, and first became involved with creative writing in the youth poetry slam scene. While at UC Santa Cruz Gabriel utilized classroom lessons to fuel his creative writing endeavors. He received his doctorate in Higher Education (with a double minor in African American and Diaspora Studies & Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies) from the Pennsylvania State University. Pulido is a transdisciplinary scholar whose work often travels across multiple fields. He seeks to perform the work while honoring the rich histories and legacies that scholar-activists have fought for. Pulido has research commitments on artistic performance and impact in higher education, community and mentorship in education, and arts-based methodologies and activism in social science research. His academic and creative writing often intersect and find a home at the center of healing. Pulido considers himself a conjurer of joy, love, and resilience, as he uses both creative and academic writing to work toward collective liberation. When not writing, he can be found near a body of water dreaming of becoming just as free.



Jasmine Haywood, PhD

AAHHE Board of Directors Liaison, Graduate Student Fellows Program
Strategy Director for Student Success
Lumina Foundation

Jasmine Haywood, PhD is a strategy director at Lumina Foundation. In that role, she leads a portfolio of work that focuses on increasing student success outcomes at four-year institutions. Before joining Lumina, Haywood was a visiting faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership at Indiana State University. Prior to joining ISU, she was the managing editor for the International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, a research assistant at IUPUI’s Center for Urban and Multicultural Education, and an admissions counselor at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in upstate New York. Haywood has published peer-reviewed scholarship on the lived experiences of Afro-Latinx students in higher education, microaggressions, and faculty of color. She was named a 2016 Ebony Magazine Power 100 honoree and awarded the IU Neal-Marshall Alumni Club Standard Bearer Award. She has been quoted in the Washington Post, NBC Latino, and Univision. Haywood holds master’s and doctoral degrees in higher education and student affairs from Indiana University.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows



Danielle Nicole Aguilar

School of Education
University of Colorado, Boulder

Danielle Nicole Aguilar is the granddaughter of Mirna Prieto, Maria del Refugia Aguilar, Jose Prieto, and Rafael Aguilar. She is the proud daughter of Lorraine Y. Velasquez and Antonio Aguilar. Hailing from Ontario, California, Aguilar comes from a working-class family with three siblings (Daniel, Domonique, and Anthony) and is a happy tia/auntie to many nieces and nephews. Aguilar studied Feminist Studies and Black Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara as a Pell Grant recipient and first-generation college student. Following graduation, she enrolled at the University of Vermont, earning a master's degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration. Aguilar was a leader in residential life, orientation, multicultural affairs and LGBTQ student services

before pursuing a PhD in Educational Foundations, Policy and Practice at the University of Colorado Boulder. Aguilar employs critical theory and community-based research approaches to disrupt the relationship between carcerality and youth. Aguilar aspires to be a tenured professor at a minority serving institution to uplift and mentor young scholars. When she's not doing transformative research, Danielle enjoys the tastiness of being a foodie, vibing at concerts, and embarking on adventures.



Cydney Y. Caradonna

Educational Leadership and Policy
University of Utah

Cydney Y. Caradonna is a queer Latinx scholar, activist, and poet originally from California's Bay Area. She currently lives in the Salt Lake Valley and is pursuing a PhD in Educational Leadership in Policy at the University of Utah. She has a Bachelor's degree in Spanish from the University of California, Merced and Master's degree in Higher Education Administration and Leadership from California State University, Fresno. Her scholarly praxis explores the systems and potential ruptures that inform a de/carceral ethos for higher education. Caradonna's poetry centers the similar tensions to her academic work and research and experiences along multiple systems of marginalization and how we unsettle those systems by speaking back to them. Caradonna's poetry publications and performances have featured lived experiences at the intersection of her Queer and Latinx identities.

Caradonna currently works as the Graduate Research Assistant for the Research Collaborative on Higher Education in Prison and supports programming for the Utah Prison Education Project. Caradonna is additionally one of the founding members and current Graduate Fellow for the Black Feminist Eco Lab in the School of Cultural and Social Transformation at the University of Utah.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows



Joselin Castillo

American Studies
University of New Mexico

Joselin Castillo is a first-generation college student from Los Angeles. As a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow at California State University, Los Angeles, she situated her family history into research. As the daughter of a single Guatemalan migrant mother, her research focuses on mothering practices and women's labor of the Central American diaspora. Earning her Master of Arts in Latin American Studies, her work titled "Central American Women in the Workforce" analyzed the public perceptions of women in transnational labor forces in film, art, and news media. Now earning her interdisciplinary PhD in American Studies, drawing from archival work, ethnography, and visual culture, she plans to explore anti-immigration rhetoric, immigration policy, and the ways in which Central American diasporic families navigate immigrant imaginaries in the US through these methods.



Allison Nicole Martínez Mejía

Biomedical Engineering
Washington University in St Louis

Allison Nicole Martínez Mejía was born and raised in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. She moved to the United States to pursue a BS in Biomedical Engineering at Florida International University, where she completed her degree in just three years. She joined the Coulter Undergraduate Research Excellence (CURE) Program, developing computational mathematical models to simulate the relationship between brain vasculature and neuronal activity. Martínez Mejía is pursuing her PhD in Biomedical Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis, where she simultaneously earned her MS in the same field. Her research focuses on using novel optical imaging techniques to study neurological diseases in animal models. Driven by the need for biomarkers that might shed light on the reversibility of neuronal dysfunction during the pathogenesis of Alzheimer's. She investigates changes in cellular energy metabolism in a mouse model of Alzheimer's disease. Martínez Mejía's work could be important to help determine potential candidates for treatment. Martínez Mejía is passionate about creating spaces for historically underserved groups. She serves on the executive board of SACNAS/GALNACS and institutional DEI committees, advocating for greater inclusion and representation in academic and professional settings. In her free time, she enjoys nail art, writing poetry, and making lattes.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows



Gerson Moreno Romero

Biomedical Engineering
Washington University in St. Louis

Gerson Moreno Romero was born in El Salvador and raised in the Broward-Miami area of Florida. As a first-generation college graduate, he earned his BS in Biomedical Engineering from Florida International University and found his passion for neural engineering research while working as a Coulter Undergraduate Researcher. Moreno Romero is currently a PhD Candidate in Biomedical Engineering at Washington University in St. Louis. He is working to understand neural circuits in the spinal cord to leverage their adaptive nature to develop rehabilitative therapies to help individuals with motor and sensory deficits resulting from spinal cord injury. To support underrepresented groups in higher education, he serves as part of the SACNAS student chapter executive board

and as a mentor for the undergraduates in the neuroscience REU. Outside of academics he enjoys spending time in nature, painting with watercolors, connecting with his communities, and traveling.



Ariana Ordonez'

Joint Doctoral Program/Educational Leadership
University of California, San Diego and California State University, San Marcos

Ariana Ordonez' background has deeply influenced her academic pursuits. As a student in a joint doctoral program at UCSD and CSUSM, she is dedicated to understanding and addressing the persistent achievement gap between Latinx students and their peers by studying culturally proficient school counseling and its impact on Latinx educational attainment. She aims to increase Latinx educational attainment, driven by her desire to open doors of opportunity for underserved and marginalized communities. Raised by her mother, an immigrant from El Salvador, in a low socioeconomic community in Los Angeles, Ordonez learned the value of hard work and perseverance. Ordonez is a first-generation college graduate who overcame numerous barriers yet continues to beam with resilience and determination. She earned a bachelor's in psychology at

UCLA and a master's in educational counseling at ULV, demonstrating her commitment to academic and professional growth. Working in education the past 10 years has shown her that representation in education matters. It increases feelings of belonging and supports a positive learning environment. Ordonez is set out to prepare, support, and advance the Latinx community through education, being that it is the most effective way to get them to participate in, lead, and influence our democratic society..

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows



Derrick Raphael Pacheco

Higher Education
Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Florida State University

Derrick Raphael Pacheco is a proud first-generation Cuban American, college graduate, and doctoral candidate from Hialeah, Florida. Pacheco is a 4th year PhD candidate in the Higher Education program at Florida State University. Pacheco has received a Master of Science in Higher Education, a Bachelor of Science in Marketing, a Bachelor of Science in Management, and two graduate certificates in Program Evaluation and Multicultural Marketing Communication all from Florida State University. Pacheco is passionate about leadership education and serves as a Graduate Assistant in the Leadership Learning Research Center where he is responsible for teaching in the Undergraduate Certificate in Leadership Studies, specifically their Latinx Leadership Development

Course. Pacheco's dissertation explores the ways that Caribbean Hispanics develop their leader identity at historically white institutions. Additionally, Derrick is an avid volunteer in local and national organizations and research centers and is actively presenting at national conferences about leadership education, student affairs, and multicultural marketing. Pacheco is passionate about educational access and equity through culturally relevant practices and strives to showcase this in his research and teaching. In his free time, you can find Pacheco binging his favorite reality television shows with a Diet Coke in hand.



Lucia Quezada

Counseling Psychology
University of Georgia

Lucia Quezada is a queer, first-generation college student, and daughter of Mexican immigrants from Chihuahua, México with Rarámuri descent. She is a fourth-year doctoral candidate in Counseling Psychology at the University of Georgia. Her research focuses on the multifaceted domains of Latiné feminism and its intersections with mental health outcomes. She aims to deepen understanding of how cultural and sociopolitical factors shape identity development and inform Latiné feminist values. Quezada has clinical experience working across various settings, including a community mental health clinic, university counseling center, medical settings, and a carceral facility. She provides bilingual (Spanish) therapy, focusing on complex trauma and identity development throughout the lifespan. Quezada earned her bachelor's degree in psychology with

minors in photography and Chinese from Southern Methodist University ('18) and a Master's in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in research methods from Teachers College, Columbia University ('20). Outside of her professional and academic work, Quezada enjoys painting, drawing, studying languages, and spending time with loved ones. She is passionate about using her research and clinical skills to contribute to the advancement of Latiné communities and promote culturally informed mental health care.

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows



Irene Richardson

Biochemistry
University of Nevada - Reno

Irene Richardson from the suburbs of Washington, DC, is pursuing a PhD in Biochemistry at the University of Nevada, Reno, researching the immunological effects of tocolytics in treating preterm birth. With a background in nutritional science, she aims to combine her knowledge of nutrition and biochemistry to address reproductive health challenges, particularly in the Latin community, and contribute to better maternal and fetal health outcomes. Passionate about bridging the gap between higher education and the local Latin community, Richardson is dedicated to addressing health disparities, especially those affecting pregnant Latinas. Her advocacy focuses on improving access to health literacy, healthcare, and prenatal care for minority groups. Irene is also committed to

inspiring the next generation of Latin scientists. She has partnered with local educators in Reno to develop science lessons in microbiology, nutrition, and reproductive health (under development) to encourage Hispanic students, particularly young women, to pursue careers in STEM. Through the AAHHE fellowship, Richardson hopes to broaden her impact, learn from fellow Latina/o/x scholars, and further her mission to improve health outcomes and educational opportunities for the Latin community.



Marina Rodríguez

Higher Education Student Affairs Leadership
University of Northern Colorado

Marina Rodríguez is from San Diego, CA. She is currently working on her dissertation at the University of Northern Colorado. She is pursuing a PhD in Higher Education and Student Affairs Leadership (HESAL) with a minor in Applied Statistics and Research Methods (ASRM). Her research focuses on high school senior Latina students' motivations and aspirations to attend higher education after graduating high school. She examines two groups of high school students, focusing on students in the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program and non-AVID students. A long-term career goal is to gain exposure to higher education administrative roles that help empower and advocate for Latinx/a/o/é students. Rodríguez also hopes to contribute to research and serve in research administration positions. Marina completed her bachelor's degrees

in Sociology and Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). She then attained her MA degree in Psychology at Antioch University, Santa Barbara (AUSB). Rodríguez is a first-generation college student

2025 AAHHE Graduate Student Fellows



Sol Macias-Thomas

Education
University of St. Thomas, Houston

Sol Macias-Thomas has a BA in Spanish and an MS in Criminal Justice. Macias-Thomas is currently a doctoral student at the University of St. Thomas' strategic leadership program-criminal justice pathway. Macias-Thomas has 15 years of experience conducting civil and criminal investigations dealing with interpersonal violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. Sol currently serves as a criminal justice adjunct instructor at the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, and has been teaching for the past three years.



Melanece Wesley

Social Work
Howard University

Melanece Wesley a Puerto Rican Afro-Latina from Boston, MA, is a PhD student and adjunct professor in Social Work at Howard University, focusing on mental health equity, health disparities, and the ethical application of Artificial Intelligence (AI). She holds Master and Bachelor of Social Work degrees from the University of South Florida. Wesley has a strong background in behavioral health advocacy and education. As a Behavioral Health Ambassador for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), she played a pivotal role in designing and delivering educational programs that empowered undergraduate students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to pursue careers in behavioral health. She also served as a behavioral health manager providing therapeutic services for a monthly caseload of over 80 patients. Her research interests lie at the intersection of AI, ethics, and equity, particularly within Afro-Latine identity and mental health. As a member of the AI Institute for Societal Decision-Making, Wesley contributes to research on AI risk communication. She is actively involved in scholarly work, including a systematic review on the experiences of Afro-Latinos at HBCUs. A recognized leader, Wesley is also a member of the AI-SDM Student Leadership Council and Howard Universities Graduate Research Committee.

2025 USDA Caminos to Success Fellows Program

Texas State University's CAMINOS for Success Fellowship is a groundbreaking partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture designed to enhance the educational and professional journeys of talented graduate students. The initiative offers expert mentoring, networking opportunities, specialized institutes, and competitive research experiences to help these students thrive. As a proud Hispanic-Serving Institution and Emerging Research University, CAMINOS for Success is vital in TXST's vision to become the nation's premier HSI-R1.



Gloria Martinez- Ramos, PhD

AAHHE Board of Directors
USDA Caminos to Success Fellows Program Chair
Professor of Sociology, Director of the Center for Diversity and Gender Studies
Director of Latina/o Studies Program

Gloria P. Martinez-Ramos, PhD is a professor in the Department of Sociology and the inaugural Director of the Latina/o Studies minor and Director of the Center for Diversity and Gender Studies at Texas State University. Martínez-Ramos earned her PhD and MA in Sociology from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, a BA in Child Development from San Jose State University, and an AA from Hartnell College, Salinas, California. As a scholar, teacher, mentor, and leader she has mentored many faculty and students who have achieved excellence and success in their career goals. Her current project involves increasing access to health care for low-income Latina and African American breast cancer survivors in Central Texas and the impact of COVID19 on First-Generation college

students' learning. Martínez-Ramos has received several awards: The Mariel Muir Mentoring Award, The Pardee Rand Faculty Leaders Program Fellow on Public Policy and Research, The New Leadership Academy Faculty Fellowship, The Center for Diversity and Gender Studies Women and Gender Research Collaborative Outstanding Faculty Scholar Award, the Excellence in Diversity Faculty Award, The Alpha Chi National College Honor Society Favorite Professor Award, and the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) Fellowship.



Bob E. Vásquez, PhD

USDA Caminos to Success Fellows Program Chair
Assistant Dean & Associate Professor
School of Criminal Justice and Criminology
Texas State University

Bob E. Vásquez, PhD currently serves as assistant dean and is an associate professor in the School of Criminal Justice and Criminology and PI of Caminos to Success at Texas State University. A first-generation university graduate from San Antonio, Texas, his bachelor's degrees are from The University of Texas at Austin, and his master's and doctoral degrees are from the University at Albany, State University of New York. Vásquez has received several awards for his teaching, his scholarly work, and his service to the university. His research interests focus on measurement, quantitative research methods, and the statistical techniques involved in modeling causes of crime. Although he usually provides advanced courses in statistics, he also teaches a course that is part of

the curriculum for African American Studies and Latino Studies.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Amanda Barney

Geography
Texas State University

Amanda Barney is a master's graduate student in Geography at Texas State University and her goal is to attain a PhD in Geography and become a university professor. Her research examines how local environments are affected by changing climate patterns. She is interested in geomorphology, paleoclimatology, and ancient DNA. She is a mother of two girls.



Brock Burford

Geography
Texas State University

Brock Burford is a master's graduate student in Geography at Texas State University and his goal is to attain a PhD in Geography. His research examines water quality, wine, and sustainability.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Nicole Roman Anguiano

Geography
Texas State University

Nicole Roman Anguiano is a master's graduate student in Geography at Texas State University in the field of Natural Resources and Environmental Studies. Her research explores innovative and effective solutions to promote equitable and sustainable living environments. Her goal is to combine cultural insights with environmental strategies in her research.



Elizabeth Orman

Human Nutrition
Texas State University

Elizabeth Orman is a master's graduate student in Human Nutrition at Texas State University and her goal is to become a registered dietitian. Her research examines how to address nutritional health disparities in underserved communities. She works for the Greater San Marcos Youth Council and is passionate about empowering youth and communities to overcome inequities.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Julia Cecilia Ruth

Sustainability Studies
Texas State University

Julia Cecilia Ruth is a master's graduate student in Sustainability Studies at Texas State University and an active member of the Texas Master Naturalists—Capital Area Chapter. Her research focuses on regenerative agriculture methods, integrated pest management, and vermifiltration. She works for the Fermented Landscapes Lab and is passionate about science education and community engagement.



Cassandra M. Swanson

Human Nutrition
Texas State University

Cassandra M. Swanson is a master's graduate student in Human Nutrition at Texas State University and her goal is to become a registered dietitian. Her research focuses on nutrition and obesity, the gut-liver axis, and liver cancer. Her future goal is to attain a PhD in Nutrition.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Arami Rosales
Engineering Management
Texas State University

Arami Rosales is a master's graduate student in Engineering Management and Manufacturing Engineering at Texas State University. Her research focuses on advanced manufacturing, automation, and robotics. She is currently a member of the Robotics and Control Research Group.



Diane Nunez
Geography
Texas State University

Diane Nunez is a doctoral graduate student in Geography at Texas State University in Environmental Studies. Her research explores how U.S. public policies create more violence, insecurity, and vulnerability for immigrants coming to the U.S. Her goal is to become a university professor.

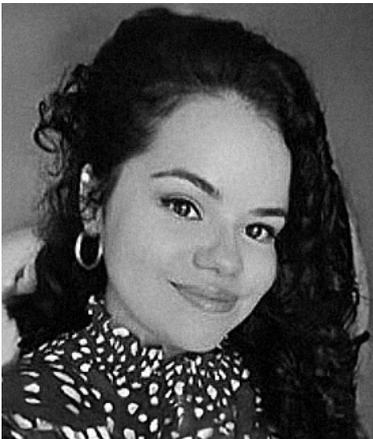
2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Annelise N. Holguin

Geography
Texas State University

Annelise N. Holguin is a master's graduate student in Geography at Texas State University. Her research interests are diverse, and she is working on several research projects that focus on remote sensing, agriculture, hydrology, and human-environment impacts. She is passionate about working towards environmental justice in underserved communities.



Emily Gonzalez

Human Nutrition
Texas State University

Emily Gonzalez is a master's graduate student in Human Nutrition at Texas State University and her goal is to attain a PhD in cancer biology. Her research focuses furthering her knowledge on cancer in the Hispanic community. Her goal is to give back to community that has given her so much.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Alyna Cox

Human Nutrition
Texas State University

Alyna Cox is a master's graduate student in Human Nutrition at Texas State University and her goal is to become a registered dietitian. She currently works for Bobcat Bounty, a student led food pantry at TXST focusing on addressing food insecurity within the community.



Liva Jensen

Human Nutrition
Texas State University

Liva Jensen is a master's graduate student in Human Nutrition at Texas State University and her goal is to become a registered dietitian. She currently works for Bobcat Bounty, a student led food pantry at TXST focusing on addressing food insecurity within the community. Her career goal is to work on women's health nutrition.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Nicole Powell

Human Nutrition
Texas State University

Nicole Powell is a master's graduate student in Human Nutrition at Texas State University and her goal is to become a registered dietitian. Her research interests are in community and public health nutrition and disordered eating.



Nayeli Medina

Applied Sociology
Texas State University

Nayeli Medina is a master's graduate student in Sociology at Texas State University. Her research focuses on identifying barriers to access to food among college students in the U.S. She is passionate about using her data analytical and statistical skills to advocate for social justices in underserved communities.

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Rigo Mayorga-Luna

Material Science
Texas State University

Rigo Mayorga-Luna is a graduate student in the Materials Science, Engineering, and Commercialization PhD Program at Texas State University. His research focuses on single electron charge sensing and AFM characterization of DNA. He is currently a member of the TXST PREM association and is working on using RF electronics to characterize materials.



Deborah Wakrat Schwartz

Geography
Texas State University

Deborah Wakrat Schwartz is a doctoral graduate student in Geography at Texas State University

2024 – 2025 Caminos for Success USDA NIFA Graduate Fellows



Canyon Tillmon

Agriculture
Texas State University

Canyon Tillmon is a first year graduate student from San Antonio, Texas. After getting his Bachelor's degree from Texas State University in Agriculture, with a concentration in Horticulture, he began the Master's program at Texas State in Integrated Agriculture with a focus in Wildlife Biology and Agroecosystems. Canyon is focusing his research on bat roosting behavior in artificial roosts located at a regenerative pecan orchard in Caldwell County.



Integrating Access and Excellence

About Us

The Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success, housed at The University of Texas at El Paso, is a national facing academic and research unit to advance knowledge and practice for Hispanic student success. It was named and established with endowed support in 2021, in the name of The University of Texas at El Paso's late President Emerita, Diana S. Natalicio - a trailblazer in integrating access and excellence to broaden opportunities in the postsecondary ecosystem for students with modest means.

Our Mission

The Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success draws on the wisdom of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to advance inclusive excellence in higher education, lifting HSI's potential to serve as engines of social and economic mobility and as exemplars of institutions that integrate access and excellence in culturally affirming ways. It leads knowledge creation, education, and partnerships to empower Hispanic-Serving Institutions to create pathways for student success, ensuring Hispanic students can thrive, contribute to their communities, and shape the future.

Leadership



Anne-Marie Núñez, PhD
Executive Director



Azuri L. Gonzalez, EdD
U.T. System Board of Regents
Endowed Distinguished Director

What We Do



Generate actionable knowledge



Cultivate communities of
scholars



Build partnerships



Share and elevate knowledge

AAHHE Outstanding Dissertations Competition (ODC)

Co-sponsored by



Recognizing scholarly achievement is an important way to grow the pipeline of Hispanics in higher education. Since 2006, the three winners—and all the fine entrants—of the annual ETS Outstanding Dissertations Competition awards have become role models for successor generations of students, academics, and administrators. AAHHE and ETS share a vision of the future of Hispanics in higher education and a commitment to actions that can help them get there. Join us as we honor and congratulate this year’s winners. Consult the conference agenda for dates and times the winning dissertations will be presented.

Committing to Inclusiveness Is Essential in Our Ever-Changing Environment

2025 AAHHE CONFERENCE



Amit Sevak

President and CEO of ETS

As President and CEO of ETS, Amit Sevak leads the largest private educational assessment organization in the world, with 20,000 employees across 200 countries serving over 50 million people each year. Sevak has been a driving force in education, learning and workforce development around the globe. He has led the University of Europe in Madrid in Spain, INTI International University in Malaysia and Universidad Tecnológica de México (UNITEC) in Mexico. His transformational style of leadership consistently led to innovation, better learning and improved job prospects for hundreds of thousands of students and workers.

Sevak has long been a coach for edtech CEOs. He has served on numerous nonprofit boards, including Cambiar Education, CitiBridge and Education Design Lab. In 2017, he founded Mindset Global, an education investment firm. His early career included roles as a researcher, professor and advisor. Sevak graduated with a bachelor’s and master’s degree from the University of Chicago and earned his master’s in business administration (MBA) from Harvard Business School. He is a regular speaker on the future of education and work, educational measurement and civic engagement. He is married with three kids and splits his time between Princeton, New Jersey and the Washington, DC area.



Kurt M. Landgraf

President and CEO of ETS, 2000-2013

Kurt M. Landgraf, in his time at ETS, nurtured the company’s social and community outreach efforts, broadened its education research activities and raised its profile as a voice of education reform. He believed in building school culture that fosters motivation and learning and accordingly inspired the establishment of the ETS Outstanding Dissertations Competition awards at AAHHE in 2006. Mr. Landgraf retired from ETS in 2013 and now serves on the organization’s board of trustees.

2025 AAHHE & ETS Outstanding Dissertation Competition First Place Winner Kurt M. Landgraf Outstanding Dissertation Award



Maria Javiera De los Rios Escobar, PhD

Degree Discipline: Higher Education

Degree Granting Institution: The Pennsylvania State University

Dissertation Title: Understanding Persistence through University Climate Assessment: First-year Students' Experiences at Chilean Universities and their Plans of Re-enrolling For The Next Academic Term

This dissertation examines first-year students' perception of university climate in Chile, how they perceive it, and its impact on their plans to re-enroll, using the Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) survey. Findings reveal disparities among social identity groups, with working-class and indigenous students reporting lower validation, sense of mattering, and higher microaggressions. By introducing a culturally adapted mattering scale, this research provides valuable insights into student belonging potentially relevant to Chile, Latin America, and Latinx communities in the U.S.

Maria Javiera De los Rios Escobar, PhD, is a higher education researcher with a deep commitment to fostering equity and inclusion in academic environments, rooted in a family tradition of educators devoted to public education. She serves as an advisor to the Cabinet of the Superintendencia de Educación Superior de Chile, where she contributes to policy development and oversight to ensure quality in higher education institutions. She holds a PhD and Master's in Higher Education from The Pennsylvania State University, where she was a Fulbright scholar, and a bachelor's degree in political science from the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals and presented at international academic conferences. De los Rios Escobar's research explores the intersection of institutional climate, student persistence, and educational equity, with a focus on supporting underrepresented student populations. Her work has been shaped by a rich academic journey and the mentorship of inspiring educators. At Penn State, she contributed to projects funded by the National Science Foundation and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, advancing efforts to create more inclusive STEM environments.

2025 AAHHE & ETS Outstanding Dissertation Competition Second Place Winner Kurt M. Landgraf Outstanding Dissertation Award



Edwin Jose Perez, PhD

Degree Discipline: Education

Degree Granting Institution: University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Dissertation Title: The Life Cycle of STEMM Intervention Programs: From Adoption to Institutionalization

Using a multiple case study approach and organizational theory, this study tracks the life cycle of the Chancellor's Science Scholars program at UNC-Chapel Hill and the Millennium Scholars Program at Penn State (University Park) two STEMM intervention programs (SIPs) modeled after the nationally successful Meyerhoff Scholars Program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. This study provides important practical and theoretical implications regarding implementing, adapting, sustaining, and institutionalizing SIPs seeking to cultivate inclusive science environments.

Edwin Perez, PhD is a postdoctoral scholar at the Diana Natalicio Institute for Hispanic Student Success at the University of Texas, El Paso. Perez is the son of immigrants from Oaxaca, Mexico and comes from a first-generation and low-income background. These identities have been central in shaping his experiences through higher education, serving as both challenges and motivators to work toward transforming our institutions into environments where students who have been historically excluded from higher education can thrive. Perez received a BA in Political Science from the University of California, Merced and an MEd in Student Affairs from the University of California, Los Angeles. He received a PhD from the Higher Education and Organizational Change program at the University of California, Los Angeles. His dissertation "The Life Cycle of STEMM Intervention Programs: From Adoption to Institutionalization" used a multiple case study approach and organizational theory to examine how STEMM intervention programs that seek to create inclusive science environments are implemented, adapted, sustained, and institutionalized within higher education institutions. His research interests focus on examining and developing the organizational dynamics and conditions that allow the creation of equitable higher education institutions.

2025 AAHHE & ETS Outstanding Dissertation Competition Third Place Winner Kurt M. Landgraf Outstanding Dissertation Award



Yvette Regalado, PhD

Yvette Regalado, PhD

Degree Discipline: Curriculum and Instruction

Degree Granting Institution: Texas State University

Dissertation Title: Pedagogy del Corazón: Investigating Cultural and Community Practices Embedded in IRW Courses Using the Methodology of Counterstory

This counterstory telling study aimed to examine how Practitioners of Color (POC) enact *cariño* (critical care) and embed restorative literacies in their postsecondary classrooms. The problem is that students can feel invalidated and distressed if they do not see their cultural, communal, language, or ancestral histories represented in the curriculum. These POC embodied the archetype of POC who navigated traumatic educational experiences and used their experiential knowledge to help students navigate racist systems of power.

Yvette M. Regalado, PhD is an assistant professor of Literacy Instruction at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Grounded in her identity as an Indigenous Latina practitioner-scholar-activist, Dra. Regalado is deeply committed to advancing cultural and language pedagogy in literacy instruction. Her research focuses on disrupting and dismantling the educational deficit narratives surrounding BIPOC students in K-16 classrooms. Her research uses counterstorytelling to advocate for student success, restorative literacies, and Indigenous pedagogy. Additionally, Dra. Regalado has 14 years of experience teaching in the K-12 classroom; seven of those years were as a reading specialist and dyslexic coordinator. Along with her academic endeavors, she facilitates Coahuiltecan language and Ways of Knowing classes and is an educator in the Tānko Summer Institute: Xinachtli Pedagogy. Dra. Regalado is dedicated to revitalizing the Indigenous language in collaboration with the Indigenous Cultures Institute. Her work creates counterspaces that promote a sense of belonging and unity. Moreover, she co-directs the San Antonio Writing Project at UTSA. She is a Cultivating New Voices Among Scholars of Color Fellow, Institute for Teachers of Color Committed to Racial Justice Fellow, Catch the Next Leadership Fellow, and honored Recipient of the Cynthia L. Peterson Outstanding JCRL Article Award.

2025 AAHHE – ETS Outstanding Dissertations Competition (ODC) Selection Committee

Maria Oropeza Fujimoto, PhD
Associate Professor
Educational Leadership
California State University Los Angeles

Michael John Pretes, PhD
Distinguished Visiting Professor
Geosciences
United States Air Force Academy

Mathew Mendez Garcia, PhD
Assistant Professor
Political Science
California State University Long Beach

Lisa Rodríguez, EdD
Acting Director/
Professional and Organizational Development
Director Title V HSI Grant
Mount San Antonio College, CA

Nancy Herrera, PhD
Postdoctoral Scholar
Psychiatry and Neuroscience
University of California, Riverside

Sanjuana Rodríguez, PhD
Associate Professor
Literacy Instruction
Kennesaw State University

Cruz Casiano, EdD
Director
Career and Applied Technology Division
Lone Star College, TX

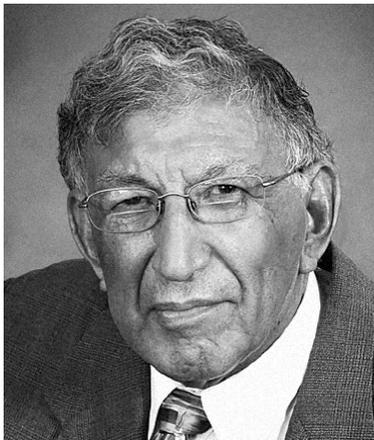
Nelson Flores, PhD
Professor
Educational Linguistics
University of Pennsylvania

2025 AAHHE AWARDS

Presented at the national conference, the annual AAHHE Awards acknowledge and honors leaders, scholars and rising scholars, teachers, and artists who through their expertise, energy, productivity, and contributions, have advocated, supported, and championed Latino/a/x(s) in higher education and have improved the conditions of Latino/a/x(s) pursuing a college degree or a career in higher education.

AAHHE Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award

The AAHHE Alfredo G. de Los Santos, Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award is given to an outstanding administrator in the field of higher education who has demonstrated excellence in academe and its related professions. The award is named in honor of Dr. Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr., a leader, faculty member, mentor, and champion in higher education.



Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr., PhD

Professor, Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College
Research Professor, Hispanic Research Center
Arizona State University

Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr., PhD served as vice chancellor for Student and Educational Development at the Maricopa Community Colleges (1978–1999) and held appointments at the Hispanic Research Center and Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. He was the principal investigator for the NSF-funded Maricopa Advanced Technology Education Center.

de los Santos served on the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute Board of Trustees; Multicultural Education, Training and Advocacy, Inc.; Jobs for the Future, Inc.; the National Center for

Public Policy and Higher Education; American Council on Education, the American Association of Community Colleges, the American Association for Higher Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the United States Open University; Partnership for Service–Learning; the Carnegie Foundation Board of Trustees; the College Board; the American College Testing; the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity and the Advisory Committee to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s initiative with Hispanic Serving Institutions, ENLACE. de los Santos received the National Leadership Award (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004), the Reginald Wilson Award (American Council on Education, 2001), the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education (1998), Special Recognition Award for Scholarly Research in Bilingual Education (National Association for Bilingual Education, 1994), and the Education Achievement Award (National Science Foundation, 1993). He received the Ramón Santiago Award from the National Association of Bilingual Education (2015) for his life-long contributions to bilingual education. He earned an associate in arts degree (1955) from Laredo Community College, and additional degrees from the University of Texas at Austin: BA in English (1957), MLS in Library Science (1959), and PhD in Educational Administration (1965).

2025 AAHHE Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award Recipient



Olivia A. Graeve, PhD

Elias Masry Endowed Professor in Engineering
University of California, San Diego

Olivia A. Graeve, PhD is currently the Elias Masry Endowed Professor in Engineering at the University of California San Diego, Director of the CaliBaja Center for Resilient Materials and Systems, Director of the Program in Materials Science and Engineering, and 24-25 Chair of the UC San Diego Academic Senate. She holds a PhD in Materials Science and Engineering (2001) from the University of California, Davis, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Structural Engineering (1995) from the University of California San Diego. Her area of research focuses on the design and processing of new materials for

extreme environments. Prof. Graeve has been involved in many activities related to the recruitment and retention of women and underrepresented minority students in science and engineering and has received several prestigious awards including the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring in 2020. She has been inducted into the Tijuana Walk of Fame (2014), the Mexican Academy of Engineering (2016), the Mexican Academy of Sciences (2019), the Latin American Academy of Sciences (2022), and has been named Fellow of the American Ceramic Society (2017) and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2021).

List of past recipients of the AAHHE Alfredo G. de los Santos, Jr. Distinguished Leadership Award: :

2024 Not Awarded

2023 Raymundo Paredes

2022 Carlos Santiago

2021 Ann Quiroz Gates

2020 Chon Noriega

2019 Mildred García

2018 Nora R. Garza

2017 James E. Brennehan

2016 Ted Martínez Jr.

2015 Havidán Rodríguez

2014 David López

2014 Tomás Morales

2013 Norma L. Hernandez

2012 J. Michael Ortiz

2011 Leonardo de la Garza

2011 Shirley Reed

2010 Milton A. Gordon

2009 Dolores M. Fernandez

2008 Silas H. Abrego

2007 Diana Natalicio and Ernest H. Moreno

2006 José Jaime Rivera

2005 Blandina Cardenas and Miguel A. Nevarez

2004 Estela López

2003 B. Roberto Cruz

2002 Margarita Benitez

2001 Douglas X. Patiño

2000 Cecilia L. López

1999 Jesús Rangel

1998 Celestino Fernández

1997 Eduardo Padrón

1996 Lattie F. Coor

1995 Victor Alicea

1994 Juliet García

1993 José González

1992 Manuel Pacheco

1991 Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.

1990 Not awarded

1989 Jaime Escalante

1988 Tomás Arciniega

1987 Arturo Madrid

2025 AAHHE Sylvia Hurtado University Faculty Award

The AAHHE Sylvia Hurtado University Faculty Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated excellence in both research and teaching and has provided significant contributions to their respective academic disciplines. The AAHHE University Faculty is now named for Dr. Sylvia Hurtado.



Sylvia Hurtado, PhD

Professor of Education

Sylvia Hurtado, PhD, professor of Education at UCLA, has written extensively on diverse students' college experiences, the campus racial climate, and higher education equity and inclusion. She is co-editor of two books that each won International Latino Book Awards: "Hispanic Serving institutions: Advancing Research and Transformative Practice" (Routledge Press), and "The Magic Key: The Educational Journey of Mexican Americans from K-12 to College and Beyond (University of Texas Press). Currently serving as a Special Advisor to the Chancellor at UCLA on Latinx issues, she was elected

to the National Academy of Education (2019) and received the 2018 Social Justice in Education Award from the American Educational Research Association (AERA). She is past President of the Association for the Study of Higher Education and directed multimillion dollar, NIH-funded projects to study the long-term effects of undergraduate education and diversification of the scientific workforce. She now engages in collaborative evaluations of STEM intervention programs, including research on culturally aware mentor training for graduate faculty in the biomedical sciences, and on how STEM student-centered interventions result in diversity, equity, and inclusion in science. Her early engagement as a first-generation college student led to roles in college admissions, graduate admissions and student support, and her developing interest in higher education as a field of study. Hurtado obtained a PhD (UCLA), MEd (Harvard Graduate School of Education), and AB in Sociology (Princeton University).

2025 AAHHE Sylvia Hurtado University Faculty Award Recipient



Idalis Villanueva Alarcón, PhD

Associate Professor, Associate Chair
University of Florida

Idalis Villanueva Alarcón, PhD is associate chair and tenured associate professor in the Department of Engineering Education (EEEd) in the Herbert Wertheim College of Engineering (HWCOE) at the University of Florida (UF). Today, she has attained \$3.1 M dollars to research engineering mentoring, preparation, and formation yielding 133 total peer-reviewed publications including 12 book chapters. She is co-editor of *Integrando STEAM: A guide for elementary bilingual and dual language programs*, which received the 2024 AAHHE Best Edited Book Volume Award. She received the 2017 National

Science Foundation (NSF) CAREER Award and the White House Office of Science, Technology, and Policy Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) Award for her work in a pathway hidden curriculum model in engineering. The latter made her the first woman, Latina, and Puerto Rican engineering faculty to receive this recognition in her field. She received the 2024 SHPE STAR Educator Achievement Award (Higher Education category) and the 2025 Leon Kirchmayer Graduate Mentoring Award from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). The National Academies has invited twice to speak and write articles about her research. She has spoken in over 25 public media outlets, 37 national/international invited talks, 7 keynotes, and counting.

List of past recipients of the AAHHE University Faculty Award:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 2024 Cristóbal Salinas, Jr., PhD | 2005 Patricia Gándara |
| 2023 Gina Ann Garcia & Gilberto Rosas | 2004 Raymond V. Padilla |
| 2022 Gilberto Q. Conchas & Kristine Molina | 2003 Rogelio Saenz |
| 2021 Veronica Terriquez | 2002 Sergio Aguilar – Gaxiola |
| 2020 Adriana Briscoe | 2001 Virginia Sánchez-Karroll |
| 2019 Antonio A. García | 2000 Yvonne Enid González Rodríguez |
| 2018 Karen Lozano and Erika Camacho | 1999 Kris Gutiérrez |
| 2017 Armando Martínez -Cruz | 1998 Edna Acosta – Belén |
| 2016 Frederick Luis Aldana | 1997 Laura Rendón |
| 2015 Estela Bensimon | 1996 Gloria Bonilla-Santigao |
| 2014 Aida Hurtado | 1995 Rolando Hinojosa Smith |
| 2013 Margarita Calderon | 1994 Frank Bonilla |
| 2012 Cynthia Feliciano | 1993 Arturo Madrid |
| 2011 Sylvia Hurtado | 1992 Paul Roldán |
| 2010 George J. Sanchez | 1991 Sonia Nieto |
| 2009 Denise A. Segura | 1990 Mari-Luci Jaramillo |
| 2008 Alberta M. Gloria | 1989 Frank Talamantes |
| 2007 John Alderete | 1988 Piedad Robertson |
| 2006 Jorge Chapa and Marta Tienda | 1987 Flora Mancuso Edwards |

2025 AAHHE Community College Award Recipient

The AAHHE Community College Award recognizes an individual who has demonstrated excellence in advocacy, teaching, or leadership and has provided significant contributions to the community college enterprise.



Osvaldo Roberto Caballero, MBA

Director, Construction and Applied Technologies Institution
Lone Star College

Osvaldo Roberto Caballero, MBA is a master electrician and visionary leader in workforce education, embodying college and career success for Hispanic students. Caballero's journey began in the trenches, literally working construction in grueling conditions while dreaming of a brighter future. Community college transformed his life, providing purpose and a pathway to success. As the director of construction technologies at Lone Star College-North Harris, he advocates securing funding and resources to eliminate barriers students face and is committed to preparing future leaders

in high-demand trades, fueling the talent pipeline. His impact at Lone Star College is profound. Starting as a student, later as adjunct faculty, he rose to lead the Electrical Technology Program, designing and building innovative labs and curricula, and mentoring students. Under his leadership, workforce programs have achieved national recognition, including HVAC Excellence Accreditation and the NCWE Exemplary Program Award. Caballero is the first LSC workforce faculty member to internationalize workforce courses and travel to Australia to partner with colleges. He is a champion of global learning, equipping students to thrive in a global workforce. He is a first-generation graduate with a bachelor's in industrial technology, an MBA in Construction Project Management, and pursuing a Doctorate in Global Educational Leadership.

List of past recipients of the AAHHE Community College Award:

2024 Rafael Alvarez
2023 Lydia CdeBaca-Cruz
2022 Estela Gutierrez & Ángel Reyna
2021 William Serrata
2020 Mona Aldana-Ramirez
2019 Liz Ann Báez Aguilar
2018 Marissa Vasquez
2017 Cristina Alfaro
2016 Cristina Villalobos
2015 Louie F. Rodríguez
2014 Sandra Trejos
2013 Sylvia Garcia-Navarrete
2012 Amaury Nora
2011 Stephanie Alvarez

2010 Maria del Carmen Martínez
2009 José B. González
2008 Elba Maldonado-Colón
2007 Enrique Chavez
2006 Arturo Hernandez
2005 René Díaz Lefebvre
2004 Eduardo E. Aguilar
2003 Virginia González

2025 AAHHE Early Career Award Recipients

In its fifth year, AAHHE Early Career Award recognizes faculty or staff members who demonstrate commitment and promise via their actions, research, and service to the Latinx higher education community.



Angela Pérez-Villa, MA, PhD

Assistant Professor of History
Western Michigan University

Ángela Pérez-Villa, MA, PhD is a historian of Latin America interested in Colombia's legal and gender history. Prior to her post as assistant professor of History at Western Michigan University, she was a Postdoctoral Fellow at Rollins College, Florida and a Graduate Fellow at the Program in Race, Law, and History at the University of Michigan's Law School. Most recently, she was a visiting scholar at the University of Oxford, UK. As a recipient of distinguished national fellowships funded by the Mellon Foundation and the Institute for Citizens & Scholars, Pérez-Villa has worked to become a thriving teacher-scholar. Her research on the social history of the law in early nineteenth-century Colombia is based on meticulous work in archives and specialized library collections in several countries. This work is expanding the way scholars understand war through gender and the law. She's already getting scholarly recognition with an award-winning piece in the *Journal of Social History*. Pérez-Villa is also a passionate teacher who cares about student success, mentorship, and teaching practices. She has received grants to redesign assignments and promote community engagement while contributing to professional pedagogy outlets like *Teaching History: A Journal of Methods*.

2025 AAHHE Early Career Award Recipients



Mayra Puente, PhD

Assistant Professor
University of California, Santa Barbara

Mayra Puente, PhD is an assistant professor of higher education research in the Gevirtz Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Using critical race, spatial, and Chicana feminist theories and methods, Puente investigates rural Latinx students' college access and choice processes from migrant farm working backgrounds in rural California. During this 2024-2025 academic year, Puente received various grants, including the Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship, the American Association of University Women Postdoctoral Fellowship, and a UC Santa Barbara Academic Senate

Faculty Research Grant, for her interdisciplinary research in this subfield of higher education. Her commitment to higher education access, equity, and success for rural Latinx students has also been recognized by the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE), naming Puente a 2024-2025 AAHHE Faculty Fellow and a 2025 AAHHE Early Career Scholar. The American Association of Educational Research (AERA) has further acknowledged her research, granting her an Outstanding Publication Award in 2024 and two dissertation awards. Puente's theoretical, methodological, and empirical commitments to rural Latinx students are motivated by her own identities and background as a proud daughter of Mexican migrant farm workers from California's San Joaquin Valley agricultural region.

List of past recipients of the AAHHE Early Career Award:

2024 Giselle Martínez-Negrette, PhD

2023 Cinthya Salazar, PhD

2022 Vanessa Fonseca Chávez, PhD

2021 Antonio Duran, PhD

2025 AAHHE Doctoral Student Award Recipients

In its fifth year, the AAHHE Graduate Student Award recognizes doctoral students who aspire to join the academy and demonstrate their academic accomplishments and servant leadership at their university.



Veronica Valencia Gonzalez, PhD

University of South Carolina

Veronica Valencia Gonzalez, PhD is a research assistant professor in the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of South Carolina and an Affiliate Faculty Member in Women’s and Gender Studies. A first-generation college graduate and the eldest of six, Veronica was raised on California’s Central Coast by their parents, Salvador and Liduvina Gonzalez, immigrant agricultural laborers. Veronica holds a PhD in Social Ecology from the University of California, Irvine, and specializes in research on gender-based violence and victimization within marginalized and rural communities, with a focus on Latine populations. Veronica’s work emphasizes community-centered

approaches and policy advocacy, targeting systemic inequalities and institutional barriers that impact survivors. In collaboration with the South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, they have developed IPV intervention programs tailored to Latine cultural contexts. An active mentor, Veronica fosters collaborative research with students and leads qualitative methods working groups to support emerging scholars. Their contributions to criminology, sociology, and public policy bridge global frameworks with the lived realities of IPV survivors. Widely recognized for their commitment to social justice in academia, Veronica is an engaged member of multiple professional organizations.

2025 AAHHE Doctoral Student Award Recipients



Saul López
Doctoral Candidate
Marquette University

Saul López was born and raised in Milwaukee, WI. He is currently pursuing his PhD in Educational Policy and Leadership at Marquette University. His scholarship draws from his own experience as a first-generation Latinx student in the Midwest. He has conducted research with the Black and Latino/a Ecosystem Transition (BLEST) hub and the MKE Roots initiative housed under Marquette's Center for Urban Research, Teaching & Outreach. He has also been part of the Milwaukee Community School Partnership with Marquette University and helped organize youth summits on campus aimed to center and amplify youth voice and leadership. Saúl is part of the Latinx Research Community at Marquette, where he coordinates research chats, networking events, and other research activities as a way to amplify and center Latinx scholars and Latinx research. His research and dissertation focus on Latinx student understandings of servingness at midwestern HSIs. Saúl currently serves as an adjunct instructor in Marquette's College of Education and is also a 2024-2025 Arthur J. Schmitt Leadership Fellow. Saúl received his bachelor's degree and a master's degree in Spanish language, literature, and culture from Marquette University.

List of past recipients of the AAHHE Doctoral Student Award:

- 2024 Diana Cervantes
- 2023 Merylou Rodríguez
- 2022 Roberto Orozco
- 2021 Angel Gonzalez, MA, PhD

2025 AAHHE Outstanding Support of Hispanic Issues Award Recipient

The AAHHE Outstanding Support of Hispanic Issues Award is given to an individual who has demonstrated outstanding accomplishments and support of AAHHE's mission. This individual need not be an educator but one who has made significant contributions to higher education as a community leader, civic leader, elected or appointed official, etc.



Teresa Patricia Feria Arroyo, PhD

Associate Dean for Faculty Success, School of Integrative Biological and Chemical Sciences
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Teresa Patricia Feria Arroyo, PhD has 16 years of experience developing and implementing programs for faculty, students, and community success. She has mentored about 103 students who have graduated, joined graduate programs, presented their research findings, received awards, published papers, participated in community engagement and traveled abroad (for most of them, this is the first time they have traveled outside the RGV), and found jobs in STEM-related disciplines. She created a program called ¡Juntos al Éxito! -Together, we succeeded- with topics such as understanding what a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) is, sense of belonging, culturally relevant pedagogy, and student success.

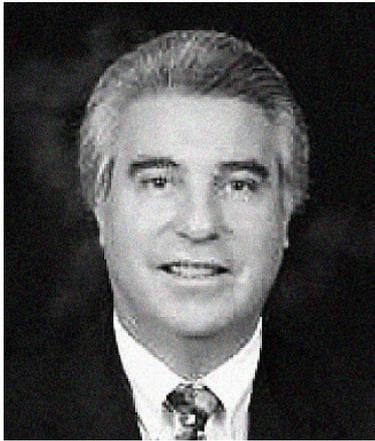
She also created the Writing-Mentoring Program for faculty success. She co-founded the Women in Sciences Network at the College of Sciences at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), where she is a full professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Success. She serves as Chair of the Culturally Responsive Student Services Learning Collaborative PUNTES, overseeing a staff development program to improve educational opportunities for students' success. She leads the national NSF ADVANCE-funded THRIVE Summit, which focuses on a transformational leadership development program for HSI Department Chairs. Feria is a UT System Distinguished Teacher, a higher recognition at the UT System.ns.

List of past recipients of the AAHHE Community College Award:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 2024 Not Awarded | 2005 Eugene Garcia |
| 2023 Mariana Martínez | 2004 Louis Fernandez |
| 2022 Amelie G. Ramirez | 2003 Rick Noriega |
| 2021 Esther Elena Mulnix | 2002 Roberto Haro |
| 2020 Dolores Huerta | 2001 Jesús Rangel |
| 2019 John Burkhardt | 2000 Art Ruiz |
| 2018 Richard Tapia | 1999 Rubén Hinojosa |
| 2017 Irma Alemar Lawrence | 1998 Irma Lerma Rangel |
| 2016 Marie T. Mora | 1997 Raúl Yzaguirre |
| 2015 Jamie P. Merisotis | 1996 Robert Atwell |
| 2014 Stephen Jordan | 1995 José López-Isa |
| 2013 Charles B. Reed | 1994 Ada López |
| 2012 Juan Andrade | 1993 José Serrano |
| 2011 Jeanett Castellanos | 1992 Edward Apodaca |
| 2010 Carlos Velez-Ibanez | 1991 Ernesto Rodríguez |
| 2009 Peter Rosa | 1990 Eloy Rodríguez |
| 2008 Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez | 1989 Isaura Santiago |
| 2007 Eddie Perez | 1988 David Hamburg |
| 2006 Kurt M. Landgraf | 1987 Allison Bernstein |

2025 AAHHE William Aguilar Cultural Arts Awards

The AAHHE William Aguilar Cultural Arts Award recognizes individuals who have contributed significantly to the understanding of the national Latino community and/or culture through the fine, creative, and performing arts. The award is named in honor of Dr. William Aguilar, one of AAHHE's founding Board Members.



William Aguilar, PhD

VP Emeritus
University Advancement
California State University, San Bernardino

William Aguilar, PhD, served as vice president and national conference chair from 2005 – 2018. He retired from California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) after twenty-one years of service in 2009. He served as vice president for Advancement for four years and was responsible for Development, Advancement, Alumni Affairs, Public Affairs, and Athletics. Aguilar served as the founding vice president for Information Resources and Technology (IRT). He earned a doctorate degree in Library and Information Sciences (University of Illinois, Urbana). He held directorships of libraries at California

State University, San Bernardino; Central Connecticut State University; Pikeville College; and Lamar Community College. Areas of specific interest included increasing CSUSB's endowment, philanthropy to complete the building of the CSUSB Palm Desert Campus, and the general overall improvement of the Advancement Division. Aguilar was awarded several distinguished awards for outstanding performance, including the 1998 Diversity Award from CSU, San Bernardino; Hispanic Leadership Fellowship Recipient (1986); Kellogg Educational Policy Fellowship (1983–84); National Hispanic Scholarship Fund Recipient (1981–83); and Title II Higher Education Act Fellowship (1973, 1980). He received several grants for work related to information and technology and holds membership in several professional organizations.

2025 AAHHE William Aguilar Cultural Arts Award Recipients



David Ocelotl Garcia

Abstract Imaginism Artist

David Ocelotl Garcia is a Colorado-based artist accomplished across several mediums including painting, mosaic, sculpture, and murals. His work can be seen in national and international public art commissions, and both museum and private collections. Ocelotl Garcia discovered his natural ability and passion for fine art at the age of eleven. By the age of eighteen Ocelotl Garcia was assisting professional muralists and monumental bronze sculptors on major public art installations across the country. Through self-meditation and creative exploration Ocelotl Garcia has developed his own technique and philosophy on painting and sculpture coined “Abstract Imaginism.” Abstract Imaginism is a style of

art that combines the spontaneity and unpredictability of abstraction with the creativity and perception of his imagination. Ocelotl Garcia is most inspired by the presence and movement of atomic energy and its influence and connectivity with all living things. In addition, Ocelotl Garcia’s passion is to explore the beauty, philosophy, and spirituality of his Native heritage. Ocelotl Garcia believes that “Art”, whether we are making it or viewing it, allows us to think more critically, respectfully, and creatively about the world around us. It is through art that Ocelotl Garcia hopes to manifest beauty, inspiration, color and energy.

Victor Escobedo

Muralist & Artist

List of past recipients of the AAHHE William Aguilar Cultural Arts Award:

2023 Maria De Los Angeles
2022 Elizabeth Acevedo
2021 Javier Ávila
2020 Juan Felipe Herrera
2019 John A. López
2018 Laurie Ann Guerrero
2017 Ana Castillo
2016 Juan Felipe Herrera
2015 Rolando Hinojosa-Smith
2014 Octavio Roca
2013 Benjamin Saénz

2012 Alma Flor Ada
2011 Chon Noriega
2010 Francisco Aragón
2009 Bessy Reyna
2008 Javier Ávila
2007 Helena Maria Viramontes
2006 Edward Gonzales
2005 Cordelia Chávez Candelaria
2004 Alberto Rios
2003 Rudolfo Anaya
2002 Juan Delgado
2001 Teófilo Jaime Chahín
1996 Nicholas Kanellos & Gary D. Keller

AAHHE Mildred García Founders' Award

The AAHHE Mildred García Founders' Award is given in the spirit of the extraordinary leadership, stewardship, and courage evidenced by the founding members of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education. This award honors an individual or organization demonstrating an exemplary commitment to advancing access and success of the Latinx population in higher education; evidencing a pioneering spirit in forging transformational avenues and inclusionary opportunities that support and promote Latinx issues; and achieving outstanding accomplishments aligned with AAHHE's mission. The AAHHE Founders' Award is now named after Dr. Mildred García.



Mildred García, EdD

President
American Association of State Colleges & Universities
Washington, DC

Mildred García, EdD, president of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), is an advocate for public higher education at the national level, working to influence federal policies and regulations; serving as a resource to presidents and chancellors as they address state policy and emerging campus issues; developing collaborative partnerships and initiatives that advance public higher education; directing a strategic agenda that focuses on public college and university leadership for the 21st century; and providing professional development opportunities for presidents,

chancellors, and their spouses. She is the first Latina to lead one of the six presidentially based higher education associations in Washington, D.C.

A much sought-after speaker, García served as president of California State University, Fullerton, the fourth largest university in the state, and president of CSU Dominguez Hills becoming the first Latina president in the largest system of public higher education in the country. García served as the CEO of Berkeley College. She has held both academic and senior-level positions at many distinguished academic institutions.

A recipient of myriad honors and awards, García served on President Barack Obama's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics, on the Air University's Board of Visitors, and on the Committee on Measures of Student Success. She presently sits on the boards of ETS, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and American Academic Leadership Institute (AALI). She served as the co-chair for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Postsecondary Value Commission. A first-generation college student, García earned a Doctor of Education and an MA in Higher Education Administration (Teachers College, Columbia University); an MA in Business Education/Higher Education (New York University); a BS in Business Education (Baruch College, City University of New York); and an AAS (New York City Community College).

2025 AAHHE William Aguilar Cultural Arts Award Recipients



Ana Mari Cauce, PhD

President
University of Washington

Ana Mari Cauce, PhD is the 33rd president of the University of Washington, where she has been a member of the faculty since 1986. A graduate of the University of Miami and Yale University, she is a noted scholar on risk and resilience among adolescents and has received numerous awards for her research as well as the University's Distinguished Teaching Award. Before becoming president in 2015, she served as chair of the Departments of American Ethnic Studies and Psychology, as dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and as provost, the University's chief academic officer. In 2008, she played a key role in establishing the Husky Promise, a program that has helped more than 40,000

low-income students attend the UW. Since becoming president, Cauce has put a spotlight on the UW's work in population health across the University, launched the University's Race & Equity Initiative and been a champion for ensuring the UW and public higher education across the country remain accessible and affordable for all students. In recognition of her leadership in population health and groundbreaking research, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Medicine. Throughout her career, she has worked to advance the University's mission of serving the public good by focusing on the UW's impact on the lives of the people in Washington and throughout the world.

List of past recipients of the Founders' Award:

- 2024 David A. Fuentes, PhD
- 2023 The Campaign for College Opportunity, Audrey Dow
- 2022 Adela de la Torre
- 2021 Joseph I. Castro

List of past recipients of the President's Award:

- 2020 Monica Lozano, President and CEO, College Futures Foundation
- 2019 The Honorable Mari-Luci Jaramillo, Former U.S. Ambassador to Argentina
- 2018 Gary Francisco Keller, Hispanic Research Center, Arizona State University

LATINO CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

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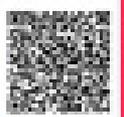
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Dean
Texas State University
San Marcos, TX

Dr. Mildred García

President
American Association of State Colleges & Universities
Washington, DC

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