

InterAction

The Initiative:

A Call to Action



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

MARÍA "CUCA" ROBLEDO MONTECEL, PH.D.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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Mission: Creating schools that work for *all* children.

Vision: IDRA is a vanguard leadership development and research team working with people to create self-renewing schools that value and empower all children, families and communities.

Functions:

POLICY AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT – IDRA policy and leadership development promotes accountability and responsibility. Using inclusive, cutting-edge and broad-based strategies, we develop leadership within communities, schools and policy-making bodies to create collaborative and enlightened educational policies that work for *all* children.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION – IDRA research and evaluation advance educational policies, programs and practices. Using collaborative and innovative methods, we investigate important questions and provide insights into compelling educational issues. As a national resource, we set standards in the design, analysis, and synthesis of timely and useful research involving diverse populations.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – IDRA professional development causes people across the country to take action that empowers others. We assist people to create educational solutions through innovative, participatory, and hands-on presentations, workshops, and technical assistance that promotes sustained growth and development.

Our assistance values the needs and cultures of our participants and acknowledges their experiences. We carefully craft training designs that include reflection and application. IDRA professional development causes participants to take a new look at persistent problems and equips them to take action that produces positive outcomes for *all* children.

PROGRAMS AND MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT – IDRA programs and materials cause people across the country to improve education for *all* children. Our programs produce results. Our materials are useful and timely; attractive, cost-effective and intuitive; linguistically, culturally and developmentally appropriate.

IDRA pro-actively disseminates cutting-edge information to educators, administrators, decision- and policy-makers, parents and community leaders.

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Questions and comments will be most generously handled by: Intercultural Development Research Association; 5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350; San Antonio, Texas 78228-1190; Ph. 210-444-1710; Fax 210-444-1714; E-mail: contact@idra.org; www.idra.org

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Introduction

“[Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King said,] ‘We are all caught up in an inescapable network of mutuality.’ I believe that the long-term progress in Latino access and success requires acknowledging and building on that mutuality. Higher education, elementary and secondary education, community, Latino, African-American, White, the government sector, the for-profit sector, non-profit sector, rich to middle-class and poor, we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality and so the name ‘InterAction.’”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel,
Executive Director, Intercultural
Development Research Association

InterAction is a Texas initiative of the Intercultural Development Research Association supported by Houston Endowment, Inc. The initiative included a series of three policy action forums leading into a statewide seminar that presented the policy solutions generated from the forum participants who represented three communities of interest – the border, urban, and rural areas. The three policy forums across Texas were hosted in Houston, Midland-Odessa, and Edinburg and were aimed at creating policy reform solutions to address disparities in higher education access and success of Latino students. The forums included K-12 educators, college and university leaders, and community and business advocates.

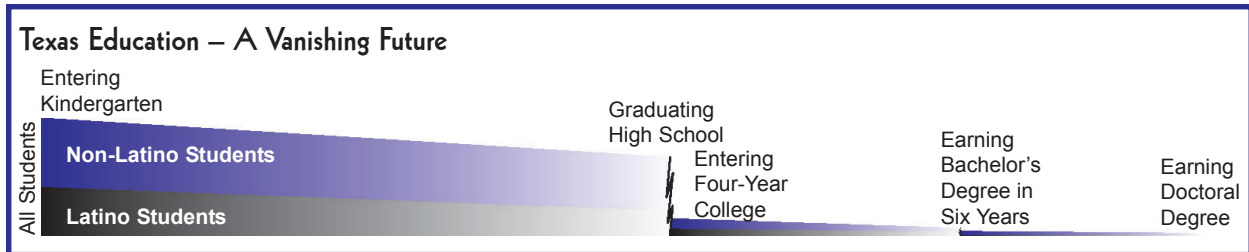
At each forum, IDRA provided opportunities for extensive interaction among invited participants, who helped frame the set of policy reform solutions using a framework for dialogue from the IDRA executive director, Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel. IDRA’s framework has seven distinct areas of opportunities for reform:

- Preparing students,
- College access,
- Institutional persistence,
- Affordability,
- Institutional resources,
- Graduation, and
- Graduate and professional studies.

The three distinct communities of interest (urban, border, and rural) helped inform the policy solutions as did the research base synthesized by IDRA. The final policy solutions were reviewed in February 2005 in a statewide gathering in Austin that included state policymakers, university system leaders, and Texas community and business representatives.

This policy brief presents the research and the policy solutions that are aimed at changing the status quo for Latinos. As with all reform, it is up to individuals and communities to move from dialogue to action. Such is the intent of InterAction – to move individuals and communities of interest from a spirited and informed dialogue to changing the future of Latino students.

The Context: Higher Education in Texas



Texas' vision for higher education states "every Texan educated to the level necessary to achieve his or her dreams; no one is left behind, and each can pursue higher education; colleges and universities focus on the recruitment and success of students...and all levels of education, the business community, and the public are constant partners in recruiting and preparing students and faculty who will meet the state's workforce and research needs."

public university the following fall. Close to one of four enrolls in a two-year college, but more than half will not enroll at all.

"In Texas the feigned K-through-16 or K-through-20 pipeline is not only clogged at various transition points, it is, in fact, nonexistent. There is no pipeline for Texans. There is no pipeline that moves students from quality early childhood education to college graduation and beyond."

– Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

"This statement is not a vision statement; it is, in fact, for the state of Texas, a survival statement."

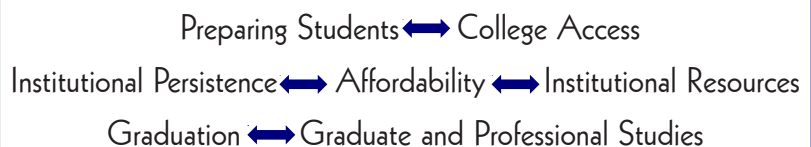
– Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

There are six public university systems in Texas with 35 public universities and close to half a million students enrolled. Over half a million students are enrolled in the 50 community colleges in Texas. *These are the survivors.*

IDRA's research shows that Texas high schools lose one third of their students before graduation. Of the total who survive and graduate with a high school diploma, one of two are White, one of three are Hispanic, and one out of six are Black.

Of those who graduate from high school, only one of five enrolls in a Texas

Texas Education – A Promising Future



A Message from IDRA Executive Director

Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Executive Director,
Intercultural Development Research Association

“We must create persistent, accountable institutions...with the resources, holding power and staying power to guide our young people from student to citizen, learner to leader.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel,
Executive Director, Intercultural
Development Research Association

InterAction is an initiative that we intend to be a vehicle for increasing Latino college access and success in the state of Texas.

Let us look a little bit at this word “InterAction.” You see it in all of your materials, this word. *Inter-* implies, of course, interconnectedness and interdependence and interrelatedness of purposes of people and of systems. Each of you bring to this forum a set of particulars that come from what you do, be it at a university or a community college, in schools or in the community or business entity, and those particulars that you bring are very important. The perspective and the insights from those three sectors – higher education, elementary and secondary education and community – are very essential to this gathering.

At the same time there is an opportunity today to look at the challenge of Latino college access and success from a broad and big platform. One that creates not only common ground but common cause. One that examines not only state level policies, but also institutional and system policies. One that assumes that the future is neither in someone else’s hands nor in our individual hands but in our connected hands.

Let’s look at the second part of this word “InterAction,” *-action*. It is

not enough to deplore the facts. Most of us in this room are painfully aware of the loud drumbeat of statistics that paint a dismal picture of education opportunity for Latinos in Texas. Many of us in fact, myself included, are convinced that hard hitting, valid, credible statistics are necessary in order to create the public will, the accountability mechanisms and the fair funding that is going to produce lasting results. There are indeed a lot of facts to explore. Some of those facts are included in a Quick Facts handout. This is a kind of quick pulling together of information, and it is there for your use today and later.

A little bit of what we do know from the facts, and they are deplorable: IDRA’s research shows that the Texas high schools lose one-third of their students before graduation. Of the total who graduate with a high school diploma, one of two is White, one of three is Hispanic and one of six is Black. And of those students, only one of five enrolls in a Texas public university the following fall.

Close to one of four enrolls in a two-year college, but more than half of high school graduates will not enroll at all. Thirteen of the 19 public universities in Texas graduate less than half of their students. Six graduate less than a third. We know that students have the best chance of returning for a second year if

they continue as full-time students. This seems to be a more important factor than the type of diploma they earn in high school. But full-time college status is difficult given that one of four high school students is economically disadvantaged and that there is a dearth of needs-based financial aid.

It is especially difficult for Latinos given that one of two Latinos in the state of Texas is poor, compared to one in 10 White students. We also know that Texas colleges and universities are being priced out of the market for most Texas families. Texas earned a “D” in affordability in a recent state report card. The study called “Measuring Up,” and I know many of you are familiar with it, indicates that the cost of a public four-year education for low- and middle-income students is equivalent to 40 percent of the family’s income, 40 percent. For a community college education, it is at 30 percent of the annual family income.

Regrettably, the steepest increases in public college tuition have been imposed during times of the greatest economic hardship for the state and for the country. Over the past 10 years, tuition in Texas public two-year institutions increased 29 percent, and tuition in Texas public four-year institutions increased 63 percent. During this same period, the median Texas family income increased only 8 percent.

On page 4, you will see a graphic of the vanishing future for Texas education. In Texas the feigned kindergarten through 20 pipeline is not only clogged at various transition points, it is, in fact, nonexistent. There is no pipeline for Texans. There is no pipeline that moves students from quality early childhood education to college graduation and beyond.

So, there are many facts to deplore; but clearly we must act. We must act now; and we must act with what

Higher education, elementary and secondary education, community, Latino, African-American, White, the government sector, the for-profit sector, nonprofit sector, rich to middle class and poor, we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality and so the name “InterAction.”

is so, today. This forum is the first of three policies forums of the InterAction initiative. Today we will focus on how urban and large institutions of higher education can address issues of access and success for Latinos.

IDRA will also convene a forum on December 9 in Odessa focused on rural serving institutions of higher education and President David Watts of the University of Texas Permian Basin will host that gathering.

A third forum is scheduled for December 14 and will be focused on border institutions and will be hosted by the University of Texas Pan American, Dr. Bambi Cárdenas, president. They are lucky to have her down there.

A statewide February seminar and news conference in Austin during the 79th session of the Texas Legislature will then serve to share and broadcast the policy solutions that we formulate at these three forums.

Your presence here reminds me that the drumroll of grim statistics need not continue. By coming here today, you demonstrate your recognition of the importance of interconnection and the need for action. Interconnection and action around what? Well, obviously around a vision.

Let me read you a statement. “Every Texan educated to the level necessary to achieve his or her dreams. No one is left behind. Each can pursue higher education. Colleges and universities focus on the recruitment and the success of students and in all levels

of education. The business community and the public are constant partners in recruiting and preparing students and faculty who will meet the State workforce and research needs.”

You may have recognized this statement as the vision statement of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in the “Closing the Gaps” effort. Last night during our facilitator meeting, Dr. Ed Apodaca, who will serve as a facilitator today, said that this statement is not a vision statement; that it is, in fact, for the State of Texas, a survival statement.

Many would agree that in order to survive, the State of Texas must increase the current 5 percent participation rate in higher education and that the current 3.7 participation rate for Hispanics in higher education affects not only Latinos but everyone.

So, what do we do? How do we interact? We will invite your participation today along a particular framework that may begin to create common cause and to frame common cause. Those areas are:

- preparing students,
- college access,
- institutional persistence,
- affordability,
- institutional resources,
- graduation, and
- graduate and professional studies.

I invite you to remember today as we move forward that in the words of Martin Luther King, “We are all caught

up in an inescapable network of mutuality.” I believe that the long-term progress in Latino access and success requires acknowledging and building on that mutuality. Higher education, elementary and secondary education, community, Latino, African-American, White, the government sector, the for-profit sector, nonprofit sector, rich to middle class and poor, we are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality and so the name “InterAction.”

There’s an interesting fact in the “Measuring Up” report as well that I want to share with you. It concludes that if all ethnic groups in Texas had the same educational attainment and earnings as Whites, total personal income in Texas would be about \$31.4 billion higher and the state would realize an estimated \$11 billion in additional Texas revenues.

And what could Texas do with an additional \$11 billion in tax revenue? Those of you who are superintendents, who are presidents of universities, who are involved with policy at many levels, know that with \$11 billion a lot could be done. I took a little bit of a look at, in fact, what we might do as sort of a shopping list for this \$11 billion if we were to achieve that kind of parity.

So, here’s what we could do. We could invest \$3.4 billion in kindergarten through grade 12 public education in Texas and reach at least the U.S. average of spending per student. Textbook costs for students next year will total \$560 million. With double that amount, we can provide for enough materials for the growing number of English language learners, more library books in the poor schools and better equipped computer and science labs. We could provide additional dollars for student financial aid.

The Texas Be On Time Program, which currently costs \$388 million to serve a few students based on financial need and contingent on completing four

years at a four-year institution or two years at a community college, could create other ways to find means-based assistance.

So, let’s say that we allocate double the amount that has been allocated so far to the Texas Be On Time Program. That would be \$776 million. And then we could fund technology for teachers and students. A Hewlett Packard Pavilion laptop computer costs \$1,229. For Texas’ 288,386 teachers, that would amount to \$354,426,395. Then we could get a laptop for 2 million of Texas’ 4.2 million students, for about half of them, and that would cost \$2,458,000,000, and then we could get into roads and public transportation.

We could invest \$31 million in what is needed for Texas to reach the average level of national spending for public transit, and we could spend an additional \$983 million to reach the national average for spending on highways and streets.

And then we could do a little bit about health care. We would have the \$1.3 billion dollars that is needed for Texas to be on par with the nation’s average spending for public health. That would be another \$1.3 billion. And then we could restore the health care aid for children and the elderly that was cut last year. In Bexar County that would be \$21.8 million; in Dallas County, \$26.5 million; in Harris County, \$43 million; in Travis County, \$7 million; about \$100 million, rounded out to take care of children and the elderly in the state of Texas.

And then I totaled my list up and ended up with \$10.54 billion, which leaves us about \$500 million for good measure. So, that is what \$11 billion could buy the students of Texas; but in order to do that we have to create educational parity for all Texans.

I say that we owe it to ourselves, to our children and to our children’s

children to find out what educational parity would look like. How might we, you and I here today, and the InterAction initiative as we move forward, how might we interact and interconnect. What might we be able to do. That is what today is about; and, again, I’m deeply grateful that you are here. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and your vision for the future.

Messages from the Host University Presidents

Opening remarks by university presidents hosting each forum focused on the challenges faced by higher education in each of the different contexts (urban, rural, and border) as well as opportunities. Dr. Max Castillo, president of the University of Houston–Downtown; Dr. David Watts, president of The University of Texas of the Permian Basin; and Dr. Blandina Cárdenas, president of The University of Texas–Pan American all underscored the critical need for increasing the number of Latino students enrolling in and graduating from Texas colleges and universities.

Dr. Max Castillo, President, University of Houston– Downtown

What a delight to have you all on the campus. Welcome to University of Houston–Downtown. It is a marvelous, great institution, a very dynamic place. I tell you, it keeps me going. I've been here a little over 12 years, and I am still energized. And I still believe that we are in a mission to really improve education and to do what we can to really advance the educational experience and to create, I think, a greater involvement in the community and produce students who really will make a difference in our society and Texas and the world.

All you have to do is pick up the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, anything having to do with education, and you can read about the crisis. We have not been able at the national level to reauthorize the *Higher Education Act*. You know, we have got a real challenge ahead of us in terms of what we have to do in that area. At the state level, you know, in following that for years, when you are summoned to a pilgrimage to Austin during a legislative session almost weekly to defend why you need certain funds, I wonder why they ask the questions. They always ask the wrong

question, but you have got to respond to those questions. But it is a challenge at the same time. Now, at the national level, I do not suspect that changing. At the state level, I do not suspect that changing.

And that is that the psyche that I hear continuously during hearings, during testimony, is that students are consumers. That education is no longer a public good. It is a private benefit. And that in itself creates a very, very different approach to funding. That's why we see accountability measures, which we need to have. But they also become excuses for not providing funding when it is critically needed.

Let me tell you a little bit about University of Houston–Downtown. Our basic mission is access and opportunity. That is really what we are all about. It is in our mission statement and we practice it and we believe it.

And when you look at the facts, over 60 percent of our students are first-generation college students. We are also celebrating the 30th anniversary of this place. We are 30 years young and our model is excellence in opportunity and you will see it throughout, especially if you have an opportunity to traverse the college halls of academia. We are very connected, a very engaged university with many different kinds of interactions, enormous amount of interactions – some

of those sometimes get us in trouble – especially with a Latino population, the African American population, the Asian population and, yes, we also have career re-entry students because of where we are located in the corporate community.

So, we are a new generation university. We kind of call it an NGU. We are not tied to the traditions of the past, but really are open to the possibilities of the future. It is a university that really is keeping up with the changing demographics of the region. As a matter of fact, we were acknowledged recently by *U.S. News and World Report* as the most diverse urban liberal arts university in the western United States.

Just to give you an idea of our enrollment, we have grown by 27 percent since fall of 2000. We are now at about 11,048 students, which places us at about 14th in size among Texas' 35 public universities; and we are third among public universities in Southeast Texas. So, we are a fairly large university in terms of the enrollment patterns, the way the state actually acknowledges that.

During this same period that I just stated, Hispanic enrollment grew by 44 percent. So, when you look at our 30-year history, we have provided educational access at this institution to the previously under-represented segments of the state's population. We are a student body. We do not have a single ethnic group in majority. We are 37 percent Hispanic, 26 African American, with 24 percent Anglo, 10 percent Asian and 4 percent international and just a microcosm of the region. We are the most ethnically diverse university of the state's universities, and I think also most reflective of what the growing urban population is in Texas.

We also have a very significant amount of transfer students, students who attended other institutions before coming to University of Houston–Downtown. They account for approximately two-

thirds of our university's total population; and in recent years there's been a significant increase in new community college transfer students.

But we do have, and I think that is something we are going to need to focus on, challenges and opportunities in increasing Latino higher education participation rates in Texas. I think that is what we have to focus on, going beyond transcending what are you are traditionally, I do not want call them minority institutions, but institutions that really attract many of our Latino students and African American students and find a significant disproportionate amount of them in the community colleges.

We know that Hispanic youth represent the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population. Hispanics now account for more than a quarter of all new entrants into the labor force. In Texas the projections are that there will be more than 4.5 million Latinos in the 15- to 24-year-old cohort by the year 2015. That's a 65 percent increase from 2000. That's pretty mind boggling, when you look at that.

And education, as we know, has historically been the path for upper occupational, economic and social mobility. We know that. But we also know that our Latino students complete college at much lower rates than other groups. So, we have to address that in terms of the high school retention rates as well as persistence in higher education.

There is a bumper sticker slogan that I know you've seen, "If you think education is expensive, you should try ignorance." I think it's strongly supportive of the income statistics in the United States. The need to increase Hispanic participation and graduation rates has been already widely acknowledged. We know that. The state had put forward several major plans to increase the participation of Hispanic and other minorities during the last 25 years. I will

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tell you what these included. Maybe we need to consider these in terms of what the next step is.

First, there was the Texas Plan. You all remember the Texas Plan, a plan for improving minority participation that was part of the *Adams vs. Bell* case settlement. It was a five-year plan monitored by the federal government between 1983 and 1988. Then the Texas Education Opportunity Plan for Higher Education continued the efforts of that first plan, which went from 1989 to 1994. And I happened to chair that particular committee at that time through the coordinating board.

Then there was Access Equity 2000. This is a six-year plan to take Texas into the new millennium. The implementation of that plan responds to many of the goals described in the master plan for Texas higher education that was adopted by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in 1993.

Now comes "Closing the Gaps." The Closing the Gaps plan outlined a set of statewide goals in the areas of education, participation and success that is in educational excellence and in funded research over the next 15 years. So, it became a little bit more focused, which I think we needed. It's really giving us some specific goals that can lead to policy issues. This is at least one advantage of "Closing the Gaps," that it really narrowed the fact that we need to increase participation, we have to have success in educational excellence and in

funded research, which makes sense with our Doctoral 1 institutions or our flagship institutions.

Now, the “Closing the Gaps” plan does more than just set forth enrollment and graduation targets. I think we need to keep that in mind. I think we really have to hold legislators, the coordinating board and all of us, hold our feet to the fire. It also committed the state to implementing several basic strategies to achieve the target goals; and that is, strategies for increasing higher education enrollments by 500,000 for students and it included the following – I think the year is 2015.

These were the specific strategies: Making the recommended high school program, which is college prep, the standard curriculum in Texas public high schools and make it a minimum requirement for admission to Texas public universities by 2008. Recruiting, preparing and retaining additional well-qualified educators for elementary and secondary schools. The challenge that we have is that many schools today and students that are going in as freshmen are required to take the recommended curriculum, but they may not have the teachers adequately prepared to teach the courses that are required in the recommended curriculum. Therein lies the crisis. And I see some folks here from State Board for Educator Certification going like this because it is true. They’re out in the schools. They have a field-based program. We find that even in the Houston Independent School District (ISD), which has made that the default curriculum for our students.

The other is to ensure that all students and their parents understand the benefits of higher education and the necessary steps to prepare them academically and financially for college. The other one was carrying out a sustained statewide public awareness campaign, which is still going on, on the

value of a college education, the preparation required and the financial aid that’s available.

Establishing coordinated pre-kindergarten through 16 information and motivational academic programs to prepare students for college. This is what Project Grad and many of these programs are doing in Houston. Establish an affordability policy that ensures the students are able to participate and succeed in higher education. So, those are the strategies we are dealing with.

So, it is strategy for increasing by 60 percent the number of degrees, certificates and other identifiable student successes from high quality programs. These included focusing college and university efforts on increasing graduates in the following areas: education, engineering, computer science, math, physical science, allied health, nursing and other critical fields. So, those are the areas in which the coordinating board is holding a university’s feet to the fire.

**Dr. David Watts, President,
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin**

I want to comment on just four things, the obstacles to Hispanic access in higher education in rural Texas.

The first obstacle that I just want to talk about is distance. Now, most of you are from West Texas, and so when I tell you that it’s two and a half hours to anywhere from here, you know that, and you’re comfortable with that. But those of you who aren’t, I want you to think about that for a minute. It’s two and a half hours to anywhere from here.

Many of you may have been students at one time or another and had the good fortune to make sure that your automobile operated. Remember those days when you were lucky if the thing turned over the next morning? Where

you had to buy gasoline and you went underneath the seat, the front seat, to be sure you had an adequate amount of money. Do you know what I’m talking about? You know, trying to find that change that fell out of your pocket.

Well, it doesn’t matter whether you’re Hispanic or Anglo or African American or what, if you’re young and trying to go to school and you need to get back and forth, that automobile is a critical tool for you to be able to do that. And it’s two and a half hours to anywhere from here.

Resources are a problem, an obstacle for Hispanic access.

Facilities are an obstacle. Think about it. I’m trying to recruit a student from Houston. “Oh, come to West Texas, it’s beautiful. The weather is great. The weather is great. The weather is great. And I’ve got a nice trailer for you to live in. And I’ve got a wonderful classroom for you to go to.” The point is the facilities are sometimes a handicap. Who wants to go to school in a trailer? Well, most of our children are going to schools in trailers in many of our school districts, and so it’s a common problem. But it’s one that we face in particular.

Another issue that I want to talk about is distance education. And we’ve done a great job, I think, at UTPB. And I know Midland College has and Odessa College has and many other institutions, Howard College and West Texas, have all done a great job. Sul Ross, Texas Tech, everybody’s done a great job of adapting to distance education. And why would we be so good at it? Well, because it’s two and a half hours to anywhere from here. Distance education is a natural.

But, you know, those of you who have done distance education know what it’s like. You’re sitting at a computer terminal by yourself. You “interact.” You get lots of interaction. Some of those e-mails are pretty burning, but you get lots

of interaction. But there aren't any people there. There's no one – I mean, there's no one. There's no touch there. There's no human contact there. There is communication, but no human contact.

Probably some of our most vulnerable students are students who have never been to college before, who don't know what college is, who think it's something like high school (and we all know that it's not), and who are most vulnerable. And it's through that interaction with people, through those relationships that their success is going to be ensured.

And I want to end my comments with a quote from a group – I spend time in Austin. You know how it is, you spend time in Austin, you pick up some characteristics and traits. There used to be a rock and roll group, a blues group there called the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

They were famous for a while. Stevie Ray Vaughn's brother was the lead guitarist and vocalist in that group. And my favorite number from the Fabulous Thunderbirds is a song entitled "How do you spell love?" That's the title of the song. And how do you spell love? M-O-N-E-Y is how you spell love. And M-O-N-E-Y will do an awful lot to help us overcome the handicaps associated with higher education in Texas.

**Dr. Blandina "Bambi"
Cárdenas, President,
University of Texas–Pan
American**

What sets this meeting, this InterAction, apart from things we have done in the past is, first of all, that we have all learned a great deal, that 30 years ago, we were not very sophisticated. We had ideas that had legs, but we really were not sophisticated enough to understand all of the intricacies of implementation.

The driving ideas still have great credibility and great validity. The other is that we are in a sense, we here are a closed system. What happens to our children in our schools, what happens to our children in our community colleges and in our universities is our doing. We prepare the teachers, the principals, the counselors. We receive the students in our schools. Most of us now are of the community. No one has to tell us about the potential that exists in those students. No one has to tell us about their suffering or their needs. It is up to us. The buck stops here. And if we do not have the resources that others have, well, we've been doing a lot without resources all of our lives, and we know how to stretch them, and we do. And so while we fight for the policy changes, we cannot lose sight that the buck stops here.

In that context, it seems to me that we have the opportunity to take what we've learned, to understand not only our responsibility, but our power. We have power to change what we do. We are accountable for the outcome. One of the things that is different, however, and I think one of the things that I would like the InterAction to take us to – although I said I wasn't going to talk, I can't remain mute – one of the things that has changed dramatically from 30 years ago is the scale upon which we had to act.

Most of us grew up in small towns, many of us. At least half of us in this room grew up at a time when we were real minorities. We are not that anymore. Most of us grew up in a time when someone other than members of our community was in charge. And as we think about making changes and experiencing successes, I think that often our framework for success is too small.

It took so long and it was so hard for us to achieve positions of leadership. It took so long and it was so hard to see some of our students going on to college

that when we see increases in the college-going rate or increases in the college-going numbers or we see our students going off to selective institutions, we think we've achieved success. But, in this country, Latinos are 31 million people. Projects no longer work. Individual successes no longer work. We need to be thinking in terms of mass strategies that emerge from fundamental policy changes.

Each one of us in our leadership roles has looked at the elephant from a different perspective. We often talk about problem identification. And I always get frustrated when I talk to educators because you always hear, "The problem is... The problem is not... The problems are..." That is, there is a whole complex configuration of challenges, external, internal, societal, familial, institutional, that either work for advancement of our children or work against them.

So, to try to come up with a one solution approach is foolhardy at best. To come up with a complex solution that simply focuses on a narrow range of students will not get us very far either. So, as we think about this InterAction, what I would recommend is that, first, we begin with the process of that which we ask our students to do, to assume responsibility for that which we do have control over; and secondly, to understand the broader context in which our actions can either encounter success or not. Thirdly – and I applaud Dr. Reed for her courageous description of the challenges that we face – we can neither romanticize nor turn our students into victims. It's neither one. It's a whole complex range of things we have to deal with.

We do know that some large scale efforts appear to be bearing some fruit. The Gear Up Program which serves 17,000 students from Brownsville to UT-Pan American may prove to have high

impact. We won't know for another two years. Looking good, but it still remains to be seen. The AVID program may prove to give us results. The thing that is attractive about these programs is that they are on a scale large enough to begin to change the numbers.

I still think that we need to do a great deal from a policy perspective on improving teacher preparation. The policy decision last year by the State Board of Educator Certification to allow secondary teachers to be certified without pedagogy is a death sentence for our students. It is an educational death sentence for our students. The continued legislative policy to restrict the preparation of teachers to 18 hours of pedagogy is a serious attack on our ability to prepare teachers to work with students with the range of educational needs that confront us. We have been living with those teacher preparation policies for 19 years, and the results are evident. We're not getting better. We're getting worse.

So, my hope is that as we think about the complexity of the policy, challenges that appear before us, that we recognize that the issue of affordability is very, very real. It's not getting any cheaper. We are competing with institutions that are charging very, very high tuition. That means they can go out and hire and support faculty. They can create systems of advising and infrastructure. And we're in the same marketplace. We've got to be able to have enough money to ensure that we aren't offering our students a second class system of education and support. So, the issue is very, very real, and it's not going to get any better. It's going to get worse.

Messages from the Guest Speakers

At each forum guest speakers drew on their expertise to provide insights on the socio-political, economic and legal implications of inequities in Texas higher education.

Mr. Albert Kauffman, Senior Legal and Policy Advocate Associate, The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University

I wanted to visit with you today about comparisons of the systems we are talking about; the public education system, higher education system and even the community college system. I will visit with you a little bit about the 10 Percent Plan, which I was involved in helping to pass in 1997 under the great leadership of Representative Irma Rangel, and then the Michigan cases (the affirmative action cases in Michigan) to try to put out some threads from those that I think might be helpful to us. And then I'll give a little more detail about what I call the relationship between higher education, the funding system, especially the higher education funding system, the public school funding system and community college funding as well.

The 10 Percent Plan has been quite successful. It has been specifically successful at the University of the Texas at Austin. I want to point you to two additional bits of information about it. One, there is a recent article in a publication of the UC Berkeley that talked how the 10 Percent Plan has been successful at UT Austin, while the 4

Percent Plan that they have in California has not been successful at UC Berkeley. As you recall, the University of California system, "ended affirmative action" under their proposition of their board of regents, and we had the *Hopwood* decision all at the same time. But in Berkeley they have gone down from 16 percent Latino admissions to 11 percent now. And the University of Texas has actually gone up from 15 percent in 1996 to 17 percent now.

Now, I don't feel that the University of Texas has done nearly enough. That 17 percent figure, in my mind, should be about 35 percent, which is the percent of Latinos in the public school system. But it is important that they have not gone down and gone up slightly instead of going down as they have in California. And I think the 10 Percent Plan has been one of the causes of that. So, those things the 10 Percent Plan does not obviously solve or help; but I think it's still relevant. On the other hand affirmative action is, I think, the way to go.

Now, let's talk about Michigan cases. As you know there were two cases, the *Gratz* and the *Grutter* cases. Basically, they upheld the system of affirmative action used at the law school, but not the one used at the undergraduate school. It might just be

If you go back and read Judge O'Connor's opinion ...She said that society, indeed, cannot exist without a large number of majorities involved in the military communities and in the business community.

coincidence that the judges are all lawyers. So, they decided it was necessary at law school, but not undergraduate school. Some cynics have said maybe that has something to do with it, but there are, I guess, some key differences in the reason.

In the law school plan, they talked about the critical mass. It's based on having a critical mass of minority students not on having a quota, not having an exact percentage, but a critical mass, an individualized review of each student, looking at their whole folder, their whole lives. Very important in that case were the amicus briefs filed by the military and the business communities; and if any of you were part of that, I want to thank you. If not, I hope that your group did their own amicus briefs; but I never saw a case where the social science research, indeed, the political pressure brought to bear by the amicus briefs was so important.

If you go back and read Judge O'Connor's opinion, which I strongly urge you to do, she really went much further than just talking about the First Amendment issue having minority viewpoints in the classroom. She said that society, indeed, cannot exist without a large number of majorities involved in the military communities and in the business community. I went back and read several of those amicus briefs, and I think that the military one was quite amazing. The military set of generals, former chiefs of staff of the Army and Navy, the Air Force, all joined together and said, look, we learned in Vietnam that we cannot exist with an all White officer corp and mainly minority soldiers.

And the military has to have a cadre of diverse people to come into our officer corp. And the business community said we cannot compete internationally without a group of minority scholars coming out of the universities. These were considered very important by Justice O'Connor. So, if any of you are involved in your own plans using race as a factor, and indeed I hope that Texas increasingly goes that direction, those are things that should be considered.

Now, the undergraduate plan was thrown out in the Michigan case, and there were major issues. One is, to be quite candid, they gave too many points on the basis of race. They had a point system, 120 points will get you in. Twenty points were given to people on the basis of being an unrepresented minority group. You know, again, being a professor-type, I can get into these authority questions like, well, would 19 points have been okay, 18 slippery slope. Nobody knows the secret number or if there is a secret number, but I think the fact that it was 20 points and that there were so many cases of minorities with much lower scores getting in, Whites with much higher scores not getting in, it was almost impossible for minorities with certain score grades not to get into the University of Michigan. All those things together defeated the plan. Also, there was no individualized review. Of course, at the undergraduate level it's much harder to consider 5,000 or 10,000 students a year than it is at the graduate schools. So, that's a very tough issue. The upshot of it, though, was to some extent the Supreme Court was accepting in this sort of gestalt review of

the individual folders was in a way you can use race if it's almost a hidden agenda.

The University of Michigan undergraduate school made it clear. They had a transparent system. You could go back, and it was verifiable. As a matter of fact, at the law school it probably was not; but I do think that that's the way it went. You have to use these variety of factors, you have to have a group of people look at it and you have to make it so that nonminorities can succeed in the system and it is not a quota system. Now, your individual lawyers at your institutions or your individual employers can give you more information on that, but that's the general lessons that I learned from them. So, one thing I would say is that in your mission statements to be sure that diversity is in your mission statements and that the plan that you use considering race is tied closely to the mission plan; that you've considered alternatives; that you gather data about it; that you frequently review your goals and that you include all groups in your plan. Not too limited.

Now, the last point I'm going to cover and I think probably the most important one here for today is the comparison of the K-12 and higher education systems and to some extent the community college systems as well. The higher education system and the public school system are both underfunded. Generally people in public education and higher education think that systems are underfunded. Compared to the rest of the country, they are clearly underfunded. But in each case, the richer systems and the richer universities can make up the difference more easily than the poor ones. If you are from a larger university with a variety of programs, professional research programs, you have the give in your system to make up for the lack. You have the ability to attract

new moneys. You have the ability to get the new research grants. You have the ability to bring in the faculty who can then bring in the research grants, who can then help you with your libraries and your other research abilities, that will then go on with the system.

So, clearly in both cases, public education and higher education, they are underfunded. The rich systems have an advantage. The poor systems have the greater need and fewer resources. I think the same thing applies in higher education. The less funded universities usually have more students who are in need, have a greater number of programs, have more needs for physical plant, increasing their infrastructure, and they have less resources to do it.

The third comparison is the objective formulas that are used, and this is always the basis for this sort of, I would call it discrimination. In the higher education system, the guts of the formula system is that if you are teaching a liberal arts program, you don't get the funding you do, obviously, as if you are teaching a science and engineering program. All based on objective studies, of course. But if you look at who has the programs, if you draw yourself your little chart, in the upper left-hand corner, you have your programs in liberal arts and then you have your programs in science and your programs in engineering, as you go up from those, your programs in liberal arts might have \$1, in science, \$3 and in engineering, \$5 for a bachelor's program. Now, if you go to your master's level, they pay about three times as much. So, it's \$1 at bachelors; \$3 at the master's level. Always, though, the engineering and science go up. For the doctorate it's about 10 times as much. It's a dollar for an undergraduate program in English. It would be \$10 for a Ph.D. program. But if you have \$10 for your engineering program, it's \$100 for your Ph.D. program. So, within your little chart you

have 1 to 100.

Now, it's all objective, in that if you have a Ph.D. program in nuclear physics at PanAm Edinburg or the University of Houston—Downtown, you get just as much if you have one at UT Austin and A&M; but, of course, you don't have them. So, you generate those dollars. If you look at those charts, one group of institutions generates money from the bottom, right-hand of the chart, which has the big numbers and the other institutions generate from the upper, left-hand part of the chart, which has low numbers.

Another comparison of the systems is that the minority participation as you go up the system is consistently lower. In public education, IDRA has been studying for 25 years the relationship of overall enrollments to graduation rates. Other people in the country have finally caught on to this, I guess, in the last five years and are doing similar studies. But clearly as you go up, minority rates go down. The same thing, of course, is true in public education and in higher education.

There is a history of discrimination, I think both in the public education system and in higher education systems. Clearly for African-Americans that was explicitly made clear; for Latinos it's not quite as clear, but if you look at the structure and development of higher education in Texas, those institutions either where Latinos live or that serve Latinos have consistently been underfunded, and those that did not, have been funded well. There is also tremendous disparity in facilities both at the public education and the higher education system and again the PUF fund and the HEAF fund have not sufficiently taken care of those disparities.

One other comparison, of course, is the increase and overuse of testing. No doubt that one of the reasons for increasing numbers as you go up the

system is testing. There is always a movement towards more testing. As you know in public education now, you don't just have the graduation test. You have the third, the fifth, the eighth, you're adding on the test. In higher education you have what we used to call the rising junior test. It has another name now, but there certainly is a movement toward graduation tests and tests in certain subject matter areas. Each one of those has a negative impact. We can argue forever about whether the tests are biased or intentionally discriminatory, but no one doubts that there is an adverse impact on minorities in each one of them.

**Ms. Norma V. Cantú,
Professor of Education and
Law, University of Texas
School of Law**

In the 1970s, Latino organizations like LULAC, GI Forum, MALDEF, all petitioned the U.S. Department of Education to pay attention to the issue of access to higher education. During the Nixon administration, the U.S. Department of Justice filed close to 500 lawsuits all over the country seeking access to public education, trying to desegregate, trying to dismantle dual systems of education, both at the K-12 and the higher education areas.

During the Reagan administrations, the activity slowed down because people were very paranoid about quotas. Anything that had a number in it, people were worried that it might be a quota. Unfortunately, they stopped school desegregation as well as access to resources cases as well, not just quota cases. They stopped everything.

And so a lawsuit called *Adams vs. Bell* was filed. Latinos were active in that lawsuit because we were trying to get the U.S. Department of Education

to pick up its caseload again and not let it languish anymore. Texas was one of those cases where the Department of Education had started investigations of Texas higher education and then put this case on a back burner.

And the court in Washington, D.C., ordered the secretary of education to resume investigations. Now, that's embarrassing when you have a federal judge to tell you to do your job, but that's, in fact, what happened to the U.S. Department of Education in the 1980s. Judge John Pratt ordered the Department of Education to resume its investigations.

He also ordered them to complete their investigation of Texas and negotiate a settlement or defund them, do something, one or the other, but don't just let that case sit in a cabinet.

The U.S. Department of Education, in fact, did finish its investigation of Texas. And that began the first of the Texas equal opportunity plans for closing the gap between African American and White, and Latino and White. The five-year plan ended with the gap still there. So the Texas governor renegotiated a new five-year plan. And now we're in the 1980s, at the end of that second five-year period. Now we are 10 years into it, the gap was still there. Governor Richards spoke and the coordinating board announced we haven't been able to conclude our job, we're going to need another five years.

Latinos became impatient. We're very patient people. We waited 10 years. That's pretty calm, *calmaditos*. We did some research and met with a number of researchers, including very talented people from IDRA, and looked at the idea of filing a state case.

And that became the *LULAC vs. Richards* lawsuit, which was filed in state court. It alleged three D's, doctorates, dollars and distances. And those three D's meant that the students who lived

The defense made by
the Attorney General
was, get this,
efficiency means cheap.

in the border area of Texas were the farthest distance from doctorate institutions, institutions that offered doctorate degrees, and had to spend the greatest amount of money to secure access to graduate programs. So the irony is the poorer you are, the more you have to spend to secure higher education in Texas.

And it was an irrational system. We had experts testify from all over the United States confirming that it's an irrational system. The legislature responded to a favorable court ruling by moving a good amount of resources. So you have your legislators to thank for pumping in about \$600 million into Texas colleges.

So the fund – the university fund that was reserved exclusively for UT at Austin's use – remained intact, but a partnership fund (the Higher Education Assistance Fund) was created to try to help out those universities that didn't have access to PUF.

The problem is that when the case got up to the Texas Supreme Court, the Texas Supreme Court said, your facts are correct, but, you know, you've gotten \$600 million since this case happened. So why are you still here in front of us?

And further, the court said: If you're going to challenge higher education in Texas, you cannot challenge it based solely on an impact where one group is impacted more than another. You need to show purposeful, intentional discrimination. And so even though the impact was that there were fewer dollars for Latinos and border residents, even though there were few doctorate degrees and even though the distances were

greater, the Supreme Court of Texas insisted that to win a case in the Supreme Court, you need to show purposeful, intentional discrimination.

And that was very hard to do. We didn't have the record of that because we couldn't look in people's minds and read their minds as to why they made those decisions about where to place the doctorate programs and where to place the master's degree programs. But even though we lost the case, 600 million new dollars were infused into higher education as a result of bringing the court case.

Now, where we are with that is the Department of Education still has not cleared in Texas for having closed their gap. What started out as a complaint in the 1970s, we're looking now in 2004 and we're on, what, the fourth of the five-year plans. The Closing the Gap is a result of the *Adams vs. Bell* case two decades ago.

Where are we with K-12? Well, what was originally the *Edgewood vs. Kirby* lawsuit is now the *West Orange Cove vs. Texas* lawsuit. And in the *Edgewood* case, the first case was that the funding disparities between property wealthy and property poor districts were on the range of 20 to 1 in most places where the same property rate in a property wealthy district would get you a dollar would only get you a nickel in a property poor school district.

And the Supreme Court in a unanimous decision said this violates our Texas Constitution. Article 1, Section 7 provides that we have an efficient system of funding that provides for general diffusion of knowledge.

The defense made by the Attorney General was, get this, efficiency means cheap. You know, we looked at dictionaries, and we think efficiency means cheap. And, boy, have we got a cheap system. It saves a lot of money for Texas taxpayers.

And the Supreme Court said efficiency does not mean cheap. They looked up a dictionary from the time of the Texas Constitution and they found that in the 1870s, efficiency means it works. Hello, Texas Constitution, read at the time that the framers of the Constitution wrote it, required a system of public education that works. Our Texas system did not work. It was not an efficient system. So under our own Texas Constitution, in a unanimous decision, the court required the Texas legislature to do it again.

Now, why didn't the court just tell the legislature what it wanted? Well, we have a separation of powers. The legislature cannot do the court's business. The court cannot do the legislature's business. All the court can do is tell the legislature when they've crossed the line and become unconstitutional. So they said, "What you have in place is unconstitutional, go do over."

So the legislature attempted again, and they said: "We're going to come up with a system that exempts the 5 percent wealthiest. We'll equalize 95 percent of the school districts and leave 5 percent out, because it would take a lot more money to capture that 5 percent that are the top of the spectrum, so let's just leave them alone and leave them out of the process."

We actually got a majority of the legislature to approve that. It was submitted to the Texas Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court said, "That's unconstitutional because the Constitution requires a general diffusion of knowledge." And we think that means everybody, not 95 percent of Texas, but 100 percent of Texas. So we have a court ruling that says school finance funding applies to all Texas kids, not just 95 percent.

Okay. Legislature, what you did was unconstitutional, do over. They went back, and the legislature kept meeting.

This time they came up with the county equalization districts, the CEDs. Let's equalize within every county so we have 256 equalizations going on as opposed to 1,100. And they passed that, submitted it to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court said, nope, that's unconstitutional.

Well, why is that unconstitutional? There's another section of the Texas Constitution that says property taxes should be under local control. You can have a state sales tax. You can have a state franchise tax. You can't have the state take over the local property taxes. Those belong to the locals. And that's written into our constitution. So it was unconstitutional because it violated that provision. Legislature, do over.

Then we finally came up with the proposal we have right now, which gives local districts the choices of – do you

money, let it get recaptured and let the state decide where the money's going to go, which is what most of the districts do. They let their money be recaptured, that goes to the state, and then the state allocates it to guarantee a yield so that the property poor districts can see that their level of funding is not, at least, a 20 to 1 disparity.

Now, the property poor districts challenged this one, said this can't be constitutional because it still allows a \$600 per child gap to exist. Now, \$600 doesn't sound like a whole lot, but if you've got a class of 30 high school kids, or a school campus, then you're looking at half a million to a million dollars, depending upon the size of the campus. Half a million to a million dollars can buy you more teachers, can buy you more technology, can fix up some of your curriculum. You can do a lot with that.

And the Supreme Court said efficiency does not mean cheap. They looked up a dictionary from the time of the Texas Constitution and they found that in the 1870s, efficiency means it works.

all want to consolidate? Hardly anybody said yes, but they had the choice. Secondly, districts had the choice, do you want to select which district to send property wealth to? If you're a high property wealthy district, you can pick your buddy and say, well, I want my money to stay in my county, so I choose my buddy to be my neighboring district, who is property poor. That's a choice that they have. Surprisingly, very few school districts make that choice. I don't know, but they don't. The third choice offered to a property wealthy district is to buy from the Texas Education Agency some credits that count up to 88, buy some 88 credits.

And the last is just send the

They also challenged it as unconstitutional because there were other ideas on the table that didn't pass. The Supreme Court said we don't legislate. That's for the legislature to do. And while this system has some criticisms (for example, it didn't take care of facilities), it didn't take care of the objection to the \$1.50 tax rate cap on maintenance and operations funds, that some people were concerned could become a ceiling, that people would feel that they couldn't tax beyond \$1.50.

The court said, you know, only about 5 percent of the districts are at \$1.50. If more districts get closer to the \$1.50 cap, come back, but right now it's not a major concern. And at

\$600 per child, it's not as big a concern for us considering it used to be at thousands and tens of thousands of dollars per child differences. That's pretty good for us, so we're going to approve it. You're finally constitutional, legislature, your job is done. And they threw a party. Okay.

Then, however, immediately, people started filing lawsuits saying, "I need to be exempted from equalization." Well, why do you need to be exempted from equalization? "I'm property wealthy and all my kids are exemplary, so I need to be exempted." What does that have to do with equalizing public funds? "I don't know. We just thought it was worth arguing."

The Supreme Court said no, you can't be exempted. Remember when we said 100 percent, we meant 100 percent.

So a new argument came up. Court, do you remember when you said if a law was worth \$1.50 cap, that we were going to lose local control? We're filing a lawsuit on that. Well, a lot meant, like, 10 percent of the districts, and the judge was not impressed. So the judge said, "No, you don't get a day in court, you need more than that."

The Supreme Court ruled in *West Orange Cove* saying: "Actually, we think it's a lot more than 10 percent of the districts. We did say, and we meant it, that if the \$1.50 denied you all local control in making decisions, then you deserve a day in court and you're going to get a day in court." So they sent the case back.

The day in court turned out to be three months in court. Judge Dietz wrote this. It's called the Findings and Fact and Conclusions of Law. It's 125 pages single spaced. It is a rich database. Those of you who are interested in where we are in Texas as far as the pipeline, as far as preparation, as far as access to resources, it's available online at the

But I think we need to strive to where all of our schools are well managed, well run, where all of our children are learning.

quorumreport.com.

The Findings of Fact, how do they pertain to what we're talking about? Well, first of all, the \$1.50 cap was, in fact, denying local districts meaningful discretion. Most persuasively, we heard from former Senator Ratliff, who said that when Governor Bush was governor, 60 percent of the cost of public education was paid for by the Texas legislature. In four years, it had dropped to 38 percent. So the rest has to come from your local property tax, and your tax rate becomes even more critical because you are having to raise the difference between what used to be the state paying 60 percent and now the state is only paying 38 percent.

The court said the Texas system was unconstitutional because it did not have adequate funding to provide for a general diffusion of knowledge and that – he also said general diffusion of knowledge does not mean that you got rated academically acceptable by the Texas Education Agency. It was much more than that. It was enough funds to provide the curriculum that was mandated by the legislature.

The legislature says, high schools, you have to have the recommended high school curriculum. So there needs to be funds for that. And there has to be enough funds for all other compliance requirements. So that includes *No Child Left Behind*. That includes that schools be safe, that the food meet the average nutrition requirements, that facilities measure up to safety requirements, by

all kinds of other agencies.

He said the current system is inefficient, inadequate and unsuitable. And with particular interest for those of you all in West Texas, he struck down the formula systems as being out of date. So what are the formulas we're talking about? The transportation formula. The transportation weights that TEA uses to generate funds for the local districts have not been updated since 1984. Now, do you tell me that paying bus drivers, paying gasoline and buying buses hasn't gone up since 1984? Everything's more expensive. The amount of money that the state funds for transportation has stayed the same since 1984, because we're using the same weight, the same formula.

The formula for small-size districts, we adjust. If you're a small size district, you get more money because you don't have the economies of scale of Dallas or Houston. Well, that has not been adjusted or updated since 1985. And the court said there's no explanation for that.

The sparsity adjustment, if you're in a county where your students are sparsely distributed, there's more expenses involved with that, but that formula has not been adjusted since 1985.

And teacher salaries, which is the single largest item in any school district's budget, and teachers do make a difference, that formula for calculating the cost of education index was based on 1989 data. And the legislature hasn't done anything about that since 1991.

So where are we with the formulas for bilingual education? It was 1984. And the same thing with comp education. These are formulas for low-income students. Disadvantaged students are going to need an additional support, maybe a smaller classroom size. So they get a little bump from the legislature, but how big that bump is was set in 1984.

Gifted and talented, I think, were adjusted in 1991. But what's sad about gifted and talented, for goodness sakes, was that they were capped. Your district is told no more than 5 percent of your kids can be gifted. Hello. Is that artificial? Sure it is. But those formulas need to be updated to reflect today's reality. And the court said that.

Where do we go from here? I'm lucky that I get to travel and visit school districts all across the United States. And I have seen wonderfully well managed schools where the resources are applied in ways that help students learn. Many of those schools are in Texas.

But I think we need to strive to where all of our schools are well managed, well run, where all of our children are learning. And if our children don't learn, then it's because they didn't apply themselves. It shouldn't be because some obstacle was there that interfered with their preparation for college.

I credit the college instructors who do try to do the best they can with the students they get. I mean, we're sending our best students to college. They're the only ones we have. We don't keep sub students hidden somewhere. They're going on to college. And our faculty and administrators are doing the best they can with the students that do make it through the pipeline. But it's hard.

Now I'm telling you personally. I'm now trying to teach students, and it's hard.

**Dr. Juliet V. García,
President, University of Texas
at Brownsville**

I thought I'd spend a moment talking about kind of the ultimate partnership, and that's the one that we're in with Texas Southmost College, the University of Texas at Brownsville. The idea was very, very simple. What we

know is that nationwide, community colleges do a wonderful job of accepting students into the fold of higher education. As a matter of fact, Hispanics and women, minorities of all kind, have as their major entry points to higher education, community colleges.

But, here's the negative part of this story nationwide. At the very best community college, only 17 percent of those students go on to transfer to baccalaureate degree programs. At the very best community college. And we argue lots of reasons that happens: "They didn't really want a baccalaureate degree," or, "They only wanted the associate," or, "They got the certificate. They came and got what they wanted," and many, many other reasons that we argue why that's okay.

We took all what we felt were the negative things out of both models and created a third model, and that was this community university, as we call it.

But finally, what we felt was that it wasn't okay if, in fact, it's a major entry point for Hispanics in our case. I'll limit it to that topic and if they're not, if that's where they're coming in, but they're not transferring to the baccalaureate or to professional school programs, then we really are in a bad situation in our nation.

So, we said, "Well, what can we do about it?" We're one little community college, southernmost tip of Texas. You know, "What policy can we affect?" Well, we decided simply to try our own partnership. That is, what if we took all the very best characteristics of a community college: its open admission, its developmental education and remediation if it's needed, its occupation/technical programs for many of those, and very flexible kind of work-oriented and work-related and training programs, and we put on top of that a university

with a baccalaureate, with the graduate programs and entry into professional schools, and eliminated between the two transfer issues, whether it's for Pell or whether it's simply articulation issues in the curriculum.

What if we eliminated the notion of, "I'm an upper-level faculty member" vs. a freshman faculty member? What if everybody taught everything within their particular subject area? What if we were to eliminate all redundancy of any kind and simply keep the good things of both? So, we decided that universities are sometimes exclusive. We didn't want to be exclusive, and so we had several negative things about universities. So, we took all what we felt were the negative things out of both models and created a third model, and that was this

community university, as we call it. We convinced the UT System that it might be a good idea to experiment a little bit. And then, we convinced the legislature, and then the governor came and signed the bill, and so we began this partnership with the community college.

What in essence happens in terms of the financials is that, we'll report out as a community college for those courses that are still occupational and technical programs, and we get funded via that revenue mechanism at the state level. But, we'll report out as a university for the graduate courses. So, when the auditors look at it, you know, they want to know which one you are. Students don't care where we get our money. Right? They don't care how I pay the faculty member or who pays the utility bills or who pays for the classroom. They don't care if Texas

Southmost College bought the land and the university built the building. They let us work that out.

So, we had a series of seven different interagency agreements for everything from financial resources to assets to personnel, and all of those were worked out in the first two and three years of the partnership, because the concept was good. What we didn't know was how we were going to do it. We decreased administrative expenses in year one alone by 52 percent by eliminating those redundancies. All of that is interesting, but how does that affect finally the students?

The statistics that you heard there are really the effect, that is, students are not only coming in, they're moving through the system and they're getting out of the system, and without reduced quality, as a matter of fact, an increase

The partnership worked because people were really involved, wanted the end result to be beyond any one of us.

in the quality of the product at the end. This year, our teachers who were coming out of the schools of education passed their state boards at 94 percent. We think that might have gone up by one this year. It's a huge increase. When we started this, they were at 70-some percent. So, every year we've been inching up.

Our nurses are passing their state boards at 94 percent. And every student who took the criminal justice program passed at 100 percent, their TECLOSE exam at the state level. So there's nothing that says that even if you come in the developmental education door, you can't end up on the other

side with a baccalaureate degree at a very high quality.

The partnership required the very best of everyone to sit at the table. All of the self-interest arguments had to be left back somewhere. And whenever we got into the territoriality issues, "Does this belong to the community college," or, "Is this the way to register students," or, "What should happen at the university," and, "The way you do things... The way we do things," the moment we got into that discussion, somebody would remind us that we were there for the students. And all of a sudden, all of those other issues had to fall off of the discussion because what we finally said was, "What's easiest for the student?"

I'll give you one example, Pell Grant. Right now, the student starts at a community college. They apply for a Pell Grant, a federal number. And then when they go to a university, they have to reapply now to that process. We said: "Well, that doesn't make any sense. Can't they just have a one-time application and carry that with them all the way through?" We talked to the Department of Education, and they said, "Well, that's a little strange, but we'll give it a try." We got their permission. Once we got their permission, then we talked to the accrediting agency, the State Coordinating Board. And it's funny, once one falls, then all of them kind of say, "Well, yes, that makes sense." And we were able to do that. So, like that one small thing, we were able to deal with all of the issues that we think prohibited or kept students from moving on into the system.

The partnership worked because people were really involved, wanted the end result to be beyond any one of us. If it was just while I was going to be there, it wasn't going to be enough, or while one board member was going to be there or while one VP or one... It

needed to be something that would outlive us, and so we needed to install that.

So, we spent two years talking about the policies for hiring faculty, recruiting faculty, promoting faculty, and all the things that really get difficult when you're talking about community college faculty versus university faculty. We even got the UT Board of Regents to put into their, you know, bible, their Regent's Rules, a classification for an occupational-technical faculty member. And it says, "Only at UT-Brownsville can you find..." ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. Fine. Whatever it took, we were able to do it whether it was at the state level or at the regents level or at the State Coordinating Board level.

In accreditation, we had all kinds of fun issues because we didn't fit a box. So they would send a committee that was a community college committee. They didn't understand. Then the second committee they sent to us was a university committee. They didn't understand. Finally, the third committee that came was a combination of both. They understood the end result, so we are good at partnering. And because we do it every day in a real way with a local partner, we have found it easy then to partner with others.

We partner with the medical school at the University of Texas-Health Science Center, San Antonio, to offer our baccalaureate degree in nursing. We only had the LVN and the associate degree, so we decided to get that medical school. Why them? Because they have the best nursing program in the system. And there's one thing about partnering geographically. There's another more important thing, and that's partnering with strength. I mean, if you're going to partner with someone, you find the best kid on the block, and that's who you pull in as a partner. And that's a great advantage of the UT System.

So, we partnered with the Health Science Center of San Antonio. We said: "For five years, you will teach this program in our campus. Your faculty will do it interactively, however we need to do it. But in five years, we'll build a capacity, then we'll offer the degree." And that's exactly what happened. When we finished that degree, we started teaching the baccalaureate degree in nursing. We said, "Now, let's do the same thing with the masters degree in nursing," and that worked quite well also.

So, partnering between universities is something that I think is going to be the best way to accelerate the kind of growth that our universities need to have. And Dr. [Blandina] Cárdenas and I are already chatting about how to do that now in a regional way that makes an awful lot of sense. So, that's one way.

I would like to give you another example of partnering that has to do with the community because we are a community university. That means more than a community college and university. I mean real community. I mean, I have seven elected board members. Ooh, like a school district. They are elected, and we meet on a monthly basis. And I also report to the Board of Regents at the University of Texas System. It works in a very powerful way because you get local input. It could be negative. It could also be very, very positive. You have local strength for your initiatives. We just passed a bond issue for about \$68 million in November. Priests helped us. Ministers helped us. Valley InterFaith helped us. Bankers helped us. There wasn't a group that we did not ask for help. There wasn't a group too small for us not to go to. And let me give you one example.

I was going through a Whataburger to get a chocolate shake because, in my life, a chocolate shake

We must train the leaders of our region first. If by chance they go off and become wonderful world leaders: "*Que bueno. Que les vaya bien, y que nos vaya muy bien tambien.*" But first, we've got to be connected to the community.

heals everything, and I really needed it at that time. I was going through the Whataburger, getting my chocolate shake, and I saw a former employee, Gilbert Garza. And I said: "Gilbert, we need your help on the bond. You've got to help us." And he said: "No, no, I'm going to give you a call. I'm going to gather up some guys." So, sure enough, a few days later, he calls me up and he says: "Whataburger, breakfast, Friday morning at 8:00 o'clock." Okay. "Which Whataburger?" We got that settled. So, it was 8:15 by the time I got there. Well, Gilbert had gathered up about eight retired guys who talk about politics, that are involved, and they were pretty much against voting for this bond issue.

When I didn't show up at first, they said: "See, I told you she wasn't going to come. *Tu eres...*," you know, and they started, "*Echándole al pobre.*" I showed up and I held court at the Whataburger over breakfast about the bond issue. So, one of the things that we've learned to do is that there is no audience too small when you really need community support. Students, I guess, were the ones who were engaged the most in this bond issue. We went to community forums. Students told their stories.

I mentioned Alex Salinas to you this morning in a story and his story about his mother and father and being migrant workers. Nothing I could have said would have been as powerful as what Alex said that night. And that's when I

sat back at the community forum and I thought, "This is theirs." I mean, we launched the notion. We'll continue to guide it. But now it belongs to every kid that goes to our school that wants this bond issue, or every parish that is having meetings so that we can talk to their parishioners, or to every priest who invited us to go to the podium during their Mass right before announcements and talk about why this was important. So, partnerships provide a tremendous amount of strength, whether it's with a community or whether it's with other institutions.

I think the final one that I'd like to talk about by the way, we're doing one in science that Dr. Cárdenas and I will be talking about in trying to restore the Bahia Grande. The Bahia Grande is an area by the Laguna Madre that needs to be reclaimed. It's dried up. Now it's kind of a dead area. They have sand storms, and it's just really unsightly, and it's a powerful deterrent for economic development. And, you can't see when the sand blows and you drive by there. But, beyond that, there's no life there anymore because the water stopped going there. So, long story, short version, this is the largest reclamation project, if it works, ever in the nation. And we are partnering with shrimpers who have lost their industry in the Laguna Madre area. We're partnering with economic development folks. We're partnering with the Brownsville Navigation District, with schools, private and public. We're planting mangrove trees. We are going

The moral of the story is, there's nothing wrong with the human capital on the border. It's a matter of investing, as someone said earlier, believing that they can because they don't know any difference at five, six and seven years old.

to reclaim the Bahia Grande area. We said we were going to dig ditches if we had to, but the Army Corps of Engineers said that they would do it for us. But the point is, if it's good for the university, it's good for your students, it's also got to be good for the community.

I was at Harvard one summer, and I was going to study. I thought I entered the Mecca. Excuse me. Harvard is the Mecca. And all of us here want to go there and to speak there or want to be part of what's going on there. It's my first year at Harvard, and I was in the room getting dressed, and I was listening to the television, and I thought it was a documentary. And they were talking about racism in the neighborhoods of Boston. And fights between the Whites and the Hispanics and the Asians and the Italians, you know, and it was just horrendous. And I thought, "Well, thank goodness this is over." It was the 6:00 o'clock news.

Well, here I am at the Mecca where you know there's 76 colleges and universities in the Boston-Cambridge area. Their biggest industry is higher education. And they have racism in their public housing. And their rivers, St. Charles River is polluted. And the more I stayed there and the more I started to imagine: "How can you have this wonderful place? How can you have MIT and Harvard and fill-in-the-blank colleges and universities and the community not benefit more? So I went, of course, and I asked a Harvard professor. I said: "I don't understand. I mean, I'm a small town girl from

Brownsville, Texas, and I don't understand why the community doesn't benefit more from having all of this expertise here." And he says, "We at Harvard are training the leaders of the world," and that was the response.

Our universities cannot get away with that kind of response. We must train the leaders of our region first. If by chance they go off and become wonderful world leaders: "*Que bueno. Que les vaya bien, y que nos vaya muy bien tambien.*" But first, we've got to be connected to the community. So, whether it's with a partnership and planting mangroves and trying to reclaim the Bahia Grande, or whether it's in chess.

I have to tell the chess story because it is so powerful. And it's nothing about the university. It's about the schools. We have an infection in the Rio Grande Valley, and it is a wonderful infection, and that is of children playing chess. And it was begun by one elementary school teacher who was teaching at Russell Elementary School in Brownsville many years ago. And they gave him the problem class because he was a guy and you do better I guess with male school teachers. He didn't know why. But at any rate, he couldn't figure out what to do with the problem class. He had taught his son chess, and he decided that he would teach these kids chess.

And so then, he started ragging to the principal about how well these kids were doing in chess. So the principal, unbeknownst to this teacher, set up a contest between the gifted

school chess kids and Russell Elementary, not so gifted, just kids. Well, of course, Russell Elementary won. So they asked this teacher now to teach teachers how to teach chess. And so that's kind of "asi brotó." That's kind of how it got started. Today, there are so many kids playing chess in the Valley that they had to break off this southern region. And we're talking about the border, right, the relevant story to the border really. They had to break off the border as a region. They had to split it up because it was so huge and it was overtaking all of the other chess competition regions in the State of Texas. Even when they broke us off, we are still the biggest region for competitive chess K through 12 in the State of Texas.

Fast forward. Six years later, Morningside Elementary School, having now chess in their school. This is a school that shouldn't be succeeding. All the negative characteristics that you can imagine. Kids don't know English when they go to school. Parents didn't go to college. They didn't go to high school. They're all on free lunch, et cetera, et cetera. Start a chess team there. They do well. They win city championships.

And so someone says: "Well, golly, that's pretty good. Maybe we should take them to regionals." They go. They win the regional championship. "Well, maybe we should take them to Dallas, to the state championships." Well, the kids had never been on a plane. They had to do, you know, car washes to raise money and all of that. The kids go to the state tournament, and they win the Texas state tournament.

They think, "Well, maybe we should take them to nationals." And these kids don't weigh 30 pounds. I mean, they're "*chiquititos, delgaditos,*" you know, they're just little whisks of kids. These are five, six, seven year-olds. Okay. So, now they convince them to raise more money because they're going

to go to nationals.

They went to the national competition. They didn't have the blazers like everybody else did with the emblem of the school. They had green t-shirts, so they became known as "the green shirts." So the green shirts now are competing, and they're competing at the national level with Hunter College Elementary School. Now, some of you may know the reputation of Hunter College Elementary School in the State of New York. It accepts only the top 3 percent of kids in the State of New York. As a matter of fact, people try to get their kids in there when they're born. That kind of situation. They really do because it's an extraordinary school.

Okay. So anyway, so it's Hunter College Elementary School vs. Morningside Elementary School or "the green shirts." The green shirts lose by half a point, by half a point. The chess master for Hunter College comes over to the green shirt team and says, "Who is your chess master?" because he had helped coach Bobby Fisher. So, he says, "Well, one day it's Armando, and another day it's...", which is absolutely true. These were elementary school teachers who were being beaten by their kids after three months. So the teachers weren't teaching kids strategy. They were simply exposing them to computer games or anything that they could try to move them up because they had excelled much further.

Okay. So if that was the end of the story, it would be kind of interesting; right? Well, it continues because today Brownsville is the city of the top five cities in the nation that sends the most kids to the national chess tournament still. We held a chess competition on our campus. Well, of course, we know what recruitment means. We had 1,200 nerds. Beautiful. And not only nerds, I shouldn't say that because I love nerds. But they weren't. There was a kid I

remember, when we had the competition, it took us longer to have the awards ceremony for this chess tournament than it did for us to have commencements because everybody gets a prize. Well, the kids would come up some with a little nerdy kind of outfit that you would expect, "*peinaditos*," with the little t-shirts tucked in. And then there was the kid who kind of walked up with a chain, because he lives in a real community and he has to survive in that community, and he still plays chess. So I mean, "hay de todo."

Well, we now have a chess team, of course, at UT-Brownsville. Why? Because those babies are going through junior high and they're going through high school. And now, of course, they're at the university. Some of them are at the university. We are recruiting them and giving them scholarships and all of that.

We get these UT news releases, and it tells you what's going on at all the other universities. And sometimes UT-Brownsville is not even on there. Unless it's negative news, then they put us on. But I was reading under UT-Dallas because UT-Dallas has the best chess team in the nation. Now, UT-Dallas has a lot of money and they can do what UT-Austin does.

They recruit them to go to UT-Dallas. I'm reading this article about the chess at UT-Dallas because it mentions them. And then it says, "And this year, three girls from the United States are going to the World Chess Tournament." One of them goes to the Hockaday School. You know the Hockaday School. It's a very elite, private school in Dallas. Another one is from Paredes Elementary School in Brownsville, Texas. She went. She came in. Our young lady, whose name is Octavia Torres, went to Greece with her parents. Again, there were fundraisers. And out of the competition, she came in 57th in the world. The young lady from Hockaday

came in 56th. The moral of the story is, there's nothing wrong with the human capital on the border. It's a matter of investing, as someone said earlier, believing that they can because they don't know any difference at five, six and seven years old.

Communities of Interest



Urban

“In the urban forum, we talked about the rising expectations and the rising standards, both in the workplace as well as for college, and we talked about spending challenges. Those were the challenges they looked at.

But what was unique about the urban areas, was that...there were some strong business connections, some linkages with the business communities that were very actively involved in the strengthening and nurturing of the schools. There were demands from the business community for the preparation of Texas leaders who weren't looking solely for entry-level positions and people trained for entry level positions. They seriously wanted in the urban centers to know who is going to run Houston 10 years from now, who is going to run Dallas 20 years from now, they were very, very seriously concerned about the role education played in developing leaders. They were concerned about their city lacking.

None of them wanted to be published in any magazine as one of the least educated cities in the U.S. And we have Texas cities that have made the rankings for least educated populations in the U.S.

They favored Top 10 Percent Plans generally because their high schools were now feeding students to the more challenging universities in the state and they favored pipeline programs where universities reached out to middle schools and to undergraduates and tried to foster increases in grad and professional schools. What they didn't want was to be left behind. They wanted to be part of a successful system.”

– Ms. Norma V. Cantú, Professor of Education and Law, University of Texas School of Law

Rural

“In Texas, especially in rural Texas, there are consequences. There are consequences in terms of access and cost. Students in rural Texas are place bound and in some instances have to drive significant distances to attend community colleges and universities. This is the type of cost in education in terms of personal budget, completion of degrees, future employment and earning opportunities.

Thus, in Texas we need to consider policies that directly impact students and provide increased funding for the Texas Grant Program and for the State Work Study Program. We also need to develop mechanisms to provide college credit for students enrolled in programs with university partnerships that involve the community.

Also in rural Texas we need increased access to technology. We need to establish community accreditation centers with community-based organizations to increase access. We also need to keep the Top 10 Percent Plan to provide access to poor rural schools and provide incentives to universities that include top 10 percenters. We need more universities that have more top 10 percenters. We also need to keep developing the human capital of Texas, because it is the most significant asset we have that will close the gap and impact the economy.”

– Dr. Jaime Chahín, Dean, College of Applied Arts and Technology, Texas State University

“I just want to say that I don’t think any place is as rural as Sul Ross in Texas. It is two and a half hours from here. And there is nothing else. This is the closest big place around. Fort Stockton is actually on the way, and that’s 65 miles from Alpine. And Alpine only has 6,000 people. But Sul Ross is a small school, about 2,000 students. There is no ethnic majority. We have 47 percent Hispanic and 45 percent Anglo. We will shortly have an ethnic majority. We’ll be a Hispanic majority institution in the next year or two.

And just to follow what Dr. Watts said, we do have a beautiful campus. And if you ever want to think, well, why do we want Hispanics to go to our schools and to graduate? I’ll give you one quick reason: Representative Pete Gallego. He was in my class, my intro to psych class, when he was a freshman in college. He went on to graduate and go to UT law school, graduate from there, become our state representative. And these \$50 million worth of improvements which have made our campus the beautiful place it is are all due to Representative Gallego. So there is a self-serving reason to help Hispanic students come to our schools and be successful.”

– Dr. Cockrum, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Sul Ross State University

Border

“The border area still is the poorest area in Texas and one of the fastest growing areas in Texas. It also has the fewest higher education opportunities for any population like this in the entire country. The border itself does not have its own institutions that are focused just on its needs to bring all the benefits of having a high level institution in your area, the graduate opportunities, the work opportunities, the interaction with community opportunities and, of course, the academic ones.

People talked about the need for more cooperation among us, a greater effort to work together on bringing foundation funds in, a greater effort to work more closely with their own public schools. There is a lot of this effort going on. The universities have outreach efforts in the communities and very positive aspirations indeed.

There is also a great deal of understanding of suffering that the communities have because of the lack of Pell grants, federal government cutting back on funding, the state government is cutting back on funding. What funding there is, is increasingly going into loans rather than scholarships, and unfortunately they have not realized yet the tremendous need to focus on need instead of ‘merit.’”

– Mr. Albert Kauffman, Senior Legal and Policy Advocate Associate, The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University

The State of the State and Policy Solutions

The following policy solutions are the result of three InterAction forums in which the Intercultural Development Research Association and partner institutions brought together representatives from PK-12, colleges and universities, communities and businesses from rural, urban, and border regions. The forums provided a new framework for discourse and creating policy solutions that would increase Latino access and success in higher education. Guiding this effort were principles for a new vision and action:

- From access and success for only a *few* to access and success for *all* students.
- From a culture of blaming to a culture of shared accountability for student success.
- From isolated efforts in PK-12, higher education, and communities to interconnected support for Latino student success, prekindergarten through graduate school.

Following is the research (“quick facts”) that informed this effort and the policy solutions that emerged for each of the seven issues that framed the discourse presented on February 2, 2005, in a statewide forum in Austin, Texas.

Preparing Students

Quick Facts

IDRA's research shows that Texas high schools lose one third of their students before graduation.

– *Intercultural Development Research Association, October 2004*

Of the total who survive and graduate with a high school diploma, one of two is White, one of three is Hispanic, and one of six is Black.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Fall 2003*

Of those who graduate from high school, two of five earn a "recommended or above" degree. Only one of three Hispanic students earn that preferred degree, and half are low-income (only one of 20 Whites with this degree are low-income).

– *Intercultural Development Research Association, October 2004*

Policy Solutions

- Establish and fund a statewide system that aligns public school standards with higher education standards, particularly in composition, reading comprehension and mathematics. This would also align an accelerated curriculum across PK-20.
- Establish and fund a "course ladder" system in which all high school students have a requirement of at least two dual credit courses for graduation. This would bridge colleges and universities with high schools.
- Establish and fund academic summer camps for middle school students to prepare them to enroll in high school accelerated curricula that will prepare them for college.
- Require a half credit high school course that supports transitions from high school to college ("planning for college") to be taken by all juniors and seniors.
- Increase access to technology in rural areas to facilitate admissions and access to online financial aid applications.
- Establish and fund a statewide grant

that reinforces college preparation and enrollment in historically under-represented areas around the state.

Comments

"We need to do better with parents. We need to have more connectedness with parents. When we recruit kids, we have to help them get ready for college. And we have to help the parents understand what it takes to get ready for college. So, particularly in a Hispanic community, you're not just recruiting an individual child, you're recruiting a family. And as some of our group discussions pointed out, sometimes a young person will show up and they brought their family with them. Right. So Mom and Dad and the children, little brothers and sisters are sitting outside in the hallway while a faculty member is talking to the student. But what it tells you is that there's a lot of support for the young person at home, but we don't have any places for these kids at school when they get there. And we're not just talking in this case about Hispanics. We're talking about African Americans. Kids that have grown up in those very tight-knit African American families experience the same things."

– Dr. Patricio Jaramillo, Vice President for Student Services, University of Texas of the Permian Basin

“We have to break down the barriers of high-stakes testing. We have to make the university warm and welcoming for all students who desire to go into higher education. We have to have multiple instruments to bring them in and not just TAKS or GREs as a screening process that dumps them out of the system.”

– Dr. Steve Jenkins, Educational Leadership Professor, University of Texas of the Permian Basin

“I am María Gonzales, South Plains tech prep, first generation, college and career coach. My job is to work with high school students and get them prepared for college, their paperwork and take care of registration. And what I’d like to say is that there is a mindset that these students, some of the counselors say, ‘We can’t hold their hands. They’re grown-ups. They’re 12th graders. They need to do it on their own.’

Well, when you think back, not everybody has parents who have gone to college and have that experience. The paperwork needs to be filled out, and so that concept kind of kills everything. The counselors don’t want to help them. And you know what? If it helps them go to college, it’s going to help all of us in the long run. We have to see the big picture.

So as I do that, I don’t care if I have to sit there two hours and go line by line filling out the application, line by line financial aid. I don’t care if I have to hold their hand. I don’t care if I have to hold a baby for a single parent, a mother, while she fills out her application. ‘She shouldn’t be going to college, she has a kid.’ No, she needs to. Then she can get off welfare, support herself and feel good about herself and show her kids they can go to college. That’s one thing I’d like to stress is in the high schools and kind of that mindset that they’re old enough, they can do that themselves. No, they cannot. If I have

to hold their hand, I’ll hold their hand to get them into the college.”

– Ms. María Gonzales, College and Career Coach, South Plains Tech Prep

“We should consider making students stakeholders in their educational outcome... In ninth grade, they develop a strategy plan for education that follows them throughout their entire high school education... If that student should happen to relocate to another high school at some point throughout his or her high school career, that document follows them. It’s a document that can actually bring the families into the discussion also.”

– Dr. Tacho Mindiola, Director, Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Houston

College Access

Quick Facts

Of those who graduate from high school, only one of five enrolls in a Texas public university the following fall. Close to one of four enrolls in a two-year college, but more than half will not enroll at all.

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003

Hispanic student enrollment increased from 23 percent in the fall of 2000 to 25 percent in the fall of 2003 but still falls short of meeting its 2005 target.

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003

Policy Solutions

- De-emphasize weight given to standardized test scores in admission policies and merit-based scholarship programs. Use multiple criteria for admissions that are more dependent on academic courses, extra-curricular activities, recommendation letters and individual interviews when required.
- Tie higher education accountability with enrollment targets or critical indicators (such as percentage of minority or poor students) using an audit management team for monitoring progress.
- Eliminate duplicative assessment in high school and college (TAKS exit level, SAT/ACT and THEA), in the Texas tradition of not spending money on redundancy.
- Use a formula adjustment in college and university allocation that expands technology in rural areas.
- Increase the allotment for access to instruction via technology.
- Keep the Top 10 Percent Plan to ensure isolated and rural students have access to colleges and universities.
- Establish financial incentives for institutions to recruit, retain and graduate students from college and

graduate schools.

Comments

“My mother came to this country from El Salvador when she was only 17 years old, accompanied only by her sister. They had to cross three borders, Guatemala, Mexico and the United States of America. My father came from Monterrey, Nuevo Leon, Mexico when he was about the same age. I have always thought of the struggles that they had to endure. And although they claim to have told me their past, I have always had the feeling that they sugar-coated it so that I don’t know how much they had to suffer for the first 17 years of their life. This fact of their lives has stuck within me as a sense of strength – strength because whenever I thought school was getting too hard, I just thought of everything they had to endure, and this made my struggles seem a lot less through the years. I have always promised them that I would help make their future a better one no matter what.”

– Ms. Ruth López, Assistant Director, University Outreach Center, Houston

“I see that in the fall of 2000, 77 percent of the Latino students that were enrolled in UT as freshmen were as a result of the 10 Percent Plan. I see that 73 percent of the African American

students that were enrolled at UT as freshmen this past fall came as a result of the 10 Percent Plan. When I begin to look at the persistence rate, when I begin to look at the GPAs, consistently that top 10 percent cohort is outperforming the non 10 percenters, even though we are beginning to see that the non-top 10 percent will have a higher average SAT and ACT score, and that is understandable. Because when you don't select those persons in the top 10 percent, you can be more selective in terms of the requirements of those who are not in the top 10 percent, and in many institutions that group is going to have or will begin to have the higher average SAT and ACT score. There is going to be a serious debate concerning this issue. When you look at your mission and the purpose of you being here today, it is very consistent. Your purpose is to make certain that you advocate the continuation and not the abolishment of the 10 Percent Plan."

– Texas Senator Royce West, Dallas

"We have some enormous challenges and you know what they are. As one of the goals of the coordinating board's initiative of closing the gaps, our goal is to increase the enrollment of students going to college in Texas by 500,000 in 10 years. Now, that number was determined because that is the figure that would put us at parity with other states, in terms of the percentage of students or the percentage of the population that is enrolled in college. It is not going to get us ahead. It is not going to give us a competitive advantage. It is only going to put us to parity.

We are way far behind. For example, the national average of high school students who go to college within a year after graduation is 67 percent. In Texas it is 45 percent. We've got to do something about that. Obviously, given the demographic projections that all of

you know about, in order to achieve this goal, the bulk of these 500,000-plus students are going to have to be Latino. The only way we can achieve the goals of closing the gaps is to work to a completely different scale than we have worked up to this point."

– Dr. Raymund Paredes, Commissioner of Higher Education, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

"Speaking from the issue of access, the challenge of information, knowledge of opportunities that exist is imperative; but the other one, the other potential missing component here is a whole issue of the corporate support and corporate incentives. I think that this legislative policy thrust cannot be undertaken unless we have also the corporate side as a partner in this endeavor to be able to support educational opportunities and access for students. I think we're going to need corporate support and corporate partnerships, both with universities and school districts. It's almost like a vertical team that we need that includes the community, the public schools, the community colleges, the university and corporate support. And I think that vertical team perhaps is the most viable intervention that we'll need statewide because I think it's education for all and it is also not only an ethnic issue; but it's a economic class issue and that is very, very clear here in the State of Texas."

– Dr. Jaime Chahin, Dean, College of Applied Arts and Technology, Texas State University

Institutional Persistence

Quick Facts

Once enrolled, students have the best chance of returning for a second year if they are full-time students. This is a more important factor than the type of diploma earned in high school.

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003

Full-time college status is difficult given that one of four high school students is economically disadvantaged. It is especially difficult for Latino students given that one of two are low-income (compared to less than one of 10 White students).

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2003

Policy Solutions

- Develop an “education tracking system,” a seamless state database stratified by regions and counties to follow students from high school through college. The database would build on the current THECB accountability system.
- Establish and fund “college transition community centers” to ease the transition from high school to college and link PK-20 schools with the community and businesses. Using a “learning communities model,” these community-based student and parent outreach and recruitment centers would provide information beginning in middle schools concerning admissions, financial aid, concurrent enrollment, scholarships and employment opportunities in partnership with high schools, colleges, universities and libraries. They would also serve as “bridge” academies for first generation college students.
- Encourage and fund partnerships with business communities that guarantee internships and employment opportunities for students in emerging employment areas.

Comments

“Truly the success of my children, the success of your children and the future of Texas rest on educational access and success for everyone. We at IDRA firmly believe that when it comes to expanding institutional persistence to building bridges and to investing in higher education, the solutions do not come from a single massive program or decree but from our interactions around the state, from Abilene to Zapata, from kindergarten to graduation, from the boardroom and classroom to the capitol, from the family and community.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

“We were concerned about gatekeeping. How do we make it easier for students to move in and out of institutions? How do we avoid limited access to key major areas that our students are interested in? We are very supportive of making sure that we maintain the 10 percent goal within that area. It is very, very important, within accountability, that we have timely, consistent and appropriate reporting, and by that we were concerned that our leaders keep going to Austin and reporting about how great they’re doing. They improved 20 percent, and they’re talking 2 percent and 5 percent. We

really need to have accountability, goals need to be set; and then the key individual needs to come in and identify what it is they're doing or not doing. But we have to get away from game playing. We're not making progress. We haven't made progress in the last 40 years. Somebody needs to be held accountable for that, and we can't keep blaming the students."

– Dr. Ed Apodaca, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management, University of Houston

Affordability

Quick Facts

Texas earns a “D” in affordability in the state report card. Low-and middle-income students have to bear 40 percent of their family’s income for a public four-year college and 30 percent of the annual family income for a community college.

– National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004

The steepest increases in public college tuition have been imposed during times of greatest economic hardship.

– National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002

Over the past 10 years, tuition at Texas public two-year institutions increased 29 percent and tuition at Texas public four-year institutions increased 63 percent while the median family income in Texas increased only 8 percent.

– National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002

Policy Solutions

- Make student funding need-based as well as merit-based.
- Increase money for the Texas Work Study program.
- Designate monies specifically for critical shortage areas, such as engineering, science and mathematics in order to increase the number of professionals in those areas (parallel to the National Defense Student Loan).
- Offer free tuition for the first two years of college.

Comments

“We must invest in education for the good of all Texas. Education is not a private good for the few, but a public good for all.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

“There needs to be better continuity in our financial aid packages, that in Texas, at least, every session of the Legislature produces new forms of financial aid and it’s confusing to students and that greater continuity would be of benefit. We also talked about the special benefit of work

study programs not just as a means of financial aid but as a way of connecting students with the institution and getting them more engaged in the life of the university.”

– Dr. David Bradley, Assistant Vice President for Administration, University of Houston

“That the Pell Grant 30 years ago had more strength, more buying power than it does today. That this \$100 increments that we’ve seen in Pell Grant year after year after year has done absolutely nothing to help students. That there is a tidal wave of new people going toward the Pell Grant, and there is little money actually being added to the Pell Grant pot. And so, in fact, it’s going to dilute the amount of money that is available to students, and that the Pell Grant was one of the most significant reasons that people got to college and made it through college, and that financial aid is one of the most compelling reasons that students stayed in college or never make it to college at all.

– Dr. Juliet V. García, President, University of Texas at Brownsville

Institutional Resources

Quick Facts

Texas has not met its target in total research and development dollars. However, the University of Texas system has the largest endowment in the state with over \$8 billion and is the top fundraiser.

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004

Policy Solutions

- Establish a weighted allocation for institutional needs and characteristics, including growth, unique rural and border needs.
- Provide additional institutional resources for first-year students that include targeted funding for smaller class sizes, appropriate course work and more advisors.

Comments

“How is it that at a time that state leaders think they can find emergency funding for Texas prisons whenever we need it, but we cannot seem to locate the funding for Texas public and higher education?”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

“It is unlike Texas to create a system that imposes artificial barriers, barriers that prevent our students from maximizing their talents and gifts. Given the workforce needs of our state, it is not only unfair but impractical to prevent a student from going to college because she can’t afford the SAT fee or because he or she can’t afford financial aid or can’t get into the right network.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

Graduation

Quick Facts

More than half of Texas college students (52 percent) take six years to graduate. Texas has the greatest number of NCAA Division 1 institutions in the nation and the greatest number of its institutions in the bottom 10 percent of graduation rates.

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004

Thirteen out of 19 public universities in Texas graduate less than half of their students; six graduate less than a third.

– Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004

Policy Solutions

- Create state college and university graduation rate goals and report annual progress.
- Create loan forgiveness programs for graduates who return to work in the local community.
- Give greater weight to graduation rates (fourth, fifth and sixth year) in the college and university accountability system.

Comments

“All of this is about quality of life. That’s the reason we have education, so people will have a better quality of life. In the United States, we are losing jobs every year, not anymore to Mexico because Mexico pays too high wages. We’re now losing jobs to other third world countries like China. Mexico is losing thousands and thousands of jobs every year to other countries because their wages are too high. We can get it done, these menial jobs, in other countries. We have got to do whatever’s necessary to incorporate business and high technology in our educational system, because that’s where the future jobs are going to be. And what you’re doing is you’re educating the future workforce. And if we’re not educating them for higher technical skills, then we’re just going down the wrong path in the deal. That’s where America is going. The jobs that are going to be left in America are high-tech jobs. And we’ve got to prepare the work force for those jobs because the menial jobs are no longer going to be in the United States.”

– Mr. Mike George, President, Odessa Chamber of Commerce

Graduate and Professional Studies

Quick Facts

The number of doctoral degrees decreased by 0.25 percent from 2,621 in 2000 to 2,577 in 2003.

– *Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, July 2004*

If all ethnic groups had the same educational attainment and earnings as Whites, total personal income in the state would be about \$31.4 billion higher, and the state would realize an estimated \$11 billion in additional tax revenues.

– *National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2004*

Policy Solutions

- Develop targets for increasing the number and percentage of minority faculty in higher education.
- Create graduate school transition academies with guaranteed funding for students going to medical and law schools. Create articulation academies between undergraduate and graduate schools and two-year and four-year institutions of higher education (example of reverse transfer).
- Expand Top 10 Percent Plan to include graduate and professional studies.
- Earmark monies that are designated for graduate and professional school recruitment, including increasing developmental funds for faculty, programs and fellowships for graduate students.
- Expand loan forgiveness programs to graduate and postgraduate work.
- Establish “Closing the Gaps” goals for graduate and professional programs.
- Increase state funding to support the expansion of the number of the state’s Tier I research institutions.

Comments

“It is unlike Texans to have a system that keeps hardworking students who happen to come from low-income families or low-wealth districts from reaching the highest level of achievement that their own hard work earns them. We all know that investing in public education is not giving a free ride. It is merely giving all students a fair shot.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Executive Director, Intercultural Development Research Association

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Acknowledgments

Host Institutions	Host Partners	Forum/Seminar Working Group
University of Houston–Downtown University of Texas of the Permian Basin The University of Texas–Pan American	Center for Houston’s Future Ector County Independent School District Howard College LULAC State Education Committee Mexican American Network of Odessa Midland Chamber of Commerce Midland College Midland Independent School District Odessa Chamber of Commerce Odessa College Project GRAD Houston Sul Ross State University Tarrant County College Texas Latino Education Coalition Texas Tech University The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences Western Texas College	Linda Battles, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Hector Bojorquez, Intercultural Development Research Association Mary Lou Cano, The University of Texas–Pan American Blanca Coronado, The University of Texas–Pan American Leticia Gonzalez-Reinke, University of Texas of the Permian Basin Christie L. Goodman, Intercultural Development Research Association Jocellyn Gutierrez, Intercultural Development Research Association Janet Heitmiller, University of Houston–Downtown Sharon Jahsman, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Lloyd Matzner, University of Houston–Downtown Ivonne Montalbano, University of Houston–Downtown Celina Moreno, Intercultural Development Research Association Yvette Padilla, The University of Texas–Pan American Dina Tamez, The University of Texas–Pan American Julie Vazquez, University of Houston–Downtown

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Planning Committee Members

Dr. Baltazar Acevedo, Jr.
Executive Director
Cross Border Institute for Regional
Development
The University of Texas at Brownsville
and Texas Southmost College

Dr. Felipe Alanis
Associate Dean
University of Texas at Austin Distance
Education Center

Ms. Norma V. Cantú
Professor of Education and Law
The University of Texas School of Law

Dr. Blandina “Bambi” Cárdenas
President
The University of Texas – Pan
American

Dr. Jaime Chahín
Dean
College of Applied Arts and
Technology
Texas State University

Dr. Richard Diem
Vice Provost
Office of K-16 Initiatives
University of Texas at San Antonio

Dr. Rinaldo Z. Juarez
President
Texas A&M University at Kingsville

Mr. Albert Kauffman
Senior Legal and Policy Advocate
Associate
The Civil Rights Project
Harvard University

Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel
Executive Director
Intercultural Development Research
Association

Dr. David Montejano
Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies
University of California, Berkeley

Mr. Gerald Torres
Professor in Real Property Law
The University of Texas School of Law

InterAction Participants

Baltazar Acevedo, Jr.

Executive Director, Cross Border
Institute for Regional
Development

The University of Texas at
Brownsville and Texas Southmost
College

Brownsville, Texas

Virginia Aguilar

Executive Administrator for Special
Programs and Support

Spring Branch ISD

Houston, Texas

Felipe Alanis, *InterAction*

Facilitator

Associate Dean

University of Texas at Austin

Distance Education Center

Austin, Texas

Ramon Alaniz

Associate Dean

Texas A&M International University

Laredo, Texas

Lisa Alcorta-Darganta

Director of Federal Programs

Victoria College

Victoria, Texas

Chris Alvarado

College for Texans Campaign

Texas Higher Education

Coordinating Board

Austin, Texas

Sally J. Andrade

Andrade & Associates

El Paso, Texas

Ed Apodaca, *InterAction*

Facilitator

Associate Vice President of

Enrollment Management

University of Houston

Houston, Texas

Amy Averett

Austin Voices for Education

Austin, Texas

Victor Azios

Senior Associate/Team Leader

Making Connections-San Antonio

San Antonio, Texas

Chris Birchak

Dean, University College

University of Houston—Downtown

Houston, Texas

Mary Black

Director, National Center for

Educational Accountability

The University of Texas at Austin

Austin, Texas

David Bradley, *InterAction*

Facilitator

Assistant Vice President for

Administration

University of Houston—Downtown

Houston, Texas

Gene Buinger

Superintendent

Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD

Bedford, Texas

Norma Cantú, *InterAction*

Facilitator

Professor of Education and Law

The University of Texas School of

Law

Austin, Texas

Rafael Caraveo

Vice President of Education and

Workforce Development

El Paso Chamber of Commerce

El Paso, Texas

Blandina Cárdenas

President

The University of Texas—Pan

American

Edinburg, Texas

Ralph Carlson

Professor

The University of Texas—Pan

American

Edinburg, Texas

Ashley Cash

Manager of Education Programs

Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce

Fort Worth, Texas

Shana Castillo

Assistant Director
New Student & Visitor Services
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Max Castillo, *InterAction Host*
President

University of Houston–Downtown
Houston, Texas

Jaime Chahín, *InterAction*
Facilitator

Dean of Applied Arts and
Technology
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

Ramon Chapa

Vice President
West San Antonio Chamber of
Commerce
San Antonio, Texas

Yolanda Chapa

Superintendent
McAllen Independent School
District
McAllen, Texas

Alfred Chaparro

Director of Community Services
Midland College
Midland, Texas

Linda Christofilis

Chief of Staff
Temporary Acting State
Representative Melissa Noriega,
District 145
Austin, Texas

Floyd L. Crider

West Texas Organizing Strategy
San Angelo, Texas

David Cockrum

Vice President of Academic Affairs
Sul Ross State University
Alpine, Texas

Charles Cole

Assistant Superintendent
Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD
Carrollton, Texas

Mario Contreras

CEO/President
CGM Consultants
Odessa, Texas

Natalie W. Correa

Program Director
Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board
College for Texans Campaign
Austin, Texas

Florinda Correa

Dean of Student Services
Victoria College
Victoria, Texas

Nabor Cortez

Superintendent
South San Antonio ISD
San Antonio, Texas

Robin Davidson

Director, Learners Community
University of Houston–Downtown
Houston, Texas

Victor Davila

Director of University Community
Services
Professional and Youth
Development
Texas A&M University–Corpus
Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

Luz Solis Day

Field Office Director
U. S. Department of Housing and
Urban Development
San Antonio, Texas

Jaime De la Isla

Assistant Superintendent
Houston ISD
Houston, Texas

Oralia de los Reyes

Research Analyst
The University of Texas at
Brownsville and Texas Southmost
College
Brownsville, Texas

Magdalena H. de la Teja

Campus Dean of Student Services
Austin Community College

Sonia Del Angel

Director, Educational Talent Search
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Richard Diem

Vice Provost for K-16 Initiatives
The University of Texas at San
Antonio
San Antonio, Texas

Vicky Estrera
Director, Scholars Academy
University of Houston—Downtown
Houston, Texas

David Fairbanks, *InterAction*
Facilitator
Associate Vice President for Policy
and Planning
University of Houston—Downtown
Houston, Texas

Bill Fannin
Vice President of Academic Affairs
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Tina Fields
Assistant Director
The University of Texas Health
Science Center at San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas

Luis Figueroa
Legislative Staff Attorney
Mexican American Legal Defense
and Educational Fund
San Antonio, Texas

Rebecca Flores
State Director
United Farm Workers, AFL-CIO
San Antonio, Texas

Javier Flores
Administrative Dean of Student
Services
Howard College
Big Spring, Texas

Chris Forrest
Vice President for Business Affairs
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Andres García
Associate Director, Upward Bound
University of Texas—Pan American
College
Edinburg, Texas

Juan García
Member
LULAC State Education
Committee
Spring, Texas

Juliet García
President
The University of Texas at
Brownsville and Texas Southmost
College
Brownsville, Texas

Rosina García
Chair, Public Relations
Texas Association for Bilingual
Education
Houston, Texas

Viola M. García
School Board Member
Aldine ISD
Houston, Texas

Leticia Garza-Falcon
Professor
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

Mike George
President
Odessa Chamber of Commerce
Odessa, Texas

Thomas Goka
Assistant Dean for Outreach and
Minority Affairs
University of Texas Graduate
School of Biomedical Sciences
Houston, Texas

Leo Gomez
Associate Dean
College of Education
The University of Texas—Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Vickie Gomez
Assistant Vice President for
Enrollment Management
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

María Gonzáles
College and Career Coach
South Plains Tech Prep
Lubbock, Texas

Elian Gonzalez
Director
University Outreach
McAllen, Texas

Elma Gonzalez
Assistant to the Dean for
Recruitment and Operations
Prairie View A&M University
Prairie View, Texas

Mary R. Gonzalez
Education Program Chair
South Texas College
McAllen, Texas

Leticia Gonzalez-Reinke
Special Assistant to the President
and Continuing Education
Director
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Jimmy Goodson
President
Victoria College
Victoria, Texas

George Grainger
Grant Officer
Houston Endowment, Inc.
Houston, Texas

Richard A. Gregory
Assistant Professor of Educational
Leadership
School of Education
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Alma Guerrero
Assistant Superintendent
Ector County ISD
Odessa, Texas

Janice Guerrero
Executive Director for Office of
Planning and Community
Relations
Austin ISD
Austin, Texas

Marilyn Hagerty
Director, College Assistance
Migrant Program
The University of Texas—Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Homer Hayes
President
College of the Mainland
Community College District
Texas City, Texas

Hermelinda Hesbrook
Coordinator for Gifted and
Talented/UILL
Mission Consolidated Independent
School District
Mission, Texas

Ann Hilbig
Vice President of Program Services
Neighborhood Centers Inc.
Houston, Texas

David G. Hinojosa
Staff Attorney
Mexican American Legal Defense
and Educational Fund
San Antonio, Texas

Carl Hoffmeyer
Educational Leadership Professor
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Manuel Isquierdo
Area 8 Superintendent
Dallas ISD
Dallas, Texas

Mona Izquierdo
Program Specialist
Communities In Schools, Texas
Education Agency
Austin, Texas

Reverend Christian Janson
Project Coordinator
St. Mary's University
San Antonio, Texas

Patricio Jaramillo
Vice President for Student Services
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Steve Jenkins
Educational Leadership Professor
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Jeannette Jones
Director of College and Resource
Development
Northwest Vista College
San Antonio, Texas

David Joost
Director, Community and Adult
Education
Houston Community College
System
Houston, Texas

Bianca Juarez
Regional Colonia Coordinator
STARR County
Rio Grande City, Texas

Albert Kauffman, *InterAction*
Facilitator
The Civil Rights Project, Harvard
University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Leonard Kent
Superintendent
Fort Stockton ISD
Fort Stockton, Texas

Kenneth Kim

Legislative Assistant
State Representative Dora Olivo,
District 27
Austin, Texas

Branden Kuzmick

Director, Ketelsen Institute
University of Houston—Downtown
Houston, Texas

Wayne Langehennig

Instructor of Spanish
South Plains College
Lubbock, Texas

Susan Lara

Title V Director
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Sylvia Leal

Senior Educational Specialist
GEAR UP Project
Education Service Center, Region
One
Edinburg, Texas

Filomena Leo

Superintendent
La Joya Independent School
District
La Joya, Texas

Mari Riojas Lester

Austin, Texas

Becky Lewellen

Manager of Education Programs
Greater Dallas Chamber of
Commerce
Dallas, Texas

Patricia Loera

Program Officer, Education
The Bill & Melinda Gates
Foundation
Seattle, Washington

Ruth López

Assistant Director
University Outreach Center -
Houston
Houston, Texas

Ricardo López-Guerra

Chief of Staff
State Representative Veronica
Gonzales, District 41
Austin, Texas

Petra Lopez-Vaquera

Go Center Specialist, Valley
Outreach Center
The University of Texas of the Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Manuel Lujan

Associate Vice President of
Enrollment Management
Texas A&M University - Corpus
Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

Michael Madrid

Vice President
CGM Consultants
Odessa, Texas

Arturo Madrid

Professor, Modern Languages and
Literatures
Trinity University
San Antonio, Texas

Margie Mancillas

Director, Resource Development
and Research
The University of Texas at
Brownsville and Texas Southmost
College
Brownsville, Texas

Diana Martinez

Dean, College of Science and
Technology
Texas A&M University-Corpus
Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

Rene V. Martinez

Special Assistant to the
Superintendent
Dallas ISD
Dallas, Texas

Dennis McMillan

Associate Vice President
The University of Texas—Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Hilda Medrano

Dean, College of Education
The University of Texas—Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

**Tatcho Mindiola, *InterAction*
*Facilitator***

Director, Center for Mexican
American Studies
University of Houston
Houston, Texas

Gaspar Mir, III

Executive Advisor to the
Superintendent
Houston ISD
Houston, Texas

Tomas Molina
Executive Director
Mexican American School Board
Members Association
San Diego, Texas

Andrez Montez
Director
Department of Resource
Development
Houston Community College
System
Houston, Texas

Marco Montoya
Project Director, Central/South
Texas ENLACE Partnership
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

Marco Montoya
ENLACE Project Director
Central/South Texas ENLACE
Partnership
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

Joe Muñoz
Assistant to the President
Angelo State University
San Angelo, Texas

Juan Sanchez Muñoz
Special Assistant to the President
for Diversity
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas

Robert Muñoz
Board Chairman
Odessa Chamber of Commerce
Odessa, Texas

Wanda Nelson
Assistant Vice President &
Executive Director
University Outreach- Executive
Office
Austin, Texas

Robert E. Nicks
Superintendent
Midland ISD
Midland, Texas

Javier E. Olguín
Texas Association of Chicanos in
Higher Education
Austin, Texas

Paula Oliver
Counselor, Upward Bound
University of Texas–Pan American
College
Edinburg, Texas

Richard Padilla
Vice President for Student Affairs
The University of Texas at El Paso
El Paso, Texas

Raymund Paredes
Commissioner of Higher Education
Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board

Martin Peña
Deputy Director for Administrative
and School Support
Education Service Center, Region
One
Edinburg, Texas

Manuel J. Piña, Jr.
Assistant Vice Chancellor for
Special Programs
Texas A&M University System
College Station, Texas

Sofia Piña
Director, High School Equivalency
Program
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Daria Lisa Prieto
Associate Director, Valley Outreach
Center
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Jessica Pugil
Senior Vice President
Center for Houston's Future
Houston, Texas

Gracie Quionez
Multicultural Services Coordinator
South Plains College
Levelland, Texas

William Rafsetto
Vice President of Student Services
San Jacinto College District
Pasadena, Texas

Janie Ramírez
Raiders Rojos National Alumni
Lubbock, Texas

Juan A. Ramírez
TASP Coordinator
Texas A&M University - Kingsville
Kingsville, Texas

Gilberto Ramón
Executive Director
San Antonio Education Partnership
San Antonio, Texas

Andrea Rangel
Dean of Admissions and Records
South Plains College
Levelland, Texas

Yolanda Rios Rangel
Site Coordinator
Making Connections-San Antonio
San Antonio, Texas

Carol Rausch
Assistant to President
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Shirley Reed
President
South Texas College
McAllen, Texas

Felipe O. Reyes
Career and Technology Education
Specialist
Education Service Center, Region
One
Edinburg, Texas

Pedro Reyes
Associate Vice-Chancellor for
Academic Affairs
The University of Texas System
Austin, Texas

María Alejandra Rincon
Immigrant Students College
Coordinator
Austin ISD
Austin, Texas

Geoff Rips
Director for University Relations
Austin ISD
Austin, Texas

Criss Rocha
Organizer
United Farm Workers
Edinburg, Texas

Rebecca A. Robles-Piña
Assistant Professor of Counseling
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, Texas

Charles A. Roeckle
Deputy to the President
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Katherine Rybka
Grant Writer
Neighborhood Centers Inc.
Houston, Texas

Abelardo Saavedra
Superintendent
Houston ISD
Houston, Texas

Mary Saenz
Program Coordinator
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Dr. Dora Salazar
Assistant Professor and Director,
Alternative Certification Program
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Myra Salcedo
Public Information Officer
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Cynthia Saldivar
Advisor
GEAR UP
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Felipe Salinas
Director
College Access and Support
Program
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Terrie Salinas
Counselor, Educational Talent
Search
The University of Texas–Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

Chance Sampson
Legislative Staff
State Senator Royce West, District
23
Austin, Texas

Rene Sánchez
CRI Supervisor
Austin ISD
Austin, Texas

Deborah Santiago
Consultant
Foundation on Hispanic Serving
Institutions
Edinburg, Texas

Sheryl Santos
Dean and Professor, College of
Education
Texas Tech University
Lubbock, Texas

Larry Savala
Communities In Schools-Houston
Houston, Texas

Robert Segura
Central High School At-Risk
Coordinator
San Angelo ISD
San Angelo, Texas

Gene Sheets
Superintendent
Muleshoe ISD
Muleshoe, Texas

Adelina Silva
Director, Student and Community
Program Development
Alamo Community College District
San Antonio, Texas

Enrique Solís
Professor
Texas A&M University-Corpus
Christi
Corpus Christi, Texas

Mark Sorensen
Director, Workforce Training and
Continuing Education
The University of Texas-Brownsville
at Texas Southmost College
Brownsville, Texas

Peggy Southall
Director
College for Texans Campaign
Texas Higher Education
Coordinating Board
Austin, Texas

Cheryl Sparks
President
Howard College
Big Spring, Texas

Ann Stiles
Senior Director of Academic
Programs
Project GRAD Houston
Houston, Texas

Dennis Stratton
Executive Director
Communities in Schools, Inc.
Midland, Texas

Lily Tercero
Director of Planning and
Institutional Effectiveness
Tarrant County College District
Fort Worth, Texas

Sylvia Torres
Migrant Counselor
Galena Park ISD
Houston, Texas

Denise Trauth
President
Texas State University
San Marcos, Texas

James R. Vasquez
Executive Director
Education Service Center, Region
19
El Paso, Texas

Patrick Vásquez
Director, Center for Outreach and
Community Involvement
University of North Texas
Denton, Texas

Cecilia Villagran
Child Care Services Developer
South Texas College
McAllen, Texas

Karen Watt
State Director, AVID
The University of Texas—Pan
American
Edinburg, Texas

David Watts
President
The University of Texas of the
Permian Basin
Odessa, Texas

Royce West
State Senator
District 23
Austin, Texas

Rick Williamson
Project Manager
EDS-Project Management Delivery
San Antonio, Texas

James R. Yates
Professor, College of Education
The University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas

Liz Zenteno
Associate Director
Midland College
Midland, Texas

Charles Zucker
Executive Director
Texas Faculty Association
Austin, Texas

The InterAction Initiative of IDRA

Principal Convenor: Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel

Project Director: Dr. Albert Cortez

Research/Product Development: Ms. Josie Danini Cortez

Lead Facilitators: Dr. Bradley Scott, and Mr. Aurelio M. Montemayor

Group Facilitators: Dr. Abelardo Villarreal, Dr. Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ms. Frances M. Guzmán, Ms. Anna Alicia Romero, and Dr. Linda Cantú



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INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

5835 CALLAGHAN ROAD, SUITE 350
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228-1190
210-444-1710 FAX 210-444-1714
contact@idra.org www.idra.org