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IDRA José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows Program

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IDRA's 2022 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows to Study K-12 and College Spending Patterns and Priorities During COVID-19

Dr. Vanessa Sansone, Dr. David Martínez Named as Fellows

San Antonio, March 24, 2022 – IDRA has named University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) assistant professor Dr. Vanessa A. Sansone and University of South Carolina assistant professor Dr. David G. Martínez as 2022 **José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows**.

The fellows program honors the memory of IDRA founder Dr. José Angel Cárdenas. Since its founding in 1973, IDRA has been at the forefront of legislative and litigation efforts to achieve school funding equity. The goal of the fellowship is to engage the nation's most promising researchers in investigating school finance solutions that secure equity and excellence for all public school students.

"Dr. Cárdenas' life was dedicated to his vision that every child deserves an excellent education, which requires strong instructional programs and school finance equity," said Celina Moreno, IDRA President & CEO. "We are so pleased that Drs. Sansone and Martínez will advance research that informs IDRA's work and honors the legacy of our founder."

Dr. Sansone is an assistant professor of higher education in UTSA's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Her research interests focus on understanding college affordability, Hispanic-serving

institutions (HSIs), and power structures and governance on the trajectories, experiences and opportunities of historically underserved students. She holds a doctorate in educational leadership with an emphasis in higher education from UTSA.



As a fellow, Dr. Sansone will conduct a comparative case study analysis of CARES Act spending patterns among selected HSIs within Texas. Centering decision-making in uncertain times within a resource dependency framing, she will synthesize the educational policy funding context in which selected public HSIs were operating pre-pandemic to understand how they spent federal emergency relief aid during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study will inform understandings about future state and federal financial investments for HSIs, HSI revenue and expenditure trends, and federal relief aid spending among HSIs.



Dr. Martínez is a tenure track assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies at the College of Education of the University of South Carolina. He is a critical school finance policy scholar connecting policy knowledge and praxis through multi-method inquiry. Dr. Martínez seeks to understand how school finance policy impacts funding availability and spending in low-income, ethnically and linguistically diverse, minoritized communities. Dr. Martínez holds a doctorate in educational policy and evaluation, economics of education and school finance from Arizona State University.

During the fellowship, Dr. Martínez will analyze South Carolina school finance priorities in high proportion Latino districts during COVID-19. Using a multi-method design incorporating longitudinal district-level funding analysis to guide in-depth interviews with a broad, statewide and stratified sample of educational leaders in South Carolina, his research will seek to understand if high-proportion Latino districts have the necessary resources to provide a salient program of instruction to their Latino students during the unprecedented and ongoing health crisis.

The fellows will dedicate themselves to a period of intense study and writing in school finance, culminating in a symposium that includes release of the fellows' research. The paper and findings will be published at a symposium and disseminated to the education research and policymaker community throughout the country.

Previous José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellows

Dr. Cristóbal Rodríguez was the 2019 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow for the third round of the program. His study, [Texas is Not Financing College Readiness –](#)

Wealth and Inequities Highlighted by the Civil Rights Data Collection, is one of the first to link school funding to college readiness. He examined the relationship between school funding and access to calculus among Texas school districts. His study was presented at a virtual panel in October 2021. The recorded symposium video, report and infographic, Math & College Readiness, are available online.



Dr. Marialena Rivera was the 2016 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow for the second round of the program. Her study, **What about the Schools? - Factors Contributing to Expanded State Investment in School Facilities**, was presented at IDRA's research symposium at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) conference in April 2017. Through case studies of five states, Dr. Rivera examined factors contributing to expanded state investment in equitable public school facilities and how those factors can be leveraged to encourage states that make minimal investments to expand support for facilities funding. Massachusetts, New Jersey, Ohio, Texas and Wyoming were the subjects of the case studies.



Dr. Oscar Jimenez-Castellanos was the 2014 José A. Cárdenas School Finance Fellow for the inaugural year of the program. The first symposium brought together more than 80 education and community leaders, and experts in law and education research around the critical question of how we can improve education quality and access for secondary English learner students. More information and videos of the event are online. See **Low Funding for Educating ELLs Affects Students Across Texas**.



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