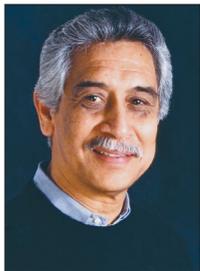


FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dr. Tatcho Mindiola

Mr. Bob Perry, founder and CEO of Perry Homes, passed away in April of this year at the age of 80. Mr. Perry was a significant supporter of CMAS and a friend. Thus I wish to pay homage to his role in helping students earn a college degree, and I want to honor his friendship.

I met Mr. Perry in 1987. Raymond Palacios, a University of Houston graduate, was working as an accountant for Perry Homes, and I asked him if he would approach Mr. Perry about support for CMAS. Raymond later called and invited me to lunch with him and Mr. Perry. The meal was served in a small office adjacent to Mr. Perry's larger office. It was the beginning of a 25 year relationship. During that first meeting, I explained our mission and answered Mr. Perry's questions about the source of our funding. He agreed to help, and his only request was that his support go to students who had financial need. After that initial meeting, Mr. Perry and I would often meet. Sometimes we had lunch at the Four Seasons Hotel, but more often than not, we met in his office. During the Christmas season, I would take the students to his office to meet him. On one such

occasion a student from Colombia gave him a tiny cardboard house that her grandfather had made. Mr. Perry told her that it was a special gift and that he would place it in the glass cabinet in his office. Every time I had the privilege of visiting his office, it was still there.

Mr. Perry had a sincere affection for our community. He said that our strength was our family orientation and that society would be better if everyone had the same degree of commitment to the family. Mr. Perry traveled to Mexico quite frequently, and he would tease me about his visiting Mexico more than I did, which was true. Once he took me to a closet where he had stored some things that he brought from Mexico, and he gave me a handmade clay pot that now sits in my office at home. One of his proud possessions was a hand carved mahogany statue of Emiliano Zapata. He kept up with events in Mexico by subscribing to an English language newspaper that was published in Mexico City, and at times he would mail me his copies. Mr. Perry was also a strong supporter of immigration from Mexico. He understood that the economies of Mexico and the U.S. are integrated and that immigration was part of the integration. He believed that laws should make it easier for people from Mexico to come to the U.S. to work and become citizens,

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**Gregory D. Compean:
Self-made Businessman and Community Hero**

Don't expect to spend time talking to Mr. Gregory D. Compean and not come away inspired. In fact, you will leave your meeting with him energized and ready to deal with whatever life has in store for you. What's more, you'll come away equipped with valuable life lessons from one of Houston's true success stories.

Mr. Gregory D. Compean came to Houston in 1996 as a licensed funeral director with a growing clientele. Having garnered praise from his many associates and supervisors in another city, he was convinced that Houston held tremendous business opportunities for him in his industry. Time has proved him correct from the time he opened Compean Funeral Home on Broadway Boulevard, as one of Houston's few independently-owned businesses within the industry, to now.

Passion for what one does with one's life is



Gregory D. Compean

an anchor for Compean in his own career and life, and in the advice he gladly passes on to younger people. It is just this same passion that can enable any person to place doing a job well and with excellence above all other priorities.

An integral part of Compean's passion for his job is his deep-seated desire to help other people. It is Compean's incredible reserves of tact and compassion which fuel his commitment to a job that

requires a 24/7 presence, and, most importantly, an impeccable bond of trust between him and his clients.

In addition, Compean is eager to talk about what life has showed him – both in his own career and in the careers of others – in the form of four precepts for living a successful and rewarding life. These four precepts are: follow your dream; read the indicators for your life; choose a career that you are passionate about; make sure you

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) at the University of Houston was established in 1972 as an interdisciplinary academic program encompassing the liberal arts, education, and social sciences focusing on the Mexican American and broader Latino experience in the U.S. Its mission is to advance knowledge, promote critical thinking, and foster the value of service to the community. This involves designing a broad spectrum of public and scholarly programs. Located within the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, CMAS has evolved into an academic unit with several major components: teaching, research and publications, recruitment and retention, leadership training, academic advising, and community service.

Homero Benavides: Goal Setting

Being part of the 2012 Harvard Latino Leadership Initiative (LLI) was a very humbling and rewarding experience for me. Forty-one students from different areas of Texas, California, Massachusetts and the recently added New York state participated in this year's cohort. All of the students came from a humble background but were also recognized to have a promising future.

Prior to participation in the program, all of the students received a call from the LLI Program Manager, Mr. Dario Collado, and he asked the same question to everyone, "Are you ready to change the world?" This question took me by surprise, but this is the kind of impact that the LLI tries to make. I have always had the passion to change and improve my community, but I did not know how to accomplish such improvement. This is where the LLI comes in. This program gives us the tools to become leaders and to make a positive impact in our local communities. We participated in a week-long program full of valuable workshops and seminars with topics ranging from public speaking to story sharing, negotiation, coaching as a leadership style, goal setting and leadership development plans and several more.

One of the most important topics to me was goal setting, which was discussed in a presentation given by Mrs. Casey Otis-Cote, associate director for the Gleitsman Program in Social Change and Special Initiatives at the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard. The way to accomplish anything is to set a goal. It may sound simple to many, but it can be a difficult task. More often we tend to claim a goal rather than properly setting it. When making goals, the following principles must be kept in mind: Clarity, Challenge, Commitment, Feedback and Task Complexity.

Ms. Otis-Cote explained these concepts as follows. Clarity – the goal must be clear and reasonable. Challenge – The goal must present a challenge, because overcoming challenges can bring improvement in many ways. Commitment – Maintaining a commitment to goals is vital, because once we start a goal we must complete it. We cannot slack off or get side-tracked, because our attainment of our goals will be delayed. Feedback – finding a way to receive feedback is important, because that is the only way that we can tell if we have been on the right track. We must set up milestones and make sure we reach them, and receiving feedback from a mentor, a colleague or a friend will only motivate us to do better. It's important to not be discouraged by negative feedback. Task complexity – More difficult goals require different strategies and approaches. As individuals, we have to prepare ourselves and/or our team to handle the situation. Remaining persistent with the aforementioned



Homero Benavides

principles of goal setting will help us accomplish our goals in a very effective way.

We all have goals that we would like to achieve in terms of school, career, physical fitness or other areas in life. Even though the desire to achieve the goal is present sometimes, much progress cannot be made without proper planning. Keeping the goal setting principles in mind, we were also introduced to two types of goals that will help us make our goals better organized and obtainable. The two types of goals are HARD (Heartfelt, Animated, Required and Difficult) and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely) goals. Both types of goals are helpful in the path to success, but they take a different approach.

Let's take a look at each component of a goal, beginning with HARD. Heartfelt – Find passion and motivation. Let's ask ourselves: "Why does this goal matter to me?" Animated – Picture what achieving the goal will look like. Required – What do I need to do now? Create a sense of urgency and do not procrastinate. Difficult – Go past your personal comfort zone and create a challenge.

Now, let's take a look at the components of a SMART goal. Specific – Think about the who, what, where, when, why and how of your goal. Measurable – How will the goal be measured? For example, how much money will be raised? How many people are we going to target? Attainable – Make a list of steps that are needed to be taken to get to the goal. Realistic – Make sure the goal is attainable. Timely – Set deadlines and keep an organized schedule. One last thing to think about when coming up with goals will be anticipating pitfalls and brainstorming on how to prevent them or overcome them. Projects may not always come out perfect, but being prepared reduces the margin for errors.

Every school group that participated in the LLI was required to organize their own community service project as they returned to their respective communities. Using the HARD and SMART goals, the UH cohort compiled a leadership development plan and their community service project. We planned an outreach program, known as Latino Leadership Enrichment and Development (LLEAD), with Stephen F. Austin High School and targeted a freshman class of 23 students. Our focus was to provide them with the tools to engage in leadership positions and to promote their community involvement. We met with the students once a week for an hour and hosted a series of workshops and interactive activities with similar topics to those of the LLI program. In the end, we had a successful program, because most of the students gained the confidence to speak in front of others, and they are motivated to become leaders and to give back to the community. 



Jose Becerra: Coaching as a Leadership Practice

In the 2012 Latino Leadership Initiative at Harvard, Professor Marshall Ganz presented his idea of an ideal, effective leader that functions as a coach. Professor Ganz was eager to share these methodologies which are the same he used to organize many groups active during the César Chávez era, some of which continue to this day.

In Ganz' definition, a leader is one who strives to exceed all of his/her own expectations while also seeking new challenges.

Also crucial to Ganz' idea is his definition of a coach as someone who is able to improve themselves along with those around them. A coach has the ability to help the others on a team achieve and excel. Such a person should be confident enough to understand that enabling their teammates to grow does not mean that someone will replace the coach. Helping individuals overcome any barriers, physical or mental, is another facet of what a coach does.

An effective coach is able to put themselves in the shoes of another person and listen with heart and mind to that person's hardships, and then be able to give advice. An effective coach should not be prepared with answers before they even get a chance to hear an individual's concerns. A coach has to sacrifice their own time in order to help their trainee overcome adversity, never criticizing the trainee for his weaknesses. A true coach takes a personal responsibility to help an individual overcome a difficulty.

Another trait of an effective coach is that they should ensure that their team has learned from their experiences and use what they have learned in other aspects of life. They should also be willing to challenge the team to push themselves even harder to higher aspirations and not be complacent with previous accomplishments. This can occur when the trainee is given false praise for his strengths alone and is never pushed to concentrate on his weaknesses.

Finally, a coach should be willing to ask questions that will help the trainee, which will ascertain feelings about the way things are flowing, and how they feel about their role on the team. This practice is different than ordering the trainee to achieve goals.

In summary, a coach has three basic practices: motivation, strategy and the teaching of skills. They coordinate all aspects of these practices with the team in order to accomplish a goal. They motivate their team to want to accomplish the goal. The strategic portion of coaching is aimed at mental enhancement of the team players, e.g. getting together with the team to coordinate a plan and letting everyone know their crucial roles in



Jose Becerra

it. The last practice is the training of skills. To accomplish this, the coach meets with an individual and helps them by doing the task with them, or shadowing them.

For effective coaching, the coach must determine which practice is needed the most and at what time. For example, if an individual is struggling with a strategy, then motivation probably would not be the best practice because it might frustrate the individual more. Instead, it would be better to do some skills-based, hands-on coaching.

There are five steps in the coaching process: observing, then diagnosing and intervening, additional observing, debriefing and, finally, monitoring.

While observing, the coach has to examine why goals are not being achieved. Are goals not being met because of motivation? Is enough effort being expended? Is someone fearful of failure and thinks he or she will be embarrassed? Or, is someone overwhelmed and quitting too soon because of frustration?

A coach must be able to analyze whether the goals are achievable or if the team is not thinking "outside the box." Does the team have the necessary resources to meet their goals? If they do, do they know how to use them, or do they need clarification on the situation?

Is the problem skill-based? Does the team or the individual need practice or reinforcement to get the task done?

In the next phase, a coach has to diagnose which form of coaching is required and how much of it is required. Then comes the implementation and figuring out what form of intervention is needed and to what degree.

For the third step, the coach has to step back and observe how things are going. They should be able to determine how they can harvest individual leadership skills to accomplish the task. When doing this, the coach should refrain from doing the task for the person and encourage the trainee to do it for themselves or to work alongside a trainer. Then the coach will take notes for the next step.

In the debriefing phase, the coach asks the team or individuals what he or she feels about the experience. Some questions might be to ask what a person felt challenged by, what are some ways they would do things differently in the future or what they seek to accomplish next.

And, finally the monitoring stage. This is where the coach schedules visits to see that everything is going according to plan, how the team and individual have grown and what they have accomplished. The results of this phase will enable a coach to gauge their success as a coach. ❏



Julia Fernandez Del Valle: The Art of Negotiation

Going into the Latino Leadership Initiative at Harvard, I didn't expect my week to be so full of great experiences and learning opportunities. Although, ever since the day I had completed my application, I had looked forward to the negotiation workshop since I believed knowing how to negotiate well makes you a better leader. My expectations were met in a surprising way, since the workshop was different from what I had imagined.

Normally, when I think of a workshop, I imagine a lecture describing various methods, perhaps followed by an activity that reinforces what has been discussed. This workshop, however, was different. Dr. Andy Zelleke, a professor at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, started off by telling us there is no specific formula when it comes to negotiation. He explained that even though there are several books on the market that may help, negotiation is not a science which can be taught, but rather an art that must be experienced.

This idea was not new to us, since the night before the workshop we had completed a reading assignment which demonstrated the complexities surrounding the art of negotiation. The assignment discussed seven questions that negotiators and analysts must ask when preparing themselves for a bargaining process. The first one related to the "Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement" (BATNA), which captures the notion that at some point in a negotiation one must choose between agreeing to the deal or pursuing other alternatives. BATNAs are commonly linked to zones of possible agreement where the negotiating parties find a range which benefits both sides of the deal. Once this concept was clarified, the article explained answers to the remaining six questions, all of which showed how negotiation is not as straightforward as some people may make it seem.

Upon reading the article, I realized how challenging the negotiation process can be. This perception was then enhanced by Dr. Zelleke's speech, reminding us about our roles as leaders and how it is important to keep in mind your responsibilities, not only to your employers, but to yourself and to society as a whole during a bargaining process. The day after the first workshop on negotiation, the group was divided into seven six-member teams so that we could participate in a negotiation process. Each team member was then given an envelope containing the problem to be resolved as well as the individual goals to be met. My team's problem related to the construction of a factory in a small community near the beach. One person was given the role of the company, while others represented unions, the federal and local governments or competing companies. I was assigned the



Julia Fernandez Del Valle

role of the "Environmental League," whose job was to ensure the well-being of the environment in the area.

After individually analyzing our goals and the zones of possible agreement, my team met and attempted to reach an agreement. As we performed the exercise, we came to understand what Dr. Zelleke had mentioned earlier. We all realized that negotiation had much more to do with character than with anything else. We learned about the power of teamwork when members formed alliances to fight the company for better benefits. We also discovered that without compromises, no arrangement could be made. Finally, we experienced the struggles and rewards that can

result from being a leader, when everyone in the team ended with a satisfactory outcome after much deliberation.

When the six teams were re-grouped, we discovered that most teams had come to similar conclusions. One team, however, had definite winners since one of the team members – the one representing the company and who had the most control over the situation – gave in to his team's demands. The results from that team were utilized as an example in showing that even though the goal during a bargaining process is to reach an agreement that benefits everyone, some parties often have to compromise more than others. This taught us that effective negotiation requires us to know our goals and options, and to bear in mind that we cannot successfully predict the outcome since we can never be fully aware of what other parties have set as their goals. It also taught us that negotiation requires character and focus in order to attain the best results.

Out of all the workshops presented during the one-week program, negotiation was the one that taught me the most about myself as a leader. It helped me better understand what my strengths and what my weaknesses are as a leader. Now that I am back in Houston, I have been able to focus on fortifying my strengths and on improving my weaknesses based on my experiences at Harvard. The skills and knowledge I acquired from the activity presented above have been important tools that I have utilized many times as a team coordinator for the Latino Leadership Enrichment and Development (LLEAD) program – a program my cohort and I founded – as well as a social director for the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AIChE). Being able to communicate and negotiate with my teammates and with companies has been crucial in my role as a leader. I only hope that I will continue to learn and grow as a leader to bring about positive change in the world and to inspire others to do the same. 



Alvaro Montaña: The Magic of Public Speaking

If you look up the definition of public speaking in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, you'll find the following: "1: the act or process of making speeches in public; 2: the art of effective oral communication with an audience." I like the second definition better because it seems that anyone can just talk in public. I believe that it takes a true professional to master the second definition through hard work.

When I first started school at Shadow Oaks Elementary School, I never would get embarrassed. I would just speak my mind without any worries. That started changing as I got older, and next thing I knew I was watching everything I said. I developed into the type of guy that I am today – a shy, nervous, tense guy who just takes notes in class and never has the courage to speak out loud unless asked to do so. To this day, I continue to have trouble speaking up in public settings. The reason I'm disclosing this information about me to you is so that you can get a better understanding of me to give you a better perspective. That way, you'll be able to see how I changed in one week.

If there's anything that's helped me develop a better public speaking skill set, it would be my participation with the Latino Leadership Initiative. At first, I thought the trip to Cambridge, Massachusetts was going to be the vacation I never had. I had no idea the Latino Leadership Initiative (LLI) was going to instill a message so deep into my heart, brain and soul, a message so deep that it changed how I live and think.

What was this message? This very important message that I took away was to be a leader in your own community. Now, what does that mean exactly? Someone that made that mandate clearer to me was Mr. Dario Collado, program manager for the LLI. Mr. Collado, more than anything, was passionate about his basic and overriding message, no matter what the ostensible subject matter was. This also goes for a lot of people who were part of the LLI that were passionate about what they said: Dr. David Gergen, Professor of Public Service and Director of the Center for Leadership, Dr. Marshall Ganz, a lecturer in Public Policy, Ms. Allison Shapira, an expert in public speaking and founder and president of Allison M. Shapira Consulting, and Dr. Andy Zelleke, a lecturer at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. These people and others who were a part of the LLI taught us valuable skills, however, all of them had one thing in common. They were all so passionate about the message they delivered, it was almost as if they weren't giving a speech at all, but just simply talking informally, as if they were at a restaurant, bar or any other public setting with us.



Alvaro Montaña

In a sense, the entire week at Harvard was about public speaking, or the effective conveying of a topic. Thus, we were challenged to leave our comfort zone from the get-go. It was a difficult transition to say the least, especially for me, since public speaking isn't my strongest suit. Nevertheless, it all began to come together bit by bit. All of us students, who have been part of the Latino Leadership Initiative, were selected to be part of the LLI because we are already leaders. I learned that we can all be leaders, no matter who you are or what job you have. It's important for people to not forget where they come from and be role models for others who need guidance.

When I left the state of Massachusetts, I knew I needed to make role modeling a part of my life. After the one-week program was over, my fellow UH cohort members (Homero Benavides, Jose Becerra and Julia Fernandez Del Valle) and I decided to create our own Latino Leadership Initiative program at a local high school (Austin High School) where we would mentor freshman students bi-weekly. We would talk to them about what it takes to be a leader and what they can expect in the years leading to college.

Now, to set the scene, we had to talk to a pretty big classroom, there were probably about 15-20 students. This is where all the public speaking skills that I picked up in Harvard came in to help me. It was easy for me to get situated in the classroom because I knew I was going to talk about something that I was passionate about, and I also knew that I was going to help out students who need leadership, direction and guidance. One of the reasons why I was passionate about our program was because I remember being in their shoes and not having anyone to talk to and ask questions. I had to find out everything by myself. At first, I was a little scared and hesitant, but then I remembered why we were there. Then I got the confidence that I needed, and next thing I knew, I was talking like there wouldn't be any tomorrow.

In my opinion, the key to public speaking is finding something that you are passionate about. That was the most important thing that I took away from the LLI. Since I truly want to set an example for other Hispanic students in my community, that's something very important to me. I want to make a difference, and in order for me to stand out, I have to be effective in my public speaking. Thanks to the Latino Leadership Initiative, I've been able to better develop my public speaking skills. Plus, even though I didn't do a perfect job at Austin High School in speaking to the freshman students, I know it came from the heart, and in the end, that's what counts. ✘



Michelle Cardenas: Finding My Way

I am a proud member of the Academic Achievers Program (AAP), sponsored by the Center for Mexican American Studies. I would like to start this story of my current success in college by telling you about my parents' childhood experiences and their upbringing. To them belongs the credit for my motivation in school. My mother was the oldest of 14 siblings, and she grew up providing for her family at a very young age. Providing for her family remained her priority as she grew up, and thus, continuing her education was no longer an option. This decision has limited her job opportunities and career choices to this day. Unlike my mother, my father graduated from high school and soon after moved into the city in search of a job so he could pay for college. Although he desired to further his studies, difficulties arose, and he too had to choose to work rather than remain in school. My parents still work long hours at their current jobs in order to provide the necessities in life for our family. My parents have always regretted not being able to obtain a degree, but they have taught my sister and I about the importance of an education and the doors it can open in life. Knowing what I know about my parents' life lessons and experiences, I have aspired for a successful career in order to give myself and my parents a better life. Although the motivation has been there, I encountered new challenges throughout my college experience that made it difficult to achieve my dreams.

During my sophomore year in college, I finally chose my major of Accounting at the C.T. Bauer College of Business. I was so happy to be a part of a college since I had been undecided for a whole year. I was more than ready to start working on my degree plan and learn about the business world. I quickly learned that networking was an important part of my future career and could help me reach my goals. Many advisors and teachers recommended that I join a student organization in order to network and to establish myself in a leadership role. During the 2013 spring semester, I was elected as an officer in the Accounting Society, a student organization full of remarkable and motivated people. This was a great accomplishment, since I was heading towards the right direction in my career path. However, that semester had to be the most difficult and challenging semester of all.



Michelle Cardenas

I was having a lot of trouble balancing my friends, family, studies and duties as an officer of my organization. The position I had acquired was very demanding, and I started to feel overwhelmed. I knew I needed help as soon as possible before my grades started to suffer. So I ran for help to the most supportive and kind person I could think of, and that person was the manager of the Academic Achievers Program, Ms. Rebeca Treviño. She understood my financial troubles at home and provided a kind and loving support system to the students in the AAP. Although at first I had trouble opening up to her about my problems, she soon became a great help to me. Ms. Rebeca introduced me to

Ms. Myrna Garcia, a gifted biology and time management tutor. Ms. Garcia taught me techniques to help combat my time management challenges. She observed that I was very detail-oriented and organized, so she used these characteristics to come up with a personalized solution to my stress. We formulated a weekly schedule, separating the hours of each day, then filling in every space with what needed to be completed every hour. That experience taught me how to be a better leader in my student organization and how to be a better student. Even the Accounting Society uses some of the time management skills that Ms. Garcia has taught me. Many people in my organization were also having trouble balancing their duties as officer and their school work, so I shared some "time management" skills with the whole team during an office meeting. As the Information System Office, I was in charge of informing all the members of the Accounting Society about our upcoming social and networking events. This became a problem when the officers on my team were avoiding their obligations to send me information about the events they were organizing. Ms. Garcia encouraged me to stand up for myself and give deadlines to the other officers. With the help of this amazing tutor, I introduced structure back into my organization which benefited all of us.

The Academic Achievers Program brings a variety of students together, allowing us to learn, motivate and support each other. AAP's active leaders and scholarship opportunities have helped me maintain my focus on my goals and come closer to my dream of providing my family with a better life. 



Taher Tayabali: My CMAS Family

In the fall of 2009, I transferred to UH in pursuit of my B.Sc. in Chemical Engineering. The tuition was high because I was an international student, and it was a mammoth challenge for my parents to support me financially. We had even discussed the possibility of going back to my home country, Kenya, and starting my education over again. However, I was determined to succeed and hopeful that I would see the light at the end of the financial tunnel.

As soon as we kicked off the first week of the semester, I began applying at many locations at the university campus for a part-time job. By the end of the first month, I had probably applied for every job that had been posted on the university's career website to no avail. My friends told me that it was extremely difficult to find a job at UH, but I was not going to throw in the towel. Every day after class, I would go to different departments and ask if they were hiring. Unfortunately, this was eating up chunks of my study time because of the size of our campus. My first set of exams was around the corner, and I had to focus on my classes. Just when I was about to quit, I received a telephone call from Ms. Maria Gonzales. I had met her previously at Lone Star College, and we became good friends working as tutors. She told me that she had found a job for me at the Center for Mexican American Studies (CMAS) and had arranged a meeting with her manager, Ms. Rebeca. I couldn't believe my luck. This was the best news I had received in a very long time.

When I first met Ms. Rebeca, I immediately felt at home. I knew she was a very nice person and would be a great manager. What I had not imagined was that she would be like a mother to me during my time at UH. There was a feeling of home at CMAS. The people were extremely friendly and, despite being a small organization at the biggest university in the city of Houston, they were close-knit. Back then I had no idea I was going to have some of my best UH experiences at CMAS.

CMAS was also a blessing in disguise for my entire family. In addition to getting paid for my work as a chemistry tutor, they offered me an in-state tuition waiver. This waiver cut down my expenses by half. This was a massive help financially to me and my family. Suddenly, the task at hand seemed not as daunting as earlier. During my junior year, CMAS was kind enough to accept me into the Academic Achiever's Program (AAP). Through this program, I got a scholarship every semester which



Taher Tayabali

further helped reduce the financial burden of obtaining my education. I had not in my wildest dreams envisaged the impact AAP would have on my success as a student at UH. I felt obliged to reciprocate the warmth and affection I had received by helping the rest of the students and the CMAS family at large.

Outside academics, AAP encourages students to participate in various extracurricular activities. Every year the students go to Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas, where they participate in various team building activities, hiking and soccer, to mention but a few. I was lucky enough to go to Camp Allen once. It was a mind-blowing experience for me. I was having one of my difficult semesters in Chemical

Engineering, and the AAP retreat was exactly what I needed to rejuvenate myself for the next half of the semester. Thus, I was able to participate and see the advantages in my own life of the AAP goal that strives to ensure that their students maintain a good school-life balance.

Today I am a proud graduate from the University of Houston with a degree in Chemical Engineering. I currently work in the Oil and Gas industry as a field engineer with MI-SWACO, Schlumberger.

I am deeply humbled by the hospitality which was showered upon me by the people at CMAS. I am not of Hispanic origin, but not once did I feel unwelcome at CMAS. I always felt part of this amazing family and will forever cherish the moments I spent there. From the financial assistance to guidance and counseling and tutoring, the Academic Achiever's Program is an all-in-one package. College students originate from diverse backgrounds. Not everyone has it all rosy. Therefore, a student may need a home away from home to facilitate the pursuit of academic goals while in college. AAP is that home. They provide all the necessary resources for a student to be successful while in college. Therefore, I encourage each and every student who is part of AAP to make the most of this amazing program. It is truly an honor to have been part of the unique tradition of the Academic Achiever's Program, and I wish the entire "CMAS FAMILIA" the very best in their endeavors.

To sign off, I would like to express my gratitude to CMAS for their commitment to success and excellence in education. As we say back home in Kenya, "Asante Sana" (Thank you very much). ☒



Joel German: My Success Story

In the fall of 2004, I entered Austin High School as a freshman with no high expectations other than to finish high school and then start working. The idea of pursuing a higher education was not part of my mindset. After adjusting to the high school environment, I noticed that many students didn't value education. They refused to listen to the teacher's lectures, and sometimes they didn't even attend class. It was disappointing to see these types of behavior, but I was determined to not let it influence me or keep me from earning my high school diploma.

I knew that I had to concentrate and stay focused on school and, for that reason, during my freshman year, I decided to join Upward Bound, an academic program sponsored by UH Downtown that offered tutoring and mentoring after-school.

My attitude towards education began to change during my sophomore year, even though, as I mentioned, I did not have aspirations to attend college. One day my cousin, Jesus Vigil, told me about a program called Students Aspiring to a Better Education (SABE) that was sponsored by CMAS at UH. He mentioned that it helped students to prepare for college by offering tutoring, mentoring, skills workshops, SAT preparation, visits to the university and scholarships. He recommended that I apply. After listening to all the amazing benefits that SABE offered, I didn't hesitate to fill out the application. Very quickly I received a response from Ms. Maria Cobio, the program coordinator, who arranged an interview for me. Two days later I was notified that I had been accepted to the program. With hindsight, I see that day as a blessing. I still remember how exciting it was to meet with the mentors and the other students in the program who all had the same goal – attending the University of Houston.

In addition to the daily tutoring and mentoring, and workshops each summer, we participated in the classes held at UH. It was an amazing experience. The lectures were given by UH professors, and as high school students, we acquired a much better feeling about what to expect from college. These lectures were a challenge, but, at the same time, really beneficial because the professors gave us valuable feedback. We also toured the campus and visited the different colleges where we received helpful information in order to gain a better understanding of the different majors that were offered.



Joel German

My senior year in high school was my most active, because our mentors were encouraging all SABE members to apply for college admission, for scholarships and for other forms of financial aid. Each week there were different scholarship applications available for those members that wanted to apply, and I applied for several. The mentors were available to offer guidance and to keep us motivated. They showed us, for example, how to write an essay for a particular scholarship. It was stressful but, at the end, the hours that I invested in the SABE program were worth it.

In fall 2007, I became a freshman at the University of Houston. The transition from high school to the university wasn't difficult thanks to Ms. Cobio and Ms. Rebeca, the Manager of the Academic Achievers Program (AAP). They gave us valuable guidance. However, adjusting to the new environment became a new challenge because classes were larger than in high school. Thankfully, the adjustment did not take long, and after a short while I felt comfortable in my new environment. Truly, being a part of AAP made my college experience enjoyable and less stressful.

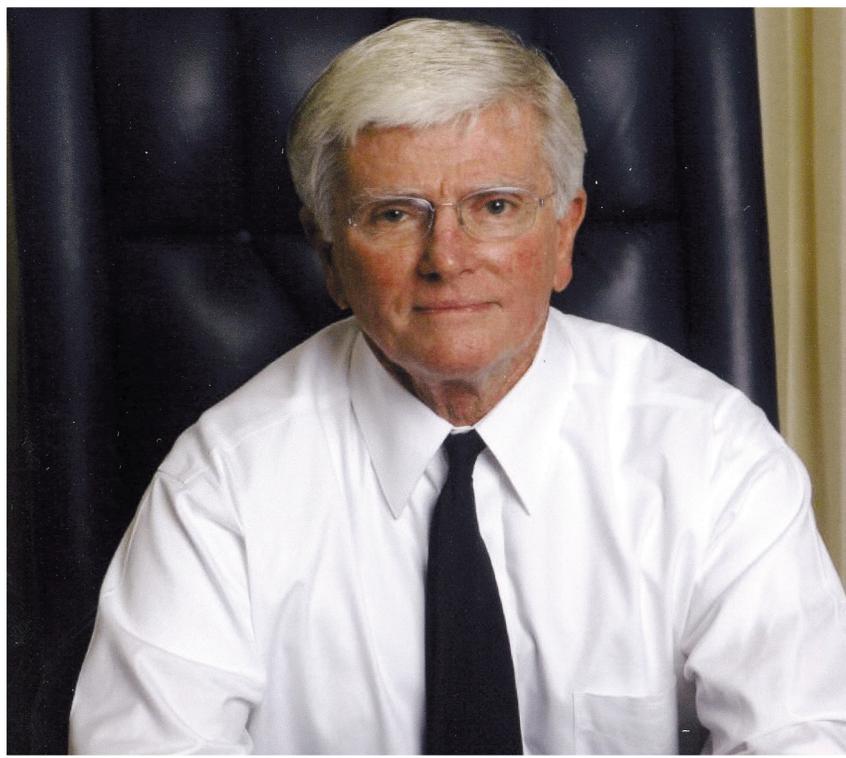
In the spring of 2013, I graduated from the College of Technology with a Bachelor of Science in Construction Management Technology. All the academic services and the essential tools that SABE and the AAP program provided have been the key to my success. The constant tutoring and mentoring were indispensable. The summer sessions, leadership retreats, academic workshops and job site visits allowed me to network and build professional connections with experts in my field. AAP not only provided me with much needed financial assistance, but it has also been responsible for providing guidance so that I could make effective academic decisions during my college life.

I cannot find the words to express my deep gratitude to AAP for its extraordinary support in opening the doors of opportunity not only for me but also for many other students that have the desire to succeed in life. I hope that the amazing academic support from CMAS continues to impact more students lives just as they affected my life. I give thanks to God for putting AAP in my path and for giving me all these great resources that helped first recognize and then fulfill my goal of completing a college education. ❏



“Mr. Perry was a great man who made a difference in a lot of students’ lives, including myself. I am doing well in life and would not have earned my degree in Engineering without his support.”

ANTHONY GARZA, ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS PROGRAM, ALUM, `12



From the Director *continued from page 1*

and he praised their work ethic. During one meeting, he told me that he had just returned from a trip to the border where he had visited an orphanage in Valle Hermoso, a small village outside of Matamoros in the state of Tamaulipas. I later learned that he was the orphanage's sole supporter. I was not surprised.

Mr. Perry was a Republican and a conservative. I am a Democrat and a liberal. He mentioned that people expressed surprise when they discovered that we were friends. I replied that some of my colleagues were likewise surprised. Perhaps he said because we were seen as an "odd couple." We chuckled at the thought. He also supported many of our elected officials, mostly Democrats, in part, because he felt that we lagged in political development, and like many others, he wondered why we did not vote in greater numbers. When CMAS conducted exit polls during the elections, we would meet afterwards and go over the results. Although we had different political orientations, we both agreed that there were many issues that were neither liberal nor conservative but rather a societal concern whose resolution benefitted everyone. More college educated Latinos was one of those issues, and he made it possible for more than 250 of our students to earn a college degree.

During the last few years we did not have one to one meetings as often. He nevertheless continued to meet with the students by coming to the University every summer to have lunch with those who were graduating. They consisted of U.S. citizens and immigrants, some of which were undocumented. These sessions usually lasted two hours. Indeed we were in the midst of planning another lunch when he passed. We would begin with the students going around the table and giving their names, majors and something about their background. Mr. Perry would ask questions, usually about their families. Sometimes he would tell a student that he had visited the town or state in Mexico where he or she was born. Inevitably, the students would ask him about his background and how he got started in his business, and it was through these sessions that we learned about him. Afterwards we would take pictures, two of which are featured here. During one lunch he talked about his dad, and the next time we met, he gave me a copy of a book about his family history.

Mr. Perry was reticent and respectful, a self-made man, a pioneer in his field and generous with his resources and time. He is an important part of the Center's history. May he rest in peace. 

Gregory D. Compean *continued from page 1*

have a strategic plan. Compean has a practical approach to how a person might approach these four steps. One of the most interesting is his guidance in the advice "to read the indicators for your life." He says: "Just as the analysts on Wall Street read the indicators for what the market might do, so must an individual read the indicators for his/her life." Such considerations could be questions like, "What are my natural talents? Who can help me? What type of work am I attracted to? Where do I fit in? What kind of challenges do I like?" As Compean is quick to point out – success requires sacrifice, but with a strategic plan in place, then the sacrifice becomes anticipated and not in vain. Life contains lessons, and as a person moves through life, then those lessons also function as indicators.

And when you reach success? Compean has words to guide each of us at that point as well. He says: "With financial success comes a huge responsibility. A huge obligation." By this, Compean is referring to the responsibility to help others, whether through mentoring or the donating of time and financial resources. Compean points out that we Latinos should be aware of our community's needs in these areas, but particularly in the need to mentor hard-working young people. He can quickly point to numerous instances (some in his own life) where an action as simple as picking up the telephone to make a call to recommend a young person can change the direction of a life by opening up doors of opportunity that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. Compean can also speak eloquently to how important it is for young Latinos to learn sound business concepts, professional standards of dress and/or the proper way to explain a business proposal.

One of the side-effects of Compean's years as a funeral director is the impetus to think deeply about the meaning of life. As he beautifully explains, "The circle of life contains death." He continues: "You must be able to connect with the beauty of life today. You must help people today." It is partially this belief of Compean that formed his decision to respond to the invitation from Dr. Tatcho Mindiola to participate as a member of the Advisory Board of CMAS and as a member of the Scholarship Committee. After being touched by the stories of young students during the annual Noche Cultural Banquet, Compean says that he had to respond because the stories touched his heart. Particularly when he found out that 100% of the funds raised by the Advisory Board are used to fund the CMAS students; Compean knew he had to participate.

In a reflective mood, Compean admits that, "Sometimes people forget what is really important in life. After all, it is the dash between the date of birth and the date of death that really means something in a person's life." For himself, Compean has carved out a personal philosophy that includes the courage to take risks, the courage to respond to causes within the community that he feels strongly about and the courage to passionately love what he does – helping people when they are struggling to cope with difficult circumstances and need a sincere and trustworthy professional.

Compean smiles when he talks about telling his own children – a nine year old and a sixteen year old – about "The Little Engine That Could." To him, there is no failure except to quit trying to accomplish whatever you have set your sights upon. As long as you are working, striving, becoming better and more skilled, then one day you will succeed – just as he has done. 

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Mark your Calendar for

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17th Annual Noche Cultural Scholarship Banquet

Wednesday, November 6, 2013
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

University of Houston Hilton Hotel
Conrad Hilton Ballroom
University Drive-Entrance One
Houston, Texas 77204-3028

For more information contact Holly Laurenzana at:
hllauren@central.uh.edu or 713-743-3139

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Noche CULTURAL

Pedro Cervantes '11



Fatima DeLeon '13



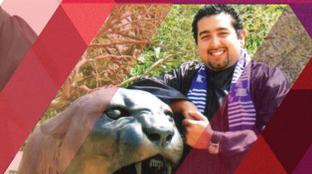
Alvaro Montano '13



Maria Fernanda Alfaro '13



Luis Orozco '10



Yael Lara '09

