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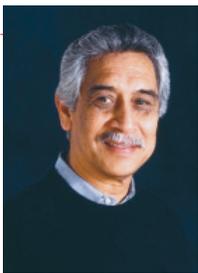
CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Noticias



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
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FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dr. Tatcho Mindiola

Faculty Research

In this issue of *Noticias*, we feature research notes from several of our Latino faculty and associates on campus. The purpose is to provide our readers with a view of the interesting and provocative research that is being conducted by Latinos at the University of Houston.

Nestor Rodriguez writes about indigenous peoples like Mayans and Mixtecos, who migrate from Mexico, Central and South America to the United States and other countries. They are often overlooked or thought to be Mexicans, and in the U.S. they may number a million people. Like many of us, Rodriguez is surprised to find that indigenous migration has been occurring for a lengthy period of time.

Marie Theresa Hernandez is researching the San Isidro Cemetery in Sugar Land, and informs us of the slave, prisoner and Mexican history which emanates from their buried remains. The cemetery is now surrounded by large, spacious,

upper middle-class homes and there has been conflict between the Mexican Americans who wish to visit their loved ones' graves and the residents of the area.

Raul Ramos uses a transnational approach to fill in the historical information void on the 19th century Tejanos who were living in Texas at the time of the conflict with the Anglos. He begins by explaining the transnational approach and then proceeds to apply the concept to cultural celebrations. He tells us that even though Mexicanos in Texas still celebrate Mexican Independence Day, the content of the celebration has changed and these changes can best be understood within a transnational context.

Christina Sisk is researching Gulf Coast Latinos who were impacted by Hurricane Katrina. We know more about how the Hondurans were affected than any other Latino group. No one knows how many Mexicans were in the area, and it is assumed because of their undocumented status they would not use the services provided by disaster aid agencies. She also brings to our

Continued on page 15

Noche Cultural Banquet: A Unique Celebration

This year's *Noche Cultural* Banquet on October 19, 2005 took on a particularly festive air due to several presentations.

The evening began with an introduction by the Master of Ceremonies, Jorge Sanchez (Junior, Communications, UH), an Academic Achievers Program (AAP) student. Those attending the banquet were then honored to have the invoca-

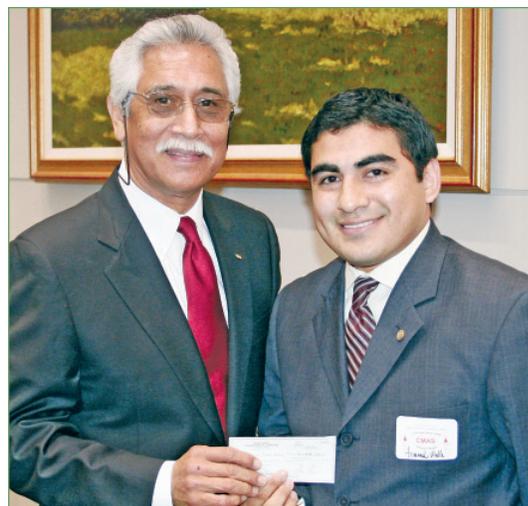
tion done by the Most Reverend Joe. S. Vasquez, an Auxiliary Bishop of the Galveston-Houston diocese.

Dr. John Antel, the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, welcomed all guests. In his opening comments, Antel stressed the respect and admiration he holds for both

Continued on page 4



Tatcho Mindiola, CMAS Director; accepts a \$20,000 gift from Henry Pastrano of State Farm establishing the State Farm Endowment in CMAS.



Tatcho Mindiola, CMAS Director; accepts \$5,000 from Armando Walle for the Gene Green Endowment in CMAS.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Endowment Board Member: Musa Dakri.....	5
Research Notes.....	5-9
AAP Student at UH: Yolanda Cruz.....	9
Educator and Administrator: Lorenzo Cano	11
Name Change for Two CMAS Programs	12
Academic Achievers At UH Fall Update	12
AAP-High Schools Fall Update.....	13
AAP Student Determined to Graduate:	
Armando Blanco	13
Concert Pianist Studies at UH.....	14
KUDOS.....	14



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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.

CMAS Wins Prestigious Star Award from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

On October 11, 2005, CMAS became one of only six programs in the state at institutions of higher learning awarded the Star Award for closing the higher education gap within Texas with a program targeted toward increasing Hispanic participation in higher education.

The Texas higher education plan entitled “Closing the Gaps by 2015” was put into place after state-wide figures showed that less than six percent of Texas’ population is enrolled in higher education, which is less than a decade ago. To support educational institutions’ efforts at reversing this downward trend, the annual Star Award was begun.

“The Star Award is a special honor and tribute to the people on our college campuses who have the foresight, knowledge and skill to build and administer successful efforts to close the educational gap,” said Commissioner of Higher Education, Raymund A. Paredes.

The CMAS programs—Academic Achievers Program (AAP), Graduate Fellowship Program—were designed to give students the knowledge, support, and financial assistance necessary to graduate from high school, continue to college, graduate from college and possibly continue to graduate school. Beginning in the sophomore year, the AAP program at Austin High School and Eastwood Academy (formerly known as SABE) has multiple activities for the students: a) tutoring and mentoring by UH-AAP undergraduates, b) workshops focused on academics, college preparation and leadership development, c) summer classes and employment, and d) college awareness meetings with parents. The AAP at UH (formerly known as the Urban Experience Program) has as its goal the retention and support of undergraduate students through their college graduation. The AAP-UH provides its members with competitive annual scholarships, new student orientation meetings for students and

parents, academic tutoring and advising, priority registration, skills workshops, leadership training, internship opportunities, and post-university graduation career/graduate school planning. Since many of the AAP-UH students are first generation college students, the AAP staff works closely with both the students and their families to make sure they have the information needed to successfully navigate the university. The Graduate Fellowship Program recruits and supports outstanding students interested in Mexican American and Latino Studies. The program is open to all graduate students interested in pursuing a graduate degree in the Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, or in Education or Social Work.

Here is a brief summary of some of the statistics and program results reported by CMAS and by UH Office of Institutional Research, whose function is to provide accurate, timely, unbiased, research-based information regarding the university and its role in higher education.

- Of the 75 high school students who began in AAP between 1998-2001, 95% completed AAP and also graduated from high school.
- Of these AAP high school graduates, 86% have pursued a college education.
- To date, 51% of the total AAP high school graduates pursuing college have been awarded approximately \$568,000 in college scholarships.
- Although AAP-UH undergraduates had lower SAT scores than other Hispanic UH undergraduates, AAP-UH students had higher GPAs.
- AAP-UH students graduate from college at a rate about double that of non-AAP Hispanic students at UH, 77% versus 39%.

Continued on page 15



From left to right: Teri Flack, Deputy Commissioner, THECB; Dr. Brooke Durbin, PK-16 Outreach and Planning, University of Houston System; Vanessa Calderon, UH Student; Jacquelyn Ortiz, UH Student; Maria Cobia, Special Program Counselor, AAP-Austin; Rebeca Treviño, Program Manager, AAP-UH; Tacho Mindiola, Director, Center for Mexican American Studies; Robert E. Shepard, Chairman, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Noche Cultural Banquet *continued from page 1*

CMAS Director, Tatcho Mindiola and for the entire CMAS staff.

There were testimonials given by three AAP students or alumni: Carlos Fernandez (Senior, Electrical Engineering, UH), Abraham Parras (Junior, Stephen F. Austin High School), and Marla Jaime-Trujillo (AAP Alumna). Each of these three amazing young people gave an account of their own dreams of pursuing a college education and a degree, and how the AAP made both of those possible.

The delicious food was donated by Mrs. Irma Galvan, the



Most Reverend Joe Vasquez of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston gives the invocation.



Dean John Antel of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Science welcomes the guests to the Annual Banquet.



Carlos Fernandez (AAP-UH) speaks about his experience at the university.



Abraham Parras (AAP-Austin) talks about why he joined the program.



Master of Ceremonies Jorge Sanchez (AAP-UH) introduces speakers.



Marlen Jaime-Trujillo (AAP Alumna) expresses her gratitude for the help she received while a student.

founder and owner of the famous downtown restaurant, *Irma's*. Galvan herself, a long-time supporter of CMAS, was on hand to smilingly dish out her famous cuisine.

One of the CMAS Graduate Fellows, Omar Herrera-Arizmendi, performed a piano solo written by Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948) and entitled "Balada Mexicana."

The next series of presentations provided the most exciting moments of the evening. In the first, Mr. Henry Pastrano, an Agency Field Executive with State Farm Insurance presented a gift of \$20,000 to establish the State Farm Endowment within the Center for Mexican American Studies. In his comments, Pastrano spoke of how much the determination and hard work of both the CMAS staff and the AAP students inspires him. Pastrano spoke in glowing terms of his personal commitment and of State Farm's corporate commitment to the educational and leadership activities of the Center. In the second presentation, Mr. Armando Walle (a recent UH alumnus) representing Congressman Gene Green, presented a gift from the Congressman of \$5,000—the second \$5,000 gift from the Congressman in his establishment of an Endowment within CMAS. Walle spoke of Green's long-term relationship with the Center and his desire to help more Hispanic students achieve their dream of a college education.

The evening concluded with closing remarks by CMAS Director, Tatcho Mindiola. The message of the Center's incredible successes was bolstered by a reminder of how each member of the audience can, and must, contribute to enable the Center to continue its work of recruitment, retention, and scholarship. Mindiola introduced the 1000 Club, a new component of the Excellence Endowment Fund, which will allow individuals to contribute a pledged amount of \$1000 within a calendar year. With over a hundred current AAP students and recent AAP alumni crowding the stage, Mindiola reminded everyone in the most heartfelt moment of the evening, "This is our future, and there is still much work to be done."



Tatcho Mindiola, CMAS Director, poses with AAP Alumna Gladis Oviedo and Lorenzo Cano, Associate Director, CMAS.



CMAS Staff: Lizett Ceja, Paloma Flores, Laura Adame, and Myra Torrez.

Endowment Board Member with A Passion for Solving Problems



Musa Dakri

Approximately thirty years ago, Houston was fortunate enough to gain Mr. Musa Dakri, when he decided to settle here after exploring possibilities throughout the U.S. Dakri says, “I chose to move to Houston because of the ‘can-do’ attitude of the people I met in the business world. Also, everyone was so friendly.”

A native of India, Dakri came to Houston after completing a B.S. at the University of London. While he was in London, he was the managing partner for a mid-sized real estate investment company. When Dakri relocated to Houston, he founded and subsequently ran Dakri Real Estate Holdings. Then, in 1991 he became Chairman and CEO of Wallis State Bank also in Houston.

Dakri has been a member of the CMAS Excellence Endowment/Advisory Board for three years. He and Tatcho Mindiola, CMAS Director, originally met some years previously due to their mutual participation in the Center for the Future of Houston, a think-tank for Houston’s community leaders.

Dakri’s deeper involvement with CMAS efforts arose in response to his own passion for the betterment of Houston as a whole. He says, “I need to be passionate about a cause to be involved. It has to be a cause which helps everyone—the entire community, such as education or healthcare.”

Dakri’s commitment in helping solve problems stretches across ethnic boundaries. He works for betterment in the African American community, in the Mexican American community, and in the South Asian community, where he has served as the chairman of the South Asian Chamber of Commerce. Indeed, when Dakri speaks of his personal philosophy regarding education he says, “I am interested in education for everyone. It’s in Houston’s best interest to have an educated work force. I support all communities—African American, Hispanic, all people. I want to be involved solving the problem.”

Dakri’s passionate interest in education is mirrored by his deep interest in healthcare. He is involved extensively with the Medical Center. He served approximately four years on the Health Sciences Advisory Board and was involved in fundraising for the Nursing School. He is also a Development Board Member of the UT Health Science Center.

In looking at his own participation on the CMAS Excellence Endowment/Advisory Board, Dakri acknowledges the years of CMAS successful programming, “They are doing a wonderful job and I’m glad to be a part of it.”

It is thanks to concerned and involved community leaders—like Dakri—that the CMAS Endowment Board is successful and strong. Leaders who can look at a problem, then roll up their sleeves to be a part of the hard but vital work of *Changing Lives Through Education, One Person At A Time*.

RESEARCH NOTES

INDIGENOUS MIGRATION



*Nestor Rodriguez, Ph.D.,
Professor & Chair of the Sociology
Department;
Director, Center for Immigration Research*

The present wave of Latin American immigration contains a number of indigenous migrant streams from Mexico, Guatemala, Peru and other regions. With a few exceptions, researchers have done little to distinguish the indigenous migration from the larger stream of *mestizos*. Undoubtedly, this is due to the fact that the number of *indigena* migrants is much smaller. Yet, collectively this number is in the hundreds of thousands, if not already one million. The *indigena* migrate from cultures and settlement areas that were established hundreds and thousands of years ago, long before the arrival of Columbus.

Maya, Mixtecos, Incas and other indigenous migrants differ from the larger number of *mestizo* migrants in several important ways. For example, while many *indigena* and *mestizo* migrants come from the lower ranks of stratification systems, the *indigena* often are subjected in Latin America to racial discrimination and exclusion in ways that *mestizos* are not. Beyond differences in background experiences, the *indigena* represent different anthropological and historical timelines. Having pre-Columbian origins, some indigenous migrants do not identify themselves as “Latinas/Latinos,” nor as “*raza*.” For these reasons, it is important to distinguish *indigena* immigrants from their *mestizo* counterparts to understand more fully the significance of present-day migration for indigenous populations.

My research on indigenous migration started in a Mayan *municipio* in Guatemala in the late 1980s. I went to the highland *municipio* to investigate emigration to Houston. One of my research questions was how international migration can evolve from a traditional culture, which at the time seemed to me to be a contradiction of traditional practices (the *municipio* that I studied was not a war zone generating political refugees). What I learned was that the (undocumented) migration to Houston from the Mayan *municipio* was but the most recent stage of long-distance travel for economic purposes by families in that community. As some elders told me, the grandfathers and great-grandfathers of the present young Mayan migrants had in the early 1900s and earlier traveled in horse and mule teams to trade artisanal products in El Salvador and other Central American regions. The men left their highland community for long periods of time to trade. When young men and women left the *municipio* to find work in Houston, thus, they were not contradicting their culture, but simply adopting it to new opportunities. From this perspective, one can view the recent immigration of indigenous populations (Maya, Mixtecos, etc.) as the continuation of an historical process of indigenous development.

I have often wondered what is the larger significance of indigenous immigration within the context of indigenous history in the Americas. What is the significance of this migration against

Continued on page 6

RESEARCH NOTES

the background of their different anthropological timelines? Since I favor the Bering Strait Crossing theory to explain the human colonization of the Americas (at least of North/Central America), I sometimes play with the idea of viewing indigenous immigration as resembling a “return” migration—a migration north by indigenous groups to where ancestors of indigenous populations passed many thousands of years ago. Almost as a hobby, I have asked observers how far north they have seen Mayan migrants. One anthropologist friend reported he had seen Maya in San Francisco and in Vancouver. Another anthropologist friend in Peru reported that Peruvian indigenous shepherds had migrated to Utah annually through a special visa program to herd sheep. During a trip I took to Guatemala in the late 1990s, a Mayan man sitting next to me on the plane described how he once had been arrested by the “*migra*” for undocumented status—in northern Alaska. Yet, I wondered if any indigenous migrant had “made it back” all the way to Asia. A couple of years ago, a Guatemalan friend who had relocated his Mayan family to Houston joyfully stated that his young son was back from U.S. military service. When I asked him where his son had been stationed overseas, he replied, “*Japón*.”

SAN ISIDRO CEMETERY REVEALS ITS SECRETS



Maria Theresa Hernandez, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of Modern
and Classical Languages;
CMAS Visiting Scholar, 2000-01

The book that I am currently writing is part of the Mexican history in the greater Houston Metro area, specifically in Fort Bend County. It is not a “history” that lists dates, names and quotes archival documents about the founding of the County and its integral relationship with the history of Texas. The book *is* about stories told and written, that fit into the dark crowded spaces that surround the larger myth of Texas, the American South and the Mexicanos (and other laborers) who helped build the State’s powerful economic machine. History has not considered many of these narratives important enough to document for the archives. Not surprisingly, the immediate focus of this text is a cemetery that holds those *Other* stories about southeast Texas that remain inside the soil even after the new houses and office buildings are constructed.

The story begins in Sugar Land, Texas, in a burial ground for Mexican laborers. This narrative about San Isidro Cemetery brought into view the complex and conflicted history of Texas. The cemetery provides the grounding for stories that emanate from its location. The land was once owned by Stephen F. Austin, who passed it to his assistant, Samuel Williams. In the

1850s it was a slave cemetery for a large plantation owned by Benjamin Franklin Terry, who organized Terry’s Texas Rangers at the outbreak of the Civil War. With emancipation it became a prisoner’s cemetery, because it was mostly prison contract labor that worked the land after the war. In the early twentieth century, it became a cemetery for Mexican laborers, who largely replaced convicts after prison contract labor was outlawed. In 2005 it is a carefully tended space of gigantic pecan trees, flowers and park benches. Through significant effort, descendants of the company’s Mexicano employees have organized and supported San Isidro through legal entanglements and other tense interactions between cemetery association members, local law enforcement, and residents of the Sugar Creek Subdivision, populated by mostly white, upper middle class, professionals. It is known as the home of Sugar Land’s “old money.”

The tension relates to the conflict between old myths and new realities. The nostalgia of the Austin Colony and its 300 who settled the county is an appealing and seductive story. It easily camouflages the terror and suffering that marks the silenced history of the county. The subterfuge surrounding the possibility of hundreds of slave, prisoner and sharecropper narratives has led Sugar Land and Fort Bend County to re-invent themselves. Ante-bellum Fort Bend had hundreds of slaves. In 1861, the Sugar Land plantation was one of the wealthiest in the state. After emancipation, the need for inexpensive labor transformed the county’s slave population into a society of prisoners. After Reconstruction the subsequent owners of the sugar refinery owned the lease to all the convicts in the State of Texas. In 1886 the state decided to create its own slave plantation by purchasing the 2,500 acre Harlem farm. Located between Sugar Land and Richmond, it was meant specifically for Black and Mexican convicts.

A surge of immigration from Mexico in the early twentieth century changed the landscape of Fort Bend. The third phase of labor in the county had begun. Convict labor was outlawed in 1911. Sharecroppers, many of them Mexican immigrants, replaced the prisoners. The prisoner cemetery became the Mexican cemetery.

The book follows the story of the county. The endless miles of cotton fields later allowed the establishment of one of the wealthiest communities in Texas (and the nation). Large tracts of land became available to developers, who built new communities for those fleeing urban Houston. During this frantic suburban expansion that has effectively cleansed the area of its darker history, San Isidro Cemetery has held steadfast to its original geography. The Sugar Creek subdivision restricted access to the cemetery in 1993 after an old bridge crossing Oyster Creek was demolished. Litigation ensued, but the cemetery association held steadfast. The subdivision was forced to open an entrance through its main thoroughfare so that funeral processions of Mexicano mourners could enter San Isidro. During the last decade there have been sporadic incidents of harassment of those visiting the cemetery. Many have been given parking or traffic tickets, just for parking on the curb outside the cemetery. Some have been arrested. A

RESEARCH NOTES

neighbor even took out a shotgun threatening a plumber who was working on a new restroom for the cemetery. Yet, the organization has persevered. It has worked with the community and a number of subdivision residents have come to appreciate how a part of the past has been retained. San Isidro and its association have shown that old ghosts can live inside of new spaces.

CAPTURING THE TEJANO PAST THROUGH TRANSNATIONALISM



Raul Ramos, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor, Department of History;
CMAS Visiting Scholar, 2002-03*

My current research continues to explore the field of nineteenth-century borderlands history by using a transnational approach. The completion of my manuscript on San Antonio, Texas, titled "Beyond the Alamo: Forging Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mexican San Antonio de Bexar, 1821-1861," has spun off several new questions and projects. One paper has already been published in the edited volume, *Continental Crossroads: Remapping U.S.-Mexico Borderlands History* (Duke University Press, 2004). Two more projects explore other elements of this period. The first is a chapter for a proposed volume from the Texas Historical Association entitled, "Tejano Leadership in Mexican and Revolutionary Texas." The second project takes a more expansive regional and temporal view of the borderlands to investigate contested interpretations of *16 de Septiembre* celebrations from their beginnings to 1910. All these projects provide examples of a transnational approach to understanding nineteenth-century history.

The current interest in transnational history stems from critiques of globalization in the twenty-first century. Social scientists and cultural critics have come to realize that traditional or official concepts of nation fail to explain the global movement of people and capital, and the identities produced by that movement. Transnational, for these scholars, defines an identity based on connections and displacement in a global context. Transnational history makes the assumption that national histories limit a historian's ability to trace social, cultural, and economic connections and movements implicit in migrations and colonization. To transcend national histories, a transnational approach requires three commitments by practitioners: to engage with outside primary sources, often in a second language; to converse with multiple historiographies and narratives that serve to define the nation; and to write a new narrative that develops these connections and conversations to produce a rich transcript

of social and economic interaction. My research takes the transnational approach typically applied to twentieth century events and uses it to make sense of nineteenth century history.

My contribution to the Tejano Leadership project concentrates on the life of Jose Antonio Saucedo. Saucedo held the positions of councilman, governor and political chief in San Antonio de Bexar during the early nineteenth century. His actions and policies during the period of Anglo American immigration into Texas provide insight into how some elites perceived their responsibility and interests relative to the growing Mexican nation-state. Little is known about his life and family before and after he held official seats. This research fills in these critical gaps.

Most recognize the significance of 16 de Septiembre as Mexican Independence Day. The celebration commemorates the declaration of independence from Spain by Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla from a church bell tower in 1810. While studying the changes that took place in San Antonio after 1836, I found it interesting that despite the change in nation, from Mexico to the United States, Mexican Independence celebrations continued uninterrupted to this day. It raises the question, what does it mean to celebrate Mexican Independence outside of Mexico? Preliminary analysis suggests that rather than unifying Mexicans under one patriotic or nationalist idea, 16 de Septiembre parades and dances became spaces where internal differences appeared and shifts in ethnic and national identity were evident over time.

Both transnational history and ethnic studies seek to bring contemporary insight and relevance to the study of the past. On Saturday, September 13, 2003, San Antonians once again observed Mexican Independence Day with a parade as they had in 1835 and 1910. The parade's sponsoring organization estimated 100,000 people participated in all the festivities, including the parade, street carnival, and historic re-enactments. The parade theme, "Saluting San Antonio's Heroes," echoed the sizable presence of Mexican American soldiers in the U.S. military and the military's dominance in the city's economic landscape. Organizers named Staff Sergeant Eric Alva, a Marine from San Antonio who lost his leg in the Iraq war, grand marshal. The parade's American patriotism casts a different light on the celebration of Mexican independence, emphasizing Mexican cultural and ethnic heritage over nationalism. Many recent immigrants joined the military during the recent Iraq war while still Mexican citizens. Some of those migrants who were killed in action received American citizenship posthumously.

Mexican citizens fighting in the American Army and marching in the Mexican Independence Day parade held in San Antonio crisscross the political and ideological borders of nationalism several times simultaneously. Far from a static identity, nationalism continues to raise questions and cut across other identities as it has for generations. Nineteenth century Tejano leader Juan N. Seguín's story contains contradictions similar to Eric Alva's when he fought for Texas' secession alongside Anglo Americans seeking annexation with the United States. Nationalism will continue to confound and confuse our ability to understand identity and motivations.

RESEARCH NOTES

LATINOS AFTER KATRINA



Christina Sisk, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,
Department of Modern and Classical
Languages

I arrived in Houston this summer after leaving New Orleans, where I lived for over a decade, to start my new job as Assistant Professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages. My research focuses

on Mexican migration and transnational communities and how they are represented in literature, film and music.

Before Katrina reached land, New Orleans and Mississippi had growing immigrant communities. Although the U.S. Census in 2000 reported that Latinos in New Orleans were only 3.06% of the total population, New Orleans was informally considered Honduras' second largest city. In Mississippi, the Census figures are more complicated because Hispanics only accounted for 1.4% of the population of the state, but the coastal areas had more of a concentration. For example, the percentages of Hispanics were 2.6 in Gulfport and 3.4 in Biloxi. The statistics from the Census probably do not include the undocumented immigrants, skewing the numbers. It is clear that this population did not "officially" exist, although they were living in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Of the Latinos affected by Katrina, more information is available about the Honduran immigrants. Many of these immigrants fled Honduras after Hurricane Mitch hit Central America in 1998. The powerful Category 5 hurricane killed over 18,000 people, about 8,000 of them were Hondurans. Several years later, about 120,000 to 150,000 Hondurans have been affected by Katrina. Of those, it is speculated that maybe half of them have sought refuge in Houston. The *Comite Unidad Hondureña* and *El Coquito Restaurant* have been working in conjunction to provide food, shelter, medical care and other basic needs to more than 1,000 Katrina evacuees.

It is clear from reading most reports that it is unknown exactly how many Mexican immigrants lived in Louisiana and Mississippi prior to the disaster. These reports vary so widely that the estimates of the Mexican population affected by Katrina range from 40,000 to up to 145,000 people. According to the Mexican Embassy's latest press release (September 14, 2005), the Mexican government assisted 1,604 people, primarily through the consulates in Houston and Atlanta. So far, four Mexicans have been reported dead: two from Chiapas, one from Michoacán and another from Jalisco.

While it may be impossible to piece together the complete picture of the Latino population in Louisiana and Mississippi prior to Hurricane Katrina, the city's demographics are expected to change because of the influx of immigrant workers. The Bush administration has said that it will not require contractors to verify the citizenship status of the workers they hire. As Pete Pae of the Los Angeles Times reports, the Central Gulf Coast is already being flooded with immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, since employers are offering from \$15 to \$17 per hour and including room and board. Pae concludes that many of the immigrant workers will stay in the area since they are needed in the reconstruction. The high wages may come at the expense of the workers' health since they are not wearing protective gear (CNN, October 7, 2005).

The hiring of immigrant workers is being debated by African American leaders and Louisiana politicians. Jesse Jackson has criticized the fact that the jobs are not going to African Americans. His disapproval led him to bus African American workers to New Orleans, but the New Orleans TV station WWL claimed that those workers were not hurricane evacuees. Not much else has been done to incorporate the African Americans into the rebuilding projects. More recently, U.S. Senator Mary Landrieu wrote a letter to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency to investigate the hiring of undocumented immigrants. The agency subsequently detained 100 temporary contract workers at the Belle Chase Naval Air Station in the New Orleans area. According to the Times Picayune, the workers were hired by BE&K, an Alabama based company being subcontracted by Halliburton Corp. CNN quoted Mayor Ray Nagin (October 7, 2005): "How do I ensure that New Orleans is not overrun by Mexican workers?"

It is understandable that Louisiana leaders would push to hire unemployed evacuees. Unfortunately, the immigrant workers are caught in the middle. The transformation of the Central Gulf Coast's ethnic landscape has already stirred xenophobic sentiment. With the transformation of the ethnic landscape of the Central Gulf Coast, it is no longer possible to forget and deny the existence of the immigrant populations in this area.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS STUDENTS: SÍ SE PUEDE



Susan Moreno, Ph.D.
Assistant Director, Office of Institutional
Research;
CMAS Visiting Scholar, 2001-02

Established in 1994 as the Urban Experience Program, the Academic Achievers Program at the University of Houston has many components incorporating both academic and social integration. Academic Achievers are required to be full-time students, complete mandatory study hall hours, attend skills and self-development workshops, and engage in leadership activities while maintaining a minimum

2.5 grade point average (GPA). These academically-focused activities often lead to planned and unplanned social events for the students.

During the summer 2005, CMAS asked the Office of Institutional Research to conduct an evaluation of the Academic Achievers Program with a special focus on student outcomes. Throughout the evaluation, AAP students were compared with other Hispanic students at UH, since most of the AAP students are Hispanic. The first part of the evaluation compared the cumulative GPA of AAP students enrolled in spring 2005 with other Hispanic students enrolled that semester. At 2.82, Academic Achievers had higher average GPAs than other Hispanic students whose average GPA was 2.66. The higher GPA of Academic Achievers held regardless of the students' gender and at each classification level, except for seniors where the average GPA was the same.

Two key success outcomes for college students are retention and graduation. Results from the AAP evaluation show that by summer 2005, AAP students had higher retention and graduation rates compared with other UH Hispanic students who started at the same time. Academic Achievers who first enrolled at UH in fall semesters 2001 to 2005 had retention rates that ranged from 80% to 100%. In comparison, other Hispanic students who began in these same semesters had retention rates ranging from 46% to 89%. The graduation rates for Academic Achievers are just as impressive. Academic Achievers who first enrolled at UH in fall semesters from 1996 to 1999 had graduation rates that ranged from 68% to 89%. This compares to graduation rates ranging from 33% to 41% for other UH Hispanic students who first enrolled in the same semesters.

In previous *Noticias*, you have read the voices of AAP students and the success the students have had because of their AAP experience. The AAP evaluation is quantifiable evidence to support the success the AAP has at both the student level and at the programmatic level. AAP-required activities are critical to the success of AAP students because they integrate students into their academic experience with the support of effective, caring staff and faculty. The naturally arising social activities and events that flow out of the academic connections students make with their peers further support Academic Achievers' complete integration into UH leading to persistence and graduation.

Yolanda Cruz: AAP Student at UH



Yolanda Cruz, AAP Student, University of Houston

Among the many hard-working, achievement-oriented AAP students at UH, Yolanda Cruz stands out. As a senior in Bilingual Education with a cumulative 3.6 GPA, Yolanda is what could be called a model student, especially with her high course load each semester. When one talks with her, it becomes evident that she has had to overcome many obstacles.

Her choice of Bilingual Education gives the first clue to the difficulties mastered when she was younger due to the fact that her first language was Spanish. Her parents had moved to the U.S. from Monterrey, Mexico, and Yolanda, her three brothers and one sister were born after that move. Yolanda sums up her experiences by saying, "My elementary years were difficult because my native language was Spanish." When Yolanda began first grade, she knew more Spanish than English. She says it wasn't until the end of the second grade when she began to feel comfortable with the English language.

Yolanda's entry into the AAP happened quite fortuitously after she was employed as a work-study student at CMAS. Ms. Paloma Flores, who was also working in that same capacity, told Yolanda about the AAP after hearing about her high GPA and Honor Roll status.

With her entry into the AAP in the spring of 2003, Yolanda began experiencing the benefits of the tutoring and many other skills-building sessions. When asked which of the AAP components has been the most beneficial for her, Yolanda says she can't choose just one, because they all are equally important: the tutoring, the community service, the financial support, the workshops to improve skills in such vital areas as test-taking or resume writing. Yolanda says that she has gained immeasurably in all these areas.

Yolanda has done something incredibly difficult by remaining in school throughout the pregnancy and birth of her son, born seventeen months ago. Not surprisingly, she states that this time has been the hardest for her during her academic career. Yet, she chose to keep her number of semester hours high—at least 12-16 hours each semester. She says she has remained focused because "I believe it's important to get your degree."

Now, Yolanda is part of the QUEST Program in her major. This program allows UH Education majors, who apply and meet certain criteria, to go to a school to work with an experienced teacher three times a week. In addition, these students take six Methods classes, so that they are constantly implementing in the actual classroom what they are learning in the Methods classes. She says, "The best feeling is when a child smiles and understands a concept. That really means a lot to me."

In looking at her accomplishments, Yolanda modestly says, "I just tried my best." Yet even in the face of daunting odds at times, she has not only tried, but succeeded. Her advice to other students portrays her own determination, "When you set your mind, never give up. Always look forward, not backward."

Yolanda is also looking ahead to those AAP students who will come after her. "It's important to keep in mind that when we [current AAP students] can give back, that we give to those who will need our help. Right now, we are the ones who really need help. Later, we'll be able to help others who need it."

Noche Cultural Banquet: A Unique Celebration



Banquet guests enjoy the meal.



Omar Herrera-Arizmendi, CMAS Graduate Fellow, performs for guests.



Left to right, Molly and Suzanne Harter; Stacy Mayers, Benjamin Cena, Rosario Espinso and Hector Cantu.



Irma Galvan of Irma's Restaurant serves José Rangel, Associate Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs, UH Systems.



Left to right, Elizabeth Miranda, Judge Hector Chavana, Dr. San Miguel (standing), Ben Mendez (center), Alba Hernandez, Linda Tristan and Belinda Jasso.



Left to right, Susan Antel, Dean John Antel, Most Reverend Joe Vasquez, Carmen Orta, Rosanna Moreno, Brooke Durbin, Omar Herrera-Arizmendi, James Anderson, and Maria Sneed.



Eddie Elizondo, former AAP Manager (second row) poses with AAP Alumni Eric Sanchez (top), Jannette Fernandez, Lewis Cruz and Fely Aguilar, UH Alumni (center).



Rebeca Treviño, AAP Manager (first row, second from right) poses with AAP-UH students.



AAP-Austin High School students.

Educator and Administrator Extraordinaire

Since 1989 Lorenzo Cano has been the Associate Director of the Center for Mexican American Studies. Coming to CMAS after years of working for other educational entities and non-profits, Cano brought his expertise in supervision, youth counseling, needs assessment, and community relations in organizations as diverse as the Houston International University, the Houston Housing Authority, and the Association for Advancement of Mexican Americans (AAMA).

Cano has long been interested in public administration especially those issues which pertain to Hispanics. This interest caused Cano to complete a B.A. in Political Science at UH, then to complete a M.A. in Urban Studies with an emphasis in Social and Community Development in the College of Social Sciences. Cano's specialization is in the challenges that urban environments offer: social, political, and administrative.

During the time he has been working for CMAS, Cano says he has seen many positive changes in how the University relates to Hispanic students. But he feels that quite a few of these changes are a result of the hard work of CMAS under the leadership of CMAS Director, Tatcho Mindiola. Cano observes that the university has been slow to adapt to the large number of Mexican American students. Cano says, "There needs to be more change overall. For instance, there still isn't enough Mexican American full-time faculty on campus."

When asked for his observations regarding the difficult issue of the high drop-out rate for Hispanics in college, Cano comments, "Once Mexican American students get here [to UH], their attrition rate isn't that different from other students. There are a multitude of reasons why students drop out: conflicts with parents, financial stress (a major issue now that state universities are raising tuition), personal relationships, not studying enough, not asking for help when they need it. Consider that previously most college students came from middle-class backgrounds. Students are more diverse than ever and they bring their burdens, financial or otherwise, with them to the university."

During his time with CMAS, Cano has been responsible for recruitment of students, the retention of students, the annual Spring Lecture Series and the Center's outreach activities. To further these important goals, Cano supervises the coordinators of the Academic Achievers Program both at area high schools and at the University of Houston. Cano is also responsible for the difficult task of scheduling the CMAS College Career Days through his extensive network of counselors and teachers within the community. Doubtlessly, Cano's years of activity in the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE) contribute to the ease with which he performs all these duties requiring professional contacts within many levels of the educational system. Cano has been named the Gulf Coast Regional Representative to TACHE's Board. A highly visible reward of Cano's success at supervising the Academic Achievers Program is the recent award given to CMAS by the State of Texas called the "Star Award." (See article page 3)

Some of the myriad of additional tasks that Cano works on for the Center also include his teaching and the development and scheduling of CMAS curricula. Some of the courses that Cano has taught are: The Mexican American Urban Community, Chicano History, Chicano Politics, The Philosophy of Chicano Education, Introduction to Mexican American Studies, and Mexican Immigration. His teaching duties for the Center bring him incredible personal rewards and allow the Center to benefit from his academic knowledge and expertise.

Cano's availability to respond to media requests is an important factor in the continuing education of the greater Houston populace about complex issues facing the Mexican American and greater Latino communities. He has written several editorials for the Houston Chronicle and is available to contribute to both the Spanish media and the English media when necessary.

One of the most exciting projects Cano has worked on for CMAS was the documentation for the major in Mexican American Studies. Cano says, "In reality, for this part of Texas, we're overdue for this major. The demand is there, the demographics, the students are there. Additionally, there is a need for

institutions in both the private and public sector to have a better understanding of the dynamics of the Mexican American community." Cano also points out that the University of Texas has a major in Mexican American Studies. He continues, "Here at UH, many students—not just Hispanic students—wish to learn about the history, politics, culture, and literature of Mexican Americans."

In addition to helping students with career or academic advice, Cano, until recently, coordinated an annual trip abroad for approximately fifteen students. The annual trip was a CMAS project from 1988 until several years ago. Cano began the trip because he strongly believed that students should learn more about Mexico's history and politics. The trip combined visits to traditional locations, such as museums and art galleries, with lectures

at other universities, and dialogue with governmental officials and non-governmental organizations involved in issues of social change, such as literacy or housing. The exact emphasis of each trip varied according to the contemporaneous political issues in Mexico.

Cano comes from a family of educators, with successful siblings throughout the educational systems of Houston. Cano says, "As any educator will say in evaluating his or her job, 'It's not about the money, it's about helping individuals at this stage of their lives.' Whether it's helping a student find the right class or the right major, or convincing students not to drop out. It's about contributing to their success."

In acknowledging Cano's vital contribution to the CMAS mission, Mindiola says, "Lorenzo Cano is as much responsible for the growth of CMAS as anyone. I don't do anything without first discussing it with Lorenzo and soliciting his opinion and ideas. His passion for and commitment to the Center is unsurpassed. He is one of my closest friends and a supreme diplomat and gentleman."



*Lorenzo Cano, M.A.
Associate Director, Center for
Mexican American Studies*

NAME CHANGE FOR TWO CMAS PROGRAMS

SABE and the Urban Experience Program

In keeping with the focus on academic excellence, the names of the two CMAS programs above have been changed to one name—The Academic Achievers Program. This new name emphasizes the academic goals of the program, which remain

the same whether the program is located in high schools (Austin High School and Eastwood Academy) or at the University of Houston.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS AT UH

Fall Update

The AAP component at UH, under the direction of Mrs. Rebeca Treviño admitted six new students in the fall of 2005: Luis Garcia, Carolina Gomez, Carolina Guadarrama, Benjamin Mellado, Alejandro Sanchez and Eduardo Toro.

The AAP students had a busy summer. Seven AAP students worked as seasonal interns with Outsource Partners International, Inc. These students began working in the spring of 2005 and continued working through the summer under the supervision of AAP alumni, Adrian Robles, B.B.A. in Finance (1997). In addition, Mr. Carlos Fernandez, a junior in Electrical Engineering, was a NASA Summer Intern from May 24, 2005 to July 29, 2005.

The job site visits coordinated through the friends of CMAS and AAP alumni continued through last spring and summer. Eleven AAP students visited State Farm Insurance through the sponsorship of Mr. Henry Pastrano, Agency Field Executive.

Fifteen AAP students visited Univision-Channel 45 sponsored by Mrs. Grace Olivares-Hernandez, the Director of Public Affairs. In addition, eight students visited Lopez Negrete Communications through the sponsorship of Mr. Alex Lopez Negrete, the CEO, President and Chief Creative Officer.

In the late spring 2005, the AAP students completed three community service projects at the University of Houston. The AAP students presented college life presentations and conducted tours of the UH campus for two schools and during one College Prep Day sponsored by the AAP and the UEP-VPSA. During the visit from Northbrook High School, over 125 sophomores and their teachers visited the campus. McReynolds Middle School brought about forty students and their mentors.

Please see the Kudos section for the names of those students named to the Honor Roll or who attained other recognition.



Alex Lopez Negrete (seated), CEO of Lopez Negrete Communications, hosting AAP-UH students.

ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS PROGRAM—HIGH SCHOOLS

Fall Update

Under the direction of Mrs. Maria Cobio, the fall semester began on August 22 with a tutoring session, quickly followed on September 2 with a T-shirt accessorizing project. This second meeting, allowing for community building among the participants, was closely followed by a September 9th student meeting. During the fall semester, the group as a whole will meet once a month in addition to their other academic activities.

An important fall workshop on PSAT Preparation was given on October 6th by Ms. Lashandra Hanes, Outreach Director at Princeton Review. Thirty-three of the thirty-five students in the program attended this workshop.

Two additional fall workshops presented by Sandy Robertson, Special Programs Counselor from the UH Department of Learning Support Services, were entitled “Managing Stress as a Student” and “Reading Your Textbooks and Taking Better Notes.”

In addition, the students will be participating in a Christmas card-making project in December and a Field Day. These activities will serve as much-needed rewards for the academic hard work that the students put in during school and in the after-school tutoring sessions.



AAP-Austin students and mentors at a San Antonio mission (2005).

AAP Student Determined to Graduate and Go To College



*Armando Blanco,
AAP Student, Austin
High School*

Meet Armando Blanco, who is currently a junior at Stephen F. Austin High School and a member of the CMAS Academic Achievers Program (AAP) at his school. Armando applied to and was admitted to the program before his sophomore year in high school after hearing about it through a presentation made by program coordinator, Mario D. Cobio. The program appealed to him for two reasons: the scholarship money and the assistance to gain admission to the University of Houston.

While in the AAP, Armando discovered that the most valuable parts of the program for him were the after-school tutoring and assistance with issues crucial to success as a student, e.g. time management and project completion within specific time parameters.

Armando was born in Houston to parents originally from Mexico and is the youngest of his brothers and sisters. Armando says, “My parents struggled to come here to the U.S. to help all of us children. I try to make them very proud.”

Both Armando’s and his family’s determination to give him educational opportunities was demonstrated when he was involved in a tragic automobile accident while driving back from Mexico last spring. With a broken wrist and left ankle, Armando couldn’t walk. His school initially told him that he would have to repeat an entire school year, but his mother and sister embarked on a home school project with him. After their help, he passed the requisite exams and did not have to repeat the school year.

Armando is skilled in art despite the fact that he lists his favorite subjects as Math, Algebra, and English. In elementary school, he was awarded the prize for “Best Drawing,” and he continued to win art awards for his drawing in middle school. Just last year he was honored by the Third Place in Pencil Drawing from H.I.S.D. Not surprisingly, he plans to study art and graphic design in college.

Armando ends with advice that will resonate for many of the AAP students who are accomplishing their dream of a college education, “Get a dream and do whatever it takes to reach it. Try to be admitted to programs—like the AAP—in high school which will help you go to college. Too few Hispanics go to college. We need to change that.”

Concert Pianist Studies at UH



Omar Herrera-Arizmendi, CMAS Graduate Fellow

Each of the CMAS Graduate Fellows comes to CMAS and to UH in a unique way with unique talents. Mr. Herrera-Arizmendi came to UH after graduating with a Master's degree in Music from Rice University in May 2003. Prior to that, Herrera-Arizmendi was awarded a Bachelor's in Music in 2000 from the University of Texas-Austin. Both of these degrees were awarded with a specialization in Piano Performance. Presently, Herrera-Arizmendi is pursuing a Ph.D. specializing in the classical music from Mexico and Latin American, especially the music composed

for piano solo and chamber ensemble.

Herrera-Arizmendi's long-term goal is a career in piano performance. In fact, he has already given concerts in different cities playing the repertoire of his specialty. Herrera-Arizmendi is looking forward to a career of performing and teaching. During his time at Rice University, Herrera-Arizmendi gave piano lessons both as a graduate teaching assistant and as a staff member. These classes were both individual lessons and group classes.

The list of awards and scholarships earned by Herrera-Arizmendi is long and stretches back as far as 1996. Of particular note is the National Piano Scholarship to Study Abroad given by the Mexican government, FONCA, for the years 2000-02. It was this scholarship that enabled Herrera-Arizmendi to study piano performance at Rice University. There are only a few awards of this type given annually. Two of the other scholarships of particular note are the 1997-98 Leticia Flores Penn Endowed Presidential Scholarship in Piano and the E.D. Farmer International Scholarship. Both of these were awarded while Herrera-Arizmendi was an undergraduate at UH-Austin.

Herrera-Arizmendi's interest in Latin American Classical Music is influenced by his familial relationship with Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948), the Mexican composer. In fact, Herrera-Arizmendi plans to do extensive research and analysis of the music by Ponce and other Mexican composers, like Chavez and Rolon. During some of his performances, Herrera-Arizmendi has presented a lecture-recital as a means to acquaint audiences with the music of Mexican composers. In February 2004, Herrera-Arizmendi and his twin brother, Edgar, organized a Latin American Festival in the College-Conservatory of Music at Cincinnati. The Cuarteto Latinoamericano, a famous string quartet, gave a recital including the String Quartet by Ponce and the Third Quartet by Villalobos. During the recent CMAS Noche Cultural Banquet, Herrera-Arizmendi performed the "Balada Mexicana" by Ponce.

The main message that Herrera-Arizmendi wishes to convey regarding his Graduate Fellowship is how grateful he is for the financial support. He says, "This fellowship allows me to concentrate on my studies. It allows me to spend half of each day practicing, rather than fewer hours practicing and having to go earn money with a job. I cannot say enough about how good it is to concentrate on my studies rather than having to worry about paying the bills."

KUDOS

Congratulations to the following Academic Achievers Program students who made the Honor Roll at the end of the spring 2005 semester at Austin High School:

Melina Alvarez

Joel German

Laura Hernandez

and

Eleazar Rodriguez.

Congratulations to the following Academic Achievers Program students who made the Honor Roll at the end of the spring 2005 semester at the University of Houston:

Yolanda Cruz

Carlos Fernandez

Carla Gonzalez

Estella Gonzalez

Raymundo More

Eduardo Robles

Jorge Sanchez

and

Cindy Villarreal.

Congratulations to **Jesus Vigil**, AAP student and a sophomore in Political Science at UH, who was selected as one of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute 2005 Scholars. Vigil will receive a scholarship in the amount of \$2500.

STAR AWARD *continued from page 3*

- Since 1996, over \$1.2 million in scholarships has been awarded to AAP-UH students.
- In the years between 1998-2003, approximately 5% of the state's total graduate degrees awarded to Hispanic students were at UH. In this same time period, 14 Hispanic CMAS Graduate Fellows attained advanced degrees.
- Since 1993 over \$585,000 in fellowship funding has been awarded to 25 Fellows, resulting in 14 earned graduate degrees.

The AAP at area high schools is coordinated by Mrs. Maria D. Cobio; the AA-UH is coordinated by Mrs. Rebeca Treviño, both of whom report to Mr. Lorenzo Cano (See article on page 6). In assessing the program's success, Treviño says, "We begin mentoring these students while they are still in high school. We want to get them into the mindset of higher education, but not desert them when they get here [to UH]." Cobio says, "Yes, by the time they graduate from high school the students in the AAP at Austin and Eastwood will be equipped with all of the tools they need to succeed in college, and with the continued support of Treviño and her AAP here at the University of Houston, they will do great."

Just as the success of each student depends upon the support from the entire family, there's no doubt that the success of the CMAS programs depends upon the entire CMAS staff. Director, Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D., says, "The Center, the University, our community and the city of Houston are well-served by the efforts of our staff. We hope that the Star Award will help us secure more resources so that we can expand and further develop our effort to close the gap, for we are very, very mindful of how much more needs to be done."

FROM THE DIRECTOR *continued from page 1*

attention the many immigrants now flocking to the Gulf Coast area to work.

In the article by Susan Moreno, she reports on the evaluation she conducted on the students in the Academic Achievers Program sponsored by the Center for Mexican American Studies. She finds that in comparison to other Latino students, our students tend to earn higher grade point averages, move towards graduation at a faster rate, and graduate from the University at higher rates. Moreno states that the graduation rate of our students ranges from 68% to 89% in comparison to rates ranging from 33% to 41% for other Latino students at UH. What is not reported is a comparison of our students' graduation rates in comparison to the whole University, the State of Texas, and the nation. The average graduation rate for our students in the Academic Achievers' Program is 77% in contrast to 38% for the University, 48% for the State of Texas, and 60% for the United States. It is the higher graduation rate of our students that led the University to nominate the Center for Mexican American Studies for the Star Award given by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to academic institutions or units that can empirically demonstrate that their services are "closing the gaps" in educational achievement between Latinos and the majority group. The Center received the award in Austin, Texas on Monday, October 11th. (See article and photo on page 3).

The Center, of course, takes pride in our efforts, but as everyone knows, we need to do more and continue for decades to come. This is why we need to fund the CMAS Excellence Endowment. It will help stabilize the Center's budget and allow for our successful programs in recruiting and retention of faculty and students, publishing and research to continue.



Feliz Navidad
Happy Holidays
from the CMAS Family
to your Family!

Transforming Lives through Education... One Person At A Time

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