

## FROM THE DIRECTOR



*Pamela Anne Quiroz, Ph.D.*

It is my pleasure and my privilege to introduce myself as the incoming Director of CMAS at the University of Houston. Serving as Director is a role that I take seriously, and I want to recognize and thank former Director and Professor Tatcho

Mindiola, who has set such a high standard of leadership and accomplishment on behalf of the Mexican American and Latino community. Tatcho's accomplishments for the Center shall continue to inspire me in my term as Director.

For those of you who know little about me, I am a third-generation Mexican American who was born and raised in the Midwest. I'm the product of working class parents whose own parents moved from Mexico with their families as young children during the Mexican Revolution. My great-grandfathers came to the U.S. by working on the railroads and ended up in Kansas City, Kansas. There they worked in various jobs as an artist, a butcher in a packing house, and a machine operator in a foundry.

Like most Mexican Americans, my family worked hard, believed in God, and loved their

children. We laughed often, played together, and shared every weekend and holiday. A less positive experience for my grandparents and my parents was the segregation experienced in Catholic school. In fact, my mother's experience with schooling was so traumatic that she quit school as soon as she was able. As a parent she was determined that my sister and I would never have these experiences, so we were not taught Spanish and moved to the "best" Catholic school in town. At the beginning of each school year, she instructed the teacher never to lay a hand on either of us. Despite my mother's efforts and my academic achievement in school, I too experienced ethnic prejudice when my fourth grade teacher brought me up to the front of the classroom and expressed her dislike of "wetbacks" and "greasers." She also conveyed that in her opinion I thought a little too highly of myself and that she was going to take me down a notch during that year. Needless to say, the year was unpleasant, and though I experienced no corporal punishment, I experienced the pain of social isolation. When I began to avoid going to school and developed an ulcer, the principal moved my desk into her office where I received all of my coursework, though often with little instruction. I was so relieved to be out of the classroom that it never occurred to me to ask why, instead of moving me out of the room, didn't the principal remove the teacher? Later as an adult I

*Continued on page 11*

## Eduardo Elizondo CMAS Success Through the Generations

Anyone who has been connected to the CMAS mission over a large number of years probably knows Eddie Elizondo. His tall stature and ready smile, along with his helpful attitude, have become a familiar and gracious aspect in the CMAS offices and along its corridors.

During a period of almost twenty years, Elizondo has filled multiple roles connected to CMAS, from student to instructor to program manager to an inspiring role model and mentor of students younger than himself—he has done it all. Elizondo has proved himself to be one of CMAS' most loyal proponents and dedicated volunteer in working toward the CMAS vision of changing lives for the better through hard work and education.

Elizondo's introduction to CMAS occurred in the early 1990s when he began working at UH-Central as an admissions counselor. At that point, Elizondo had already completed a B.A. in psychology, and he had begun post-baccalaureate coursework for a master's degree. Some of the courses he took served as his introduction to



*Eduardo Elizondo*

CMAS. In fact, two of these courses were taught by Dr. Tatcho Mindiola himself.

During this time period, Elizondo continued his work in Admissions and soon was in charge of that office's recruitment of Hispanic students to attend UH. This Admissions' goal put Elizondo in regular communication with CMAS as he often made presentations as part of the CMAS-sponsored Career Days for high school students. It wasn't long before Elizondo began

teaching as an instructor for CMAS courses, specifically the Introduction to Mexican American Studies and the course in Latino Leadership. Elizondo later functioned as a program manager for the college component of the Academic Achievers Program at UH.

After leaving UH with a Master's degree in educational psychology, Elizondo has continued working among a variety of institutions and organizations that seek to support low-income, at-risk families and individuals. These institutions and Elizondo have partnered to further their

*Continued on page 11*

## CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

### Advisory Committee

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Paula M. Mendoza <i>Honorary Chair</i> <i>UHS Board of Regent</i>	Steve Harter <i>President</i> <i>Notre Capital Ventures</i>
Roman Martinez <i>Chair</i> <i>Texas Taxis, Inc.</i>	Graciela Saenz <i>Attorney at Law</i> <i>Saenz and Burkhardt, PLLC</i>
Alfred Castillo, Jr. <i>P.E., PVF/PPE Strategic Sourcing</i> <i>Manager,</i> <i>Global Purchasing</i> <i>The Dow Chemical Company</i>	Suzanne Suarez <i>Physician Practice Manager-</i> <i>North Market</i> <i>Mischer Neuroscience Associates</i> <i>Memorial Hermann</i>
Gelines Chapa <i>Jewelry Designer</i>	Juan Tello <i>Principal</i> <i>Deloitte Consulting LLP</i>
Greg Compean <i>Funeral Director</i> <i>Compean Funeral Home</i>	Marlen J. Trujillo <i>CEO</i> <i>Spring Branch Community</i> <i>Health Center</i>
Eddie Elizondo <i>AAP Alumni</i>	Armando Walle <i>State Representative</i> <i>District 140</i>
Glenn Godkin <i>Former Regional President</i> <i>Wells Fargo Bank</i>	

#### CMAS FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Nicolás Kanellos, Ph.D. <i>Brown Foundation Professor</i> <i>Director of Arte Público Press</i> <i>and Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage</i>
Maria C. Gonzalez, Ph.D. <i>Associate Professor</i> <i>Department of English</i>
Augustina Reyes, Ph.D. <i>Professor EPSY</i> <i>College of Education</i>
Guadalupe San Miguel, Ph.D. <i>Professor</i> <i>History Department</i>
Christina L. Sisk, Ph.D. <i>Associate Professor</i> <i>Department of Hispanic Studies</i>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Conversos, Marie-Theresa Hernandez .....	3
Maricarmen Velazquez .....	4
Carlos Amaya .....	5
Melanie Salazar .....	6
Marcelo Martinez .....	7
Academic Achievers Program - UH .....	8
Academic Achievers Program - Austin .....	9
CMAS Speaker Series .....	10

## CMAS Staff

Pamela Anne Quiroz, Ph.D.  
Director of the Center for Mexican  
American Studies & Professor of  
Sociology University of Houston  
Editor, *Social Problems* (2014-2017)  
North American Editor, *Children's*  
*Geographies* (2014-2018) Board  
Member, Council on Contemporary  
Families

Lorenzo Cano, M.A.  
Associate Director  
lcano@uh.edu

Mary Helen Meza  
Department Business Administrator  
mmeza@uh.edu

Rebeca Treviño  
Program Manager  
Academic Achievers-UH  
rtrevino@uh.edu

Sarah Cortez  
Editor

Fely Aguilar  
Program Coordinator II  
Academic Achievers-High Schools  
faguilar@uh.edu

Sonia Ramirez  
Marketing &  
Communications Assistant  
smramir9@central.uh.edu

Jessica Thiam  
Events Assistant  
jygomez2@central.uh.edu

Flor Montelongo  
Financial Coordinator I  
fmontelo@central.uh.edu

Eddie Gonzalez  
Program Coordinator II  
eegonza4@central.uh.edu

## 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.

## The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Conversos

### Marie-Theresa Hernández, Ph.D.

The recent publication of my book *The Virgin of Guadalupe and the Conversos: Uncovering Hidden Influences from Spain to Mexico* (Rutgers University Press, 2014) presents stories associated with Guadalupe and individuals whose ancestors were most likely Jews, who converted to Catholicism during the time of the Spanish Inquisition.

This book was heavily influenced by my unlikely find of a large group of manuscripts at the New York Public Library in 2007. They were written by Manuel Espinosa de los Monteros, a priest in Mexico City who had an inordinate amount of interest in Jewish narratives. In his writings he shows his intense devotion to Guadalupe and how he saw her as a representation of what he termed “the defeated Jewish nation that would return to its former glory.” Monteros went into great detail regarding aspects of the Old Testament, the history of the Guadalupan apparition, including a discussion of whether she actually appeared in Mexico City in 1531. Monteros knew much of the story because the last years of his life he was archivist at the sanctuary of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. He had access to large amounts of diverse documents that had arrived in Mexico during the colonial period.

Although Monteros never actually states he is of *converso* (a person or his/her descendants who converted from Judaism to Catholicism) descent, he writes so emotionally about what he describes as *los judios escondidos en el latibulo* (Jews hidden in a large container, box, or casket), it is quite possible he had some type of genealogical affiliation. His only admission to this possibility is his statement that his family prayed psalms at burials (a Jewish tradition known as *Kaddish*).

Once I had a full grasp of what Monteros was trying to say, I realized that his documents were a clear indication that the descendants of converted Jews still existed in Mexico in the early 1800s, during which time they maintained some loyalty to their former faith (and identity).

While the book is about Monteros, I also wanted to find out how it was possible that he would be able to continue his line of thinking so many centuries after the Jews were told to leave the Iberian Peninsula or convert to Catholicism. I studied the lives of people (who might be *conversos*) at the highest levels of the monarchy and the church to see how they might have found ways to keep the beliefs and traditions alive. In a story that begins in the early 1300s and continues three hundred years, I find traces of thought, beliefs, and a sense of identity that would have strongly influenced a person such as Monteros. Central to these narratives is the circulation of



Marie-Theresa Hernández, Ph.D.

books. A key figure in this was a close aide to King Phillip II named Benito Arias Montano who wrote, published, and coordinated the transport of hundreds of books to the Americas. These books remained in libraries for centuries and were accessible to local clergy. In the most famous case of a secret Jew who was executed by the Mexican Inquisition in 1596, a young man named Luis Carvajal, *el mozo* (the younger), had access to a number of books that provided information on Judaism, while he worked at the famous Mexico City library of Santiago del Tlatelolco. (The Inquisition had banned the books Carvajal was reading.)

Writing this book was an adventure. The stories were fascinating. The early chapters of the book are about the first virgin of Guadalupe whose statue appeared in Spain between 1200 and 1300 A.D. She is also known as *la Morenita de las Villuerkas*. She does not look like the Mexican Guadalupe. In fact, she resembles the Virgin of San Juan de los Lagos, except her skin is coal black, and she is holding an infant. She is housed in what had been known as the wealthiest monastery in all of Spain. During the 1500s, the Hieronymite monastic order (known as *los Geronimos*) in charge of the Guadalupe sanctuary was closely associated with the monarchy, many of the monks coming from the nobility. The monks were known to be an order full of *conversos*, as were many of the people in the village surrounding the monastery. In this way, the first Guadalupe was associated with the presence of *conversos*.

Fast forward to the Mexican Inquisition. The year is 1648. Hundreds of Portuguese living in Mexico have been arrested over the past six years. The jails are overflowing. Inquisition officials need to find extra space. A new Viceroy arrives and promptly dies. Before his death, he commissions a book on the Virgin of Guadalupe. The author is to be Miguel Sánchez, a priest in Mexico City who lived at the Sanctuary of the Virgin. Sánchez is devoted to the Mexican Guadalupe. Yet, he writes some curious things in his book on Guadalupe. He says she is a *menorah* – a Jewish symbol. He says she is a woman clothed in the sun – a fantastic image that resonates with the Jewish Shekhinah ... known as the feminine aspect of God that is often represented by a blinding light or fire. He notes that the eyes of the Inquisition are everywhere. He says they are “vigilant.” Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, ninety percent of his book, *Imagen de la Virgen Maria de Guadalupe*, focuses on the Old Testament, something that normally would have led to Miguel Sánchez being arrested by the Inquisition. Instead, he went on to be famous and at his death was lauded as the greatest orator in the colony, beloved by all.

# Maricarmen Velazquez

My name is Maricarmen Velazquez. I am seventeen years old and a senior at Stephen F. Austin High School. I was born and raised in Houston, and I am the third child of four. In my family, education is very important, because my parents did not have that opportunity in Mexico. Growing up in an environment where my dad was never around because he was always busy working was difficult for me. In sixth grade, I developed low self-esteem. I did not know who I was and became insecure. I didn't trust people. It was hard for me to concentrate in school. However, my parents never gave up on me. When I came home from school, I would leave my report card on the table for my parents to see. They both would always tell me, "Why a ninety-seven and not a hundred?" I was always motivated by my teachers at Houston Gateway Academy (HGA), a charter school, to continue to reach for success. The following year, I changed schools to Hartman Middle School, which was a big transition for me.

Going from a charter school to a public school was a major transition. For instance, the charter school had a lower population of students compared to public schools. When the school year began, I noticed that academics was not emphasized. Even so, at Hartman I became recognized for my grades. Many of the students knew to come to me if they needed "help." I wanted to help them but, unfortunately, some of them just wanted to cheat. This made me feel uncomfortable in this school, but I couldn't move back to my old school, so I persevered. When I graduated from middle school in 2012, I received the perfect attendance and outstanding math student awards.

Math is the subject I enjoy the most, because I find it to be a resource that will be useful after I graduate from high school. My love for math was inspired by my second grade math teacher, Mrs. Wright. Mrs. Wright's teaching style was filled with many narrative examples. These stories which she wove into the mathematical problems made us eager to solve the numerical problems. Math class was a place where many of us could feel confident and skillful after solving difficult problems. As a student, I have grown to love math because of the knowledge I have gained from each math course I have taken.

In the fall of 2012, I enrolled at Stephen F. Austin High School. My freshman year, I met new people that helped build my self-esteem. The first program I joined was the Academic Achievers Program (AAP), and this provided me with the support I need



Maricarmen Velazquez

to succeed. AAP offers SAT classes, training on writing admission essays, and the opportunity to engage in community service events. We also have mentors, tutors in specific subjects, and scholarship opportunities. One of these opportunities is that the program will grant me a \$12,000 scholarship if I earn admission to the University of Houston. We also have guest speakers who share their personal stories of how they overcame their struggles. I have learned that I am not the only one who has a difficult story. In summary, I would say that AAP has inspired me to work hard to succeed.

Now, I enjoy my time in school. In addition to AAP, I serve as the battalion commander for Houston ISD's 6th Army JROTC Battalion, treasurer for the Science National Honor Society, historian for Student Council, and I am a member of the National Honor Society, Science Club, Interact Club, and Emerging Latino Leaders. The Interact Club is a program that exposes young students to the needs of the community by feeding the homeless and participating in shoe drives to give to the needy. Also, I am the captain for the Lady Mustangs Soccer Team and the commander of the Austin High School Primary Color Guard Team. The student I am today is the result of acquiring good habits from these different organizations.

My story has recently had a few positive changes. My father spends more time with us, and my family is now tied together like a knot. I am no longer insecure about myself, and I have high self-esteem. I consider myself to be a person who is loyal, caring, and responsible, someone who does not give up easily when obstacles are present. From these experiences, I learned that I can be someone in life, someone who is a goal-driven and who desires success.

My goal is to attend the University of Houston where I plan to major in Elementary Education. My career aspiration is to become an elementary school teacher, because in my early years of school my teachers motivated me to aim for success and to never give up. I hope that one day I am able to set the example for future generations. I know that teachers do not earn high salaries but the only pay I would love to receive is to see a child develop the passion to learn as much as I did when I was in elementary school.

I believe a good education is the key to success. I am thankful for my teachers, mentors, and, most of all, my family, because without them I would not be the person I am today, someone who makes the right decisions and who will inspire others that share similar experiences.

# Carlos Amaya

My name is Carlos Amaya, and I am a junior at Stephen F. Austin High School. I was born in Houston, but my dad was born in El Salvador, and my mom in Mexico.

Throughout my childhood, I have always been told by my parents to try my best in school. They would tell me that they did not want me to struggle or live paycheck-to-paycheck like they did. They told me to find a career that not only paid well, but also one that I was deeply passionate about. If I had passion, they said my job would not feel like a “job,” but more like a hobby, like something that I wouldn’t mind doing for free. Since neither of my parents went to college, they would constantly stress the idea of getting a higher education. They would not take “no” for an answer. I would guess that since my parents had me when they were very young that my birth made it impossible for them to pursue a higher education. For instance, my father had to drop out of high school in order to support our family. They knew that if I went to a university, I would have more career opportunities to choose from and could find something that I truly enjoyed studying.

I received good grades throughout my elementary school years and always received commendations for my scores on the TAKS test, but I failed to give my best effort. I thought that it was pointless to turn in my best work if colleges were not going to look at my middle school grades. Since universities only look at the work you do in high school, I did not see the value in trying to earn good grades. However, during my freshman year in high school, I regretted my attitude and realized that the classes in middle school laid the foundation for future classes in high school, such as Algebra and Biology, and not paying attention as much as I should have led me to struggle with these basic classes. I also realized that I no longer had time to slack off and turn in mediocre work if I wanted to attend a good university and study Computer Engineering.

My passion for technology and science started when I was young. Ever since I can remember, I have been intrigued with the way electronics works and how it has been developed to ease the lives of people. When I received my first computer in the fourth grade, I was amazed by how something so complex and intricate could be so affordable. To this day, I still find it exciting how quickly technology is advancing, and it is inspiring to me to realize that the digital revolution has just begun. This unprecedented transformation in history, from the industrial age



Carlos Amaya

to the digital age, is something that I definitely want to be part of. I would like to use my knowledge of computers in the future to benefit others in a positive way, such as, by creating websites where others can become involved in helping those in need.

Science has been interesting to me as well, and throughout my childhood, I watched numerous documentaries dealing with space and read books on the subject. One day, I would like to work in the aerospace industry by designing and developing computers, because I feel that this career path would involve both of my passions.

Out of all of the extracurricular activities I am involved with, such as the National Honor Society, Skills USA, and the NASA Aerospace Scholars Program, I find the Academic Achievers Program to be one of the most rewarding. Fortunately, I discovered AAP after recruiters came to one of my classes during my freshman year and told us what it was about and how it could benefit us. At first, I was hesitant to apply and doubted whether I would be accepted, but now I am glad that I did, because AAP has benefited me in multiple ways. First, I have learned how to manage my time more effectively. Second, I receive academic and emotional support from our mentors. Third, I benefit from the inspiring and motivational speakers who I can relate to. The program has inspired me to work harder in school and not only to take the opportunities that are given to me, but also to seek them out as well. We also participate in many community service events and give our time to multiple charities and causes like building a school park for children and playing flag football for charity events. I enjoy doing this and hope to participate in more projects in the future.

As I am entering my senior year at Stephen F. Austin High School, I am working hard to keep my grades as high as possible. I enjoy taking the most rigorous courses, because I feel they are preparing me for the college-level work that I will undertake in the near future. I plan on majoring in my passion—computer engineering. I have always been interested in computers and technology, particularly in how different components and parts work together to accomplish tasks that make life easier for people. After learning about computer engineering, I knew it was something that I would like, and I have been pursuing this goal ever since. Ultimately, I want to make a positive impact on my community and the rest of the world as well, and set a good example for my nine-year-old brother.

# Melanie Salazar

*"If you're not willing to learn, no one can help you. If you're determined to learn. No one can stop you."*

—Anonymous

My grandparents came to the United States in the 1960s to seek a better life for their family. Two years later, when my father started school, he didn't speak or read English. Nevertheless, he was able to learn English and graduate from high school. My father didn't continue his education because he had a family to support.

This fall I am a senior at Stephen F. Austin High School, and I will be able to pursue higher education. I want to take advantage of this opportunity for my father because he never had an opportunity to attend college. Early in my life, my parents and I made a commitment to do everything within our power to instill in me a love of learning and an understanding of the importance of hard work. Because of my parents' love and sacrifice over the years, I have devoted myself to academic accomplishments. Now I have the opportunity to become a successful person by attending college and realizing my long-term goal and my parents' dream for me.

My hard work, determination, and perseverance have led me to accomplish what I initially thought was impossible. I have earned A's in all of my classes in high school and am the valedictorian of my class. I enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses beginning in sophomore year of high school. I am especially proud of earning high grades in statistics, the Spanish language, and Spanish Literature. In fact, my grades were high enough in these classes to earn college credit hours and be awarded the AP Scholar Award. My score on the statistics test was the highest ever earned at Austin High School.

My favorite subject is math. It excites me so much. This is what I do when I am faced with a difficult problem—I continue to work on it until I find the solution. I am absolutely drawn into the problem and solving the problem. What I like is that every calculation has a justification that supports it. When solving a math problem, the answer is either right or wrong; there is no in-between. Due to my love for mathematics, I have taken every math course offered at my high school. I hope in the future that I can apply my knowledge of mathematics to any real world problem.

Some of my other accomplishments include being one of forty students from the entire Houston area to be accepted into the Tapia Math-Science Scholars Program at Rice University. At high school, I am the vice president of my class and I am in numerous clubs, organizations, and programs such as the National Honor Society, Science National Honor Society, Interact Club, Student Council, the Magnet Program, Academic Achievers Program, and Science Club. Through the Science Club, I participated in environment improvement by cleaning local beaches. As a club, we contributed to Operation Gracias and donated money to families



Melanie Salazar

in need of a Thanksgiving dinner. We also supported runners of the Houston 25K Run with enthusiasm and handed out Gatorade and water.

I am also a member of the Academic Achievers Program (AAP), sponsored by the UH Center for Mexican American Studies. This is a college-preparation program that provides tutoring, workshops, leadership opportunities, and also engages in community service. Our specific community service has included raising money for the American Cancer Society and the Down Syndrome Association of Houston. We also participated in creating holiday cards for the elderly. Our AAP workshops include topics such

as anti-bullying, health awareness, and choosing between career possibilities. Academic Achiever students have achieved higher grades and better graduation rates from high school, and I am proud to be among them.

Both of my older brothers have been in the Academic Achievers Program. My oldest brother, Bryan Salazar, joined the program when he was in high school, just like me, and has graduated from the University of Houston. With a major in History and a minor in Education with a Social Studies 7-12 teacher certificate, he will start teaching social studies in Sam Houston High School in fall 2015. My other brother, Steven Salazar, is currently a sophomore at the University of Houston and is a member of the Academic Achievers Program as well. He is majoring in Petroleum Engineering. The Academic Achievers Program has helped them greatly through academic support, leadership retreats, and mentoring. They have set a great example for me by being on the Honor Roll almost every semester.

Just like my brothers, I am very privileged to be a part of the Academic Achievers Program and would like to thank the staff for their guidance and dedication to student learning. I am sure the program will continue to help future generations of students achieve their dreams of a higher education.

My future goal is to major in Biomedical Engineering and minor in both Statistics and Spanish. With my degree, I plan to have a long and prosperous career that will benefit my community and the medical industry. As a biomedical engineer, I want to analyze and design solutions to problems in biology and medicine, with the goal of improving the quality and effectiveness of patient care. These engineers design systems and products, such as artificial internal organs, artificial devices that replace body parts, and machines for diagnosing medical problems. Also, I plan to attend graduate school to continue on with a master's and Ph.D. My Hispanic community needs more people to demonstrate the importance of having a college education and how each and every one has the potential to achieve what they desire. And, of course, the community needs more programs like Academic Achievers.

## Marcelo Martinez

My name is Marcelo Martinez, and I am currently a senior at Stephen F. Austin High School. I was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. My twenty-three-year-old sister, my thirteen-year-old brother, and I moved to the U.S in pursue of a better life. I was eight years old when we embarked on this life-changing journey.

One of the main reasons we moved from Mexico to the U.S. was because my mother passed away. In Dallas, we lived with one of my cousins for a couple of months, and then we moved to Houston to live with my oldest brother who has always played the role of my dad. My siblings and I had to find a way to survive and look for a better life. When I first got to Dallas, I was so excited and impressed to see the huge buildings. School was hard. I was in bilingual classes but would only speak Spanish. I did not feel that the English language was necessary. It was not until I moved to Houston and started school that I realized that I needed to learn English because I did not understand the teachers. Luckily, my sister-in-law's younger nephew helped me learn English, and within a couple of years, I was able to speak it. The difficult part was learning how to write it.

When I was in fourth grade I received my first award, a commendation for my English and Math scores on the TAKS test. I also received a perfect attendance award at all grade levels. After I graduated from Brookline Elementary and enrolled in Jackson Middle School, I started making all A's and was placed on the honor roll. I continued to be on the honor roll throughout my entire middle school.

Math is my favorite subject in school. I love math because it is the language of logic and reason. Math became my favorite subject when I moved from Mexico to the U.S. because it was the only subject I understood. Math is exciting to me because it challenges the mind and has many secrets and shortcuts to it. For example, in algebra and calculus there are long ways of finding the variables  $x$  and  $y$  but by knowing formulas you are able to find the answer in two steps. I find this process to be very interesting and would like to do this full-time in my chosen career. That is a crucial reason for my choice of a major in civil engineering. It is a career that requires many math courses, and I am thrilled with the challenges that await me.

When I entered Austin High School, my goals were to graduate and attend a community college because I could not afford to go to a university. In my sophomore year, my friend Maricarmen Velasquez told me about the Academic Achievers Programs (AAP)



Marcelo Martinez

sponsored by CMAS at the University of Houston. She told me the program had an open spot and that I should check it out. I did and it was the best decision I have ever made. I applied, was interviewed, and then accepted into the program.

Ms. Fely Aguilar, the coordinator for AAP, provided me with a great deal of information. She told me that I needed to work hard and make good grades and that I would definitely have the opportunity to attend the University of Houston. Since joining the program, I have attended mandatory skills and personal enrichment workshops in areas such as note taking, exam preparation, time management, conflict management, and how to prepare a résumé. AAP also offers a mandatory leadership retreat. The retreat workshops emphasize the benefits of a college education, public speaking, and the importance of serving one's community. Leaders such as Roberto Arenas from the DOW Chemical Company, Marlen Trujillo, CEO of Spring Branch Community Center, and Dr. Carolina Jimenez from the UH Counseling and Psychological Services conduct workshops. We also engage in recreational activities to help us learn team-building skills.

During the school semesters, AAP also provides mentors to us that not only help us with our educational issues but also with our personal issues. Our mentors are Austin High School alumni and are currently students at the University of Houston and members of AAP-UH. They have been in our shoes and have overcome similar obstacles. They help us believe in ourselves, and they are a constant reminder that if they could do it we can as well.

AAP has made a huge impact in my life. I will be graduating in May of 2016, and I will be attending the University of Houston and joining the AAP – UH group. My goal is to graduate from UH with a degree in civil engineering. I have already worked in the construction industry with my older brother, and I am very familiar with how the construction process works. By getting a college degree in civil engineering, I can hire my brother to work for me. He is very knowledgeable of the entire construction process and, at times, I've observed that he even knows more than the civil engineers.

I am working hard to graduate at the top of my class and get accepted into the College of Engineering at the University of Houston. I want to make my brother proud and be able to give back to him for all of the sacrifices he has made for me.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS - UH Spring 2015 Update

Under the able guidance of Ms. Rebeca Trevino, the AAP-UH Program saw the 2014-15 academic year's graduation of the following students: Yelineth Bradburn in Biology, Johan Casella in Business, Jonathan Contreras in Mechanical Engineering TECH, Javier Hernandez in Psychology, Maria Lugo in Health, Alberto Pena in Supply Chain and Logistics TECH, Christy Castillo in Business, Melissa Gil in Human Nutrition and Foods, Teresa Nguyen in Kinesiology, Bryan Salazar in History, Karina Hernandez in Business Management, Iliana Gonzalez in Psychology, Omar Rodriguez in Chemical Engineering, Abigail Leal in Public Relations, Hadill Calderon in Political Science, Abraham Reyes in Interdisciplinary Studies, and Lilian Rodriguez in Political Science.

Even though springtime is not a season normally associated with long hours of indoor study, the AAP-UH students proved otherwise with their spring 2015 average semester GPA of 3.1. Another of their impressive feats was their total of twenty-seven students on the university's honor roll for academic achievement. These students were: Melissa Barron, Wendy Berrios, Karen Bravo, Hadill Calderon, Christy Castillo, David Cervantes, Salvador Donado, Anisleidys Garcia, Myrna Garcia, Melissa Gil, Cristian Gonzalez, Iliana Gonzalez, Karina Hernandez, Ricardo Hernandez, Maria E. Hernandez, Ana Madrigal, Isidro Melendez, Jaira Pereznegron, Abraham Reyes, Melvin Rodriguez, Jordan Rosales, Bryan Salazar, Steven Salazar, Cynthia Vasquez, Andrea Velasquez, Jennifer

Velasquez, and Jessica L. Varela.

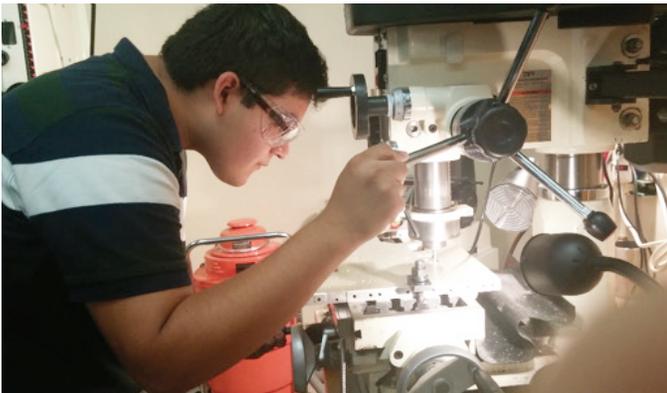
During the hottest part of the year, two AAP-UH students participated in the 2015 NASA Summer Internship. The students were Jose Amaya, a junior in Chemical Engineering and Daniel Rivera, also a junior but in Mechanical Engineering. Both students worked at NASA in the International Space Station Medical Project (ISSMP).

Sixteen new students were admitted into AAP-UH in the fall 2015, bringing the total head count to eighty-two. The new students and their parents participated in a New Member Orientation on July 24, 2015.

Other program activities include two job site visits: one to CITGO Petroleum Corporation, coordinated by former employee Eduardo Elizondo; and one to Lopez Negrete Communications, coordinated by AAP alumnus Luis Orozco, who serves in the capacity of an account executive there. Additionally, five AAP students attended the inaugural Conference for Women sponsored by the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

The large community service project for the AAP students took place on May 23, 2015, when the students volunteered during a mandatory service day to assist the children served by the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston.

Please stay tuned for our next update highlighting the academic achievements of our hard-working and highly motivated AAP-UH students.



*Daniel Rivera - 2015 NASA Internship*



*2015 AAP Community Service Project*



*AAP students who attended the Lopez Negrete Communications job site visit*



*AAP students attending the 2015 Women's Conference sponsored by the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*

# ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS PROGRAM - AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL

## Summer Update

The Summer Session was a four-week program from June 1 to June 26, 2015 that included academic sessions, self-improvement workshops, career presentations, and field trips. This year the entire event was hosted at UH-Central campus with a welcoming address and farewell from Dr. Tatcho Mindiola.

The following presentations were made: College Admissions Essay, Jennifer Velasquez, UH student-mentor; College Algebra, Nery Gamez, Mr. Erick Dominquez, UH student-mentors; Video Production by Alma Andrade, Jessica Varela, Isaac Lopez, UH student-mentors.

Workshops were given by Brandon Thompson, Lubricants Product Specialist, CITGO; Gonzalo Munoz, UH MIS student, President, Hispanic Business Student Association; Barrio Writers by MASSO; Youth Empowerment Alliance, UH Student Organization; Jennifer Pluma, UH student, C. T. Bauer Entrepreneurial Program; Relaxation Methods, Elizabeth Aleman, Pasadena ISD teacher; Roberto Arenas, Project Manager Performance Materials, The Dow Chemical Company; Healthy Relationships and Boundaries, Stephanie Hernandez, Houston Area Women's Center; and Careers in Architecture, Minelia De Leon, UH Student.

This year's primary field trip was an excursion to Pirates Bay Water Park in Baytown, Texas with a shorter field trip to watch movies.

The AAP-Austin Leadership Development Retreat occurred from Friday, July 17 to Sunday, July 19, 2015 at Camp Allen in Navasota, TX.

During this annual weekend-long leadership development retreat, the students are required to attend a series of academic and self-improvement workshops. Some of the presentations are listed below:

- Welcome, Lorenzo Cano, Associate Director, CMAS
- Overview of Agenda and Ice-Breaker, Fely Aguilar, Special Programs Counselor, CMAS
- Challenge Course, Camp Allen Staff
- Jobs with the City of Houston, Maria Lugo, Sanitarian 1, City of Houston
- Working in the Research Field, Alejandra Castellano, M.D. Anderson Cancer Center
- Working in the Maritime Industry, Fatima De Leon, Community Relations and Events Administrator, Port of Houston Authority
- You Will Achieve Your Dream, Maria Vega, Elementary Bilingual Teacher, Houston HISD



Guest Speaker Roberto Arenas - DOW



Guest Speaker Elizabeth Aleman - PIS



Video Production Workshop



Camp Allen - Challenge Course



Barrio Writers



Dr. Mindiola - Farewell to AAP - Austin



Camp Allen

## CMAS Speaker Series 2015



### Associate Professor Natalia Molina

University of California, San Diego

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

**Topic:** How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts



### Writer Sergio Troncoso

Yale Writer's Conference

Friday, March 27, 2015

**Topic:** A Mexican American Writer's Life: Creating Character, Building Readership



### Professor Matt Garcia

Arizona State University

Thursday, April 9, 2015

**Topic:** Beyond the Legend: César Chávez, Charismatic Leadership, and the Relevance of Accountability



### Professor David Diaz

California State University, Los Angeles

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

**Topic:** Houston's Economy, Urban Policy Challenges, and the Central Role of Latinos in the Future of Wealth Generation of the Region



### Professor Pamela Orpinas

University of Georgia

Thursday, April 23, 2015

**Topic:** Trajectories of Bullying from Middle to High School: Implications for Prevention

## From the Director *continued from page 1*

realized that it was probably not practical to fire a teacher on behalf of only one (of two) Mexican American students in the school. Nevertheless, this year of anxiety and social ostracism, first by my teacher, and subsequently, by my peers who had once been my friends, left its mark, and education became my personal mission. As an academic, it became my research focus.

Thus, as I enter this position, I contemplate the status of education of Latinos in the U.S. Between 2012 and 2060, the number of Latino children is projected to increase by 16.2 million. Yet, as most of you already know, currently only 25 to 50% preschool age Latino children are enrolled in school. And, although the number has declined significantly, nearly 15% of Latinos ages 16 to 24 are high school dropouts, and those Latinos who are foreign-born have much higher rates (nearly three times the number of dropouts). Clearly, Latino children and youth are a critical part of our communities and our future workforce. We also know from research that while access to education is critical, success in school extends well beyond access. It is also the creation of an environment that recognizes and addresses the academic potential of youth, their social and cultural realities, and their personal needs. Increasingly, public elementary and secondary school systems have been restructured as a quasi-market as states have retreated from addressing the needs of their citizens to exhorting citizens to address their own needs. In such a context, parents are presented as responsible consumers who select the best educational alternatives for their children. Public higher education must also battle to justify

itself, and “Ethnic Studies” is now met with greater scrutiny or seen as no longer necessary as we head into a reportedly *post-racial* era.

At such a time, how do we assure that CMAS continues to make a difference both within and beyond the walls of the university? In the larger national and global contexts of increasing economic insecurity, and assaults on immigration and public education, how do we prepare Latino youth to achieve their life goals? How do we promote an understanding among youth that they are both *entitled* to full civic and economic participation and *obligated* to make the world a better place?

As incoming Director of CMAS, I embrace this struggle and believe that how we respond to these challenges will dictate our relevance as a Center and a field of study with meaningful consequence. I look forward to the opportunity to work with students, colleagues, and the community as we continue to strive to reach our potential as a Center that 1) educates and prepares Latino youth to become productive global citizens, 2) serves as a conduit of research and information for the public, and 3) addresses the needs of the greater Houston community. The increasing power of the Latino community demands vibrant leadership, and I promise to serve with integrity and energy. I am happy to follow in the footsteps of Professor Mindiola and like him, my goal is to provide leadership that inspires each of us to serve ends larger than ourselves.

Pamela Anne Quiroz, Ph.D.  
*Director*

## Eduardo Elizondo *continued from page 1*

mutual goals of bettering lives and people through the acquisition of marketable skills and education.

For instance, Elizondo has functioned as a case manager for the Young Fathers Program for Community Family Centers in a program to provide counseling and mentorship to assist in the development of social and communication skills as well as a continuance of education with job training and then job placement.

Another of Elizondo’s jobs was as a senior career advisor for Gary Job Corps. In this capacity, Elizondo managed eleven career advisors assisting over seven hundred Job Corps graduates in effective placement in jobs matching their skill sets. These goals were accomplished largely through developing productive professional relationships with area-wide employers.

In his jobs, Elizondo has found ways to stay true to his goals of assisting others in acquiring education and skills for life-enhancement. He says that this is part of why he has continued his close relationship with CMAS: “We have the same goal for people going beyond high school, and sometimes beyond an undergraduate degree. CMAS has demonstrated over and over again that a student’s hard work and an organization’s mentorship can change the path of a young person’s life.”

Elizondo is proud to be a connection across the generations at CMAS. In fact, he fondly recalls the days of his own post-baccalaureate studies and his teaching for CMAS every time he ascends the concrete stairs of Agnes Arnold Hall. Elizondo finds it immensely rewarding to still participate as a mentor for young

college students in the CMAS programs. After all, Elizondo is living proof of the success in the job place that a good education can buy.

Elizondo is also proud of introducing his former employer, CITGO Petroleum Corporation, to CMAS by inviting their representatives to one of the annual galas. He had thought that CITGO’s employees would be impressed by the young students’ overcoming-the-odds stories, and he was right. At present, CITGO has become a loyal and generous funder of the Academic Achievers Program, helping to steer young Hispanic undergraduates toward a brighter future based on solid academic achievement and strong job skills.

CITGO’s participation has gone even further than this crucial funding of the Academic Achievers Program. The corporation has sponsored CMAS students for internships at the company and also arranged for jobsite visits by the students, even going so far as to orchestrate the job site visits according to the students’ majors and GPAs. Elizondo says: “The people at CITGO have been so impressed by the CMAS students—how well prepared they are academically. How professionally they act. CMAS is turning out a quality product which businesses appreciate.”

Elizondo finishes by saying, “Almost twenty years later after my first coursework, I am still connected to CMAS. It’s because of Dr. Mindiola. He’s honest and genuine. He truly wants to help other people, and he’s helped me in my career. I have the utmost respect for him—that’s why I still want to help.”

0073011059  
University of Houston  
Center for Mexican American Studies  
Agnes Arnold Hall  
3553 Cullen Boulevard, Room 323  
Houston, TX 77204-3001

Visit us at [www.class.uh.edu/cmas](http://www.class.uh.edu/cmas)



**19th annual**

# Noche Cultural

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

**JOHN QUIÑONES**

*BROADCAST JOURNALIST AND HOST OF  
PRIMETIME: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?*

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR**

**FRIDAY  
NOVEMBER 6, 2015  
5:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.**

UNIVERSITY of  
**HOUSTON**

CENTER for MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES