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CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES

Noticias

FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Dr. Tatcho Mindiola*

The Academic Achievers Program (AAP), sponsored by the Center for Mexican American Studies and the Office of the President, was recently evaluated for the third time by the University of Houston's Office of Institutional Research. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess retention and graduation rates among the students we support with scholarships, tutoring, skills workshops, and leadership activities. These activities are graciously funded by donors from the broader community. We hoped to show progress not only because the need to increase the number of Hispanics with a college degree is great but also, and very importantly, to illustrate to our donors that their investment in our students is paying dividends.

In comparison to other full-time undergraduates, AAP students are consistently retained and graduate from the University of Houston at higher rates than other non-AAP Hispanic students and than all other undergraduate students. According to the evaluation, 75% of AAP students who

entered the University between fall 2003 and fall 2006 were either still enrolled or had graduated by fall 2010. That nearly doubles the graduation and retention rate of 41% for non-AAP Hispanic students and is significantly higher than the rate of 59% for all other undergraduates during the same time.

We accomplish these higher rates not only by providing the students with the services cited above but also by having monthly meetings, an annual leadership retreat, and a lounge with computers where students can congregate and study.

We also closely monitor academic progress. If someone is lagging in grades or attendance, he/she is immediately counseled and advised that his/her AAP benefits are in jeopardy. Students also know we have an "open door" policy. They can walk into our offices at any time to discuss their concerns or visit. The dedicated staff that oversees the AAP is vital, especially Mrs. Rebeca Treviño, the Program Manager. Mrs. Trevino goes well beyond her responsibilities in helping the students achieve their goal of graduating from college. This is why she is so respected and admired by the students and by their parents.

Continued on page 9

Juanita Elizondo: Serving Hispanics in the Houston Community

Longtime CMAS and community supporter, Juanita Elizondo, has spent many years finding ways to help better life for Hispanics in the Houston community. Both as a tireless volunteer and in her position as director of Corporate Relations for Fiesta Mart, Inc, she has kept the commitment of service to the community at the forefront of her life. This same commitment coupled with her professional role has been the cornerstone for many valuable donations to the CMAS programs. As a graduate of UT-Austin with both a bachelor's and a master's degree in Sociology, she has a deep understanding of the positive dynamics of obtaining a college education.

Elizondo became aware of CMAS by attending annual Noche Cultural banquets. Hearing the vivid personal stories of the participating students inspired her to become involved with CMAS well over a decade ago. From her viewpoint as a successful corporate manager, she understands the

*Juanita Elizondo*

Academic Achievers Program's value in both building careers and lives. She says, "The Academic Achievers Program is so wonderful because it gives young people the opportunity to learn so much by going *beyond* their immediate surroundings. A whole new world is opened up for them. Historically, Hispanics haven't had these types of opportunities in the areas of education and jobs. If not for programs like the ones at CMAS, these opportunities wouldn't exist for these students."

When Elizondo began working for Fiesta Mart, Inc. in Human Resources, she brought her experiences from working at the City of Houston in the Affirmative Action Division of the Mayor's Office and the Public Library. Her original position with Fiesta Mart, Inc. was also in Human Resources, but over time she saw the need for a division that directed the company's corporate contributions program and managed both community and government

Continued on page 9

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Carlos Ordonez: Theoretical Physicist	3
Vera Lopez: Visiting Scholar Studying Risk Taking among Female Adolescents	4
Cristian Gonzalez	5
Jesus Treviño	6
Itzel Avila	7
AAP-UH Fall Semester Updates	8
2010 Sponsored Events	10



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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.



Carlos R. Ordonez: Theoretical Physicist

After graduation in 1986 with a Ph.D. in physics from UT-Austin, Ordonez went to Vanderbilt University for a one-year post-doctoral position. In the spring of that year, a colleague invited him to give a presentation at UH and, as they say, the rest is history. Creative funding and CMAS leadership provided the opportunity to bring Ordonez to UH almost immediately. Now, he is an associate professor in the Department of Physics with a long-term interest in high-energy theory with an emphasis on quantum field theory and aspects of quantum gravity and black hole thermodynamics. His research has provided important contributions to theoretical nuclear physics. He is currently investigating the role of conformal quantum mechanics in black hole thermodynamics and its connection with string theory.

Ordonez is quite eloquent when explaining his role as a theoretical physicist. He says, “Theoretical physicists don’t do experiments. Instead, we study what scientists have found in their experiments. Then, we postulate new theories. I think of it as ‘intellectual elegance.’ We marry the real world with mathematics. We are looking for simple axioms that encompass the greatest amount of reality. This involves constant re-learning and a willingness to see more and more data in a ‘simple’ fashion.”

Ordonez received his initial schooling in his own country of Panama. In fact, it was his high school Catholic priest-professors who fostered his interest in the conceptual basis of physics by their own interest in the philosophical crux of science. “I have wanted to be a physicist since I was 15 years old,” he says. His enthusiasm carried him forward in his studies at the University of Panama, where he graduated with honors in 1979 with a B.S. in physics.

Excellence in teaching is a matter of pride for Ordonez, and he has taught undergraduate and graduate courses in physics and mathematics at every university and college where he taught throughout his career, e.g. The Rockefeller University, New York University, The Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, The Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of Santa Barbara, Vanderbilt University, and The University of Texas at Austin. At UH he has taught introductory physics, junior-level electromagnetism, graduate-level quantum mechanics, quantum field theory, the introduction to string theory, and specialized topics.

In addition to his teaching duties, Ordonez has worked for years to try to increase the low numbers of Hispanic students

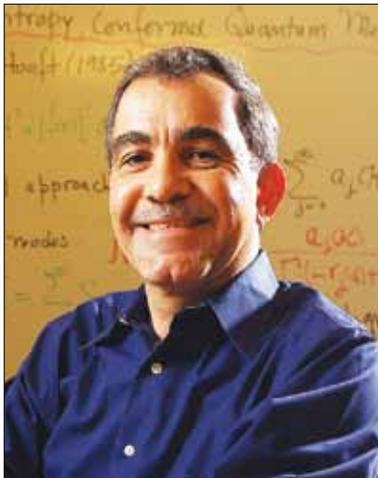


Photo by Fernando Bravo

Carlos R. Ordonez, Ph.D.

represented in the sciences. In 1986, he was a founding member of the National Society of Hispanic Physicists. He also mentors pre-university students and often visits schools in the Houston community. His most extensive outreach efforts have been on the international front. He was one of the founding members of the Pan-American Association for Physics. In 1998, he established the World Laboratory Center for Pan-American Collaboration in Science and Technology at UH. In the six-year time span between 1998-2004, 14 postdoctoral fellows from Mexico and South America were brought to work with prominent UH scientists in the fields of biology, chemistry, and physics.

He is currently helping Dr. Fernando Quevedo, the director of the International Center for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy, to establish one or more Pan-American ICTP US-based centers. Ordonez’ eyes light up when he speaks of his work in assisting others “Collaboration—I love collaboration. Helping people find funding, helping students find the ‘right’ research position. I derive great pleasure in helping others make the right connections.”

Not surprisingly, in 2009 Ordonez received the John Wheatley Award “for his extensive contributions to developing physics throughout Latin America, and especially for his work with the World Laboratory to expand its efforts on US-Latin American exchange and cooperation.” Ordonez added this prestigious award to a list of other coveted honors, such as his designations as a World Laboratory Fellow, a Simon Guggenheim Fellow, and a member of the American Physical Society.

While Ordonez laments the cultural biases that lead many U.S. Hispanic students to focus on the short-term goal of earning money quickly rather than the long-term goal of becoming a scientist, he is hopeful that the work of CMAS, himself, and many others will lead more Hispanic undergrads into the sciences as a career. He points out that while there are a number of Hispanic undergraduates in the sciences, very few of these students go to graduate school. Thus, the Hispanic graduate students in the sciences are mostly from Latin America.

Ordonez applauds the important visibility afforded all Hispanic/Latino faculty by the Latino Faculty Council. He keeps informed as the council works on issues affecting Latino students and faculty and enjoys the professional camaraderie. 



Vera Lopez: Visiting Scholar Studying Risk Taking among Female Adolescents

This year's visiting scholar, Dr. Vera Lopez, has come to UH from the School of Justice and Social Inquiry at Arizona State University (ASU). Lopez spent most of her childhood in southeast Houston, and she is thrilled to be in Houston again. As a visiting scholar, she is an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology at UH.

Lopez graduated *summa cum laude* in Psychology at UT-Austin in 1993. She completed an M.A. at her alma mater with a Master's thesis topic of "Social Acceptance and Gang Membership Among Mexican American Adolescents" in 1998 and a Ph.D. in 1999 with a dissertation entitled "Adolescent Male Offenders' Cognitions and Emotions: A Grounded Theory Study of Delinquent Crime Contexts." She completed a one-year clinical internship at the Institute for Juvenile Research at the University of Illinois-Chicago and a two-year NIMH funded post-doctoral research fellowship at ASU's Prevention Research Center. Her research interests include adolescent delinquency, sexual risk taking, substance use, and prevention. She has significant research and clinical experience working in the areas of juvenile justice and residential treatment settings.

This spring Lopez is teaching an undergraduate course entitled "Latina Adolescent Girls: Risk and Resiliency." Lopez is delighted with the opportunity to focus the scope of a similar honors course taught at ASU which previously included female adolescents in populations other than Mexican Americans. The course employs an interdisciplinary approach to facilitate a multifaceted understanding of Latina adolescents' risk and resiliency. Some of the pressing questions considered are: which factors put Latina girls at risk for a variety of outcomes, such as HIV, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, gang involvement, victimization, delinquency, and depression. The course will also consider which protective factors minimize risk and how gender, socio-cultural and economic situations enhance or minimize risk and protective factors. The students participate in class discussions, listen to videos and lectures, complete a variety of writing assignments and readings within the field, and listen to experts as guest lecturers. The broad range of students interested in the course speaks to a feature that Lopez considers one of the greatest strengths at UH, i.e. the school's commitment to proactively reach out to many different types of students.

When asked about her research, Lopez is careful to point out



Vera Lopez, Ph.D.

that she does not do research for research's sake. Rather, she determines what research within her areas of interest will help today's adolescents and increase their chances for doing well in life. Lopez says, "I want to be able to design a program for adolescent girls that will have a real effect on their lives. My work at UH is trying to better understand how Mexican American girls view themselves in relationships with boys both romantically and sexually." The study Lopez will complete for her Visiting Scholar project focuses on how Mexican American female adolescents in Houston make meaning of infidelity. The intent is to further understand how these perceptions influence sexual risk taking behaviors among sexually active girls.

Lopez' professional publications have appeared in a host of journals, including *Violence Against Women*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *Journal of Ethnicity in Substance Abuse*, and many others. She has also participated in writing book chapters, encyclopedia entries for the *Encyclopedia of Social Problems* and *Encyclopedia of Public Health*, book reviews, evaluation reports, and articles for popular media.

She has been a featured presenter for many community-based organizations seeking a better understanding of topics ranging from adolescent criminal offenders to sexual risk taking by adolescents. In addition, she has presented at conferences, such as the annual meetings of the American Society of Criminology, Society for the Study of Social Problems, and the Society of Behavioral Medicine.

Lopez' list of fellowships, professional awards, and honors extends back to 1989 with the National Hispanic Scholarship. She has received numerous honors and professional accolades. When asked which of these have had the greatest impact on her professional career, Lopez singled out the HIV Intervention Science Training Program at Columbia University, 2008-2010, which helped hone her grant writing skills.

Lopez is inspired by the first-generation college students she has met at UH, along with the aspiring college students in the CMAS Academic Achievers Program at Austin High School. Since it is one of Lopez' particular joys to work with adolescents, it is not surprising that she brings this joy into her focused dedication to help youth through her research skills and the teaching of those skills and methodologies to others. 



Cristian Gonzalez

My name is Cristian Gonzalez and currently I am a sophomore at Austin High School. My family has taught me to value education, and I know that it is something that I can take with me wherever I go.

My life began in Valle De Santiago, Mexico where I attended school until the age of nine. Everything went well, for I was involved in many after-school programs. However, my life changed when my father decided to move my family to America.

One of the main issues my family has faced is having a father classified as disabled since 1990 and who cannot work. Since my father's diagnosis of cancer, he went to a hospital and has fortunately survived to this day. But, his disability compensation is only \$1,550 a month and with the six of us children, it is difficult for my father to financially support us.

Regardless of our difficulties, I am thankful to have my family together at home. My oldest sister is attending college on financial aid, but she is not sure if she will continue since she might not qualify for financial aid in the upcoming semester. This same sister is my inspiration to do well in school and earn the highest degree possible. For the rest of my siblings, they are also instructed by my parents to excel in school. I can proudly say that all of them are trying to keep their grade average higher than a B, following my sister's example. We all hope to win as many scholarships as possible so that we can have a better future due to a good education.

My life here in America has taken many twists and turns. One of the first obstacles my family and I had to overcome was getting our papers. This not only cost a great amount of money but took the time to take pictures and fingerprints. It was a huge deal to me to be in the United States. This was the land that offered jobs and was known to be the greatest place in the world. Our first residence was living with my uncle at his home. He has four children of his own and with my father bringing six more, the house turned into chaos. Many times disagreements would occur. I will never forget the night that my uncle and father had a dispute over a gallon of milk. This caused my uncle to kick us



Cristian Gonzalez

out of his house, and the situation forced us to find a place for our family. We then relocated to some apartments. But life there was not safe, so we moved into a house. This is now the place that I can call home and feel secure when I am there.

Once we got settled in I was able to attend a new school and benefit from the new experiences that came there. I am happy to be able to get an American education and be a part of many after-school programs. I am a member of the Science Club, which teaches about the world and how recycling will help the world become a better place for all who inhabit it. Sea

Scouts is a program that exposes us to sailing and exploring the outdoors. Spanish Club helps me to not forget about my culture and where I came from. Robotics Skills USA is a club that teaches us about technology and about computers, e.g. how to work with software and fix computers. The DREAM club teaches us about engineering and architecture by providing activities to apply the skills required in these professions. In this program, I have had the opportunity to build a bridge house.

I can tell you, however, that the best program of all is the CMAS Academic Achievers Program. This program is going to help me with my college career by granting me a \$10,000 scholarship to the University of Houston, if I earn admission. In order to receive this help, I must fulfill certain requirements, like maintaining a GPA higher than 2.7, adhering to all the rules set by the mentors and the special program counselor, attend a four-week summer session, attend a weekend leadership retreat, complete one community service project each month, and attend one mandatory monthly meeting as well as attend one mandatory educational workshop each month. I consider the most important mandate of the program to be keeping my grades high. I am very proud to be in this program and intend to follow each and every single rule. I have strong college aspirations, and I am hoping to make my dreams come true by becoming a scientist, doctor, engineer, or architect. With all these hopes and dreams I carry, I plan to make a difference in the world and within my own family. 



Jesus Treviño

My name is Jesus Treviño, and I am a tenth grader at Austin High School. I was born in San Fernando, Tamaulipas, Mexico and came to the United States in 2002. My family and I came to the United States looking for better opportunities than in Mexico. When I first came to the United States, my family and I had to stay with one of my aunts in Friendswood for a year. Later, my family and I moved to Houston because my dad was looking for a job and, thankfully, found one here.

My first years in the United States were not what I expected. I did not like the feeling of missing all of my family and friends in Mexico. Not only was I homesick, but I encountered a language barrier. My first years here I did not know English, but my elementary school teachers helped me learn the language by dedicating extra time to teach me in the third grade. The following year, I learned a little more English, and I started to practice it during my spare time. Those years were the most difficult for me, because I needed to adapt myself to a new country with new traditions. I started to like being in Houston, making new friends and meeting people I hadn't known previously. I attended Peck Elementary School, and at the end of my fifth grade year I earned quite a few awards. Some of the awards I received include commended performance in Math TAKS, perfect attendance, being on the honor roll, and a distinguished award in all my classes for performing outstanding work. After leaving Peck Elementary, I attended Jackson Middle School. I maintained good grades and earned perfect scores on the TAKS test. I graduated from Jackson in 2008.

Then, I went to Austin High School. My freshman year, I was so proud to be placed in the Pre-Advanced Placement classes because those classes were challenging and competitive, and I liked that. The classes helped me grow as a person and academically as well. Now as a sophomore, I realize that the Advanced Placement classes will become even more challenging as the years go by.

But, one of the reasons I am confident about my current and future success is because of the Academic Achievers Program. This program encourages me to enroll in as many Advanced Placement classes as possible so I can be prepared for college.



Jesus Treviño

They also provide amazing mentors that not only help us with homework and scholarships but with personal issues as well. I still do not know what field I wish to major in, but I know for a fact that I will be someone with a purpose and an excellent job. Also, the \$10,000 scholarship that the Academic Achievers Program will grant me if I earn admissions to the University of Houston will help me become the first in my family to attend college. The program provides us with important information by bringing speakers with inspirational stories who talk about how they overcame their struggles. These types of stories motivate me to continue to do

my best.

However, even though I enjoy my time at school to the fullest, I also have hobbies and extra-curricular activities. Yes, the Academic Achievers Program is one of them, but I also participate in Sea Scouts, a program at the Port of Houston that allows us to participate in different activities, such as sailing, hiking, camping, and visits to the Port of Houston. Some of my hobbies include watching TV (especially soccer games), listening to music, playing video games, drawing, playing sports, hanging out with friends, and dancing.

A few things I forgot to mention about myself are that I am a very responsible person; I am also careful and very motivated. For a boy who is only 15 years of age, I consider myself very dedicated and optimistic about life. Giving up is not an answer for me; I always keep trying. I am the type of person that wants to achieve their dreams no matter what, so that one day I can become successful. I want to have a job with a fine salary and do my best in everyday life. I am also a very shy person who does not want to talk at a first meeting, but when I get to know someone I start to talk. I also enjoy helping my peers who are having trouble understanding classwork. I try to answer the questions they have and give them the best solution. I am a confident kid that has confidence in his friends. I not only respect myself but also respect my teachers, peers, and staff. I am a very punctual student and never late to class. My goal is to graduate from high school and from college. 🏠



Itzel Avila

My name is Itzel Avila, and I was born in Veracruz, Mexico. I lived there most of my life. When I was six years old, my parents filed for a divorce. It was one of the most difficult moments of my life. My mother had to leave our home and decided to move to Tamaulipas, Mexico. I was very close to her and suffered tremendously when we had to part. She would call every five days or so and send us money, but that never compensated for any of the pain I felt. I remember the first time she called to tell us she was fine and how much she loved us. I was too young to speak with her, so all I could do was look at her photograph under my pillow and cry myself to sleep with memories of those happy moments with her.

My mother would come to visit us once a year, and every time I hoped for a reconciliation between her and my dad. As the years passed, I finally understood that it would never happen. At that time, I lived with my dad, my aunt, Francisca, my grandmother, Amalia, and my three sisters, Flor, Maria, and Angela. In 2004, my older sister, Flor, left us to go live with my mother's parents. In 2005, we had one of the greatest losses in our family; my father's mother died in front of us, and my sisters and I had to clothe her body in her best clothes. Her dying wish was to be buried on our family's ranch. It is illegal to transport a dead body from one city to another, but we had no choice. We had to oblige her by carrying out her last wish. After my grandmother's death, my father was devastated and numbed by the pain. He found comfort in alcohol, drinking and crying. He would tell us how much he wanted to die but could not because we needed him.

In 2006, my mother was living in Houston, and she went to visit us in Veracruz to celebrate my sister's fifteenth birthday celebration. She arrived at Veracruz, Mexico on November 1, 2006, and the celebration was held on November 26, 2006 and she left for Houston in January of 2007. However, on November 20th, my mother took me to my grandparents, with whom I lived



Itzel Avila

for nine months. From there, my sister Maria and I moved in with my aunt Angela, who lived in Guachochi, Chihuahua, for one month. Finally, I arrived here in Houston, but my sister Maria went back to my grandparent's home. I arrived in Houston at the age of 13, but not legally. I did not have a visa, passport or any other type of permit to come here. I have to admit it was not easy to cross the border.

I know it was not right for me to come here illegally, but I wanted a better life for my family and me. I am in this country illegally, as I mentioned before, but I am not ashamed. I am here because I want to have a better future. I am currently living with my mother and my two sisters, Maria and Angela, and they are the ones that give me the support I need to live. I would like to study medicine and become a great pediatrician. In my family, it has been said that there is a curse plaguing every female that has tried to pursue a career. My mother, my sisters, and aunts have all wanted to become doctors, but until now no one has succeeded. Whether it is because they have to work, take care of their families, or just don't have the money to continue to study, none of my female relatives have been able to accomplish their professional career aspirations.

That is why I am taking the opportunity that the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) is giving me. I want to study and make my family see that this "curse" is not real, and, even if it is, I will be the one to break it. I also want my family to feel proud of me. If, and when, I accomplish my goals of attending college and becoming a pediatrician, I will be the first in my family to have a college degree. I adore my family, and I would do anything and everything for their happiness. I used to believe that I had no unique talent amongst all my family members, but I have realized that I am the only one that has a program that helps them academically and that will help me attend the University of Houston—the Academic Achievers Program. 



AAP-UH Fall Semester Updates

One of the keynote events during the fall semester for AAP-UH students was the annual Noche Cultural Banquet on October 21, 2010. This year's banquet was the fourteenth annual celebration in honor of the CMAS programs. It was a time when many UH and community leaders came together to celebrate the academic successes of the program's participants.

During each semester, AAP-UH students are hosted at companies for job site visits. On November 9, 2010, a group of AAP-UH students visited AAA Capital Management where they were hosted by Mr. Gerard Treviño, a member of the 2010 Noche Cultural Banquet committee.

On December 3, 2010, the Academic Achievers Program received a two-year grant from the Bank of America Charitable Foundation in the amount of \$100,000. Ten AAP students were named as Bank of America Scholars through the excellence of their academic work. These 10 students will receive funding for their education from the grant. The 10 students named along with their majors are: Christian Alvarez (Civil Engineering), Jaime Alvizar (Communications Public Relations/Advertising), Eva Briones (Psychology), Pedro Cervantes (Mechanical Engineering), Fatima de Leon (Business Administration), Anthony Garza (Electrical Power Engineering Technology), Joel German (Construction Management Technology), Sara Mendoza (Communications Public Relations/Advertising), Ricardo Saldaña (Mechanical Engineering), and Alice Valdez (Electrical Power Engineering Technology).

Please join us in congratulating these students as well as in thanking the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. 



Abraham Reyes, AAP-UH student and La Michoacana supporters with Mr. Jose Hernandez, NASA Astronaut.



Mr. David Ruiz, Senior Vice President Community Development for Bank of America, presenting a check for a two-year grant to Dr. Tatcho Mindiola, CMAS Director for 10 AAP students.



AAP-UH Bank of America Scholars with representatives from Bank of America: Mr. David Ruiz, Mr. Randy Garcia and Mr. Andrew DeLauro.



Throughout all of our activities, we promote an *esprit de corps* by stressing that in obtaining a college education the students are not only doing something for themselves but also for the community. This leads to the students having a strong sense of belonging. Consider the following comment from one of the students cited in the evaluation.

“For me, AAP is also like a family—they are always supporting me in everything that I do.”

We especially emphasize doing well academically. We continuously point out that the first piece of information that a prospective employer seeks is how well a student performed in college. This, we stress, is how a potential employer assesses not only competency but also a student’s work ethic, because it takes effort to be an above average student. The students take our admonitions to heart as illustrated by the student response below when asked about the benefits of being a part of the AAP.

“It’s not just about being in the [AAP] program. You also have to meet the requirements. So, it pushes you to do better. I know some people who are just going to school and they don’t even care. They don’t have the drive. They have all C’s. But in AAP, we have study hours imposed. We have progress reports, GPA requirements. So, it pushes you since you have to meet the standards.”

The success of our students is amplified when you consider their backgrounds. The overwhelming majority comes from

low-income circumstances and graduated from inner-city schools. Most are the first in their family to attend college. Many are the sons and daughters of immigrants or are immigrants themselves who struggled to learn English. In other words, they come from backgrounds associated with academic failure, yet they have persevered and with support have proven themselves to be above average achievers.

We are, of course, proud of these accomplishments, but we would not be successful without the support of our generous donors. They are the key, for without them we would not have the resources to provide scholarships, tutors, and the skills workshops that are vital to the students’ success. This is why we evaluate the AAP on a regular basis. We want our donors to know that their support is making a difference in the lives of our students and helping to raise the educational level of our community.

I encourage you to spend time reading the personal stories of our AAP students included in this issue of *Noticias*. I have no doubt that you will be inspired, as we who work with the students are inspired daily. 

Tatcho Mindiola, Jr.,
Director

relations. The position that was ultimately created for her allowed her to meld her affinity for people and her desire to positively make a difference in their lives.

Elizondo says that she realized her desire to help the community would demand more than the commitment required by her corporate job. She saw that she must also devote her own personal time to serving on boards and commissions. She said, “You have to be at the table to be part of the decision-making process.” A partial list of the boards she has served on is as follows: AIDS Foundation Houston, Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, and the Corporate Community Relations Council. She also served as Commissioner of the City of Houston Civil Service Commission. Currently, she is a board member of the Houston Public Library Foundation, Julia C. Hester House, and Mental Health America of Greater Houston. She is a senior fellow of the Houston Chapter of the American Leadership Forum.

Close to her heart is the time she spent as a volunteer with the United Way of the Texas Gulf Coast. Through the span of approximately 10 years, she rose through the volunteer structure of allocation panels to become chair of one of the panels. These panels make the decisions of which agencies to fund through such due diligence as site visits, review of financial statements, and other procedures.

Her ongoing commitment to helping CMAS has been crucial in supporting the Noche Cultural annual banquets and the establishment of the Fiesta Mart Endowment in the Center for Mexican American Studies in 2008. She has also served, and continues to serve, on the Noche Cultural Banquet committee.

One of the recent programs funded through the Fiesta Mart, Inc. donations in the summer of 2010 was the sponsorship of 11 incoming freshmen in the JUMP program at UH. Due to Fiesta’s generosity, these students had the opportunity to complete two courses before beginning their first fall semester, earning a total of six hours credit in the five weeks of the program. Not only does the JUMP program offer the courses at one-half the tuition’s cost, but research has shown that the one-year retention rate of students completing JUMP is 7% higher than that of other freshmen. During the weeks that they are on campus, the students have an opportunity to orient themselves to the campus and learn about valuable resources that are available.

Elizondo points with pride to the success of the CMAS programs in helping so many succeed academically. She also highlights the careful fiduciary responsibility and performance effectiveness that has been shown in the CMAS programs. She says, “I take my responsibility very seriously. It’s important that the money be used as it has been designated. There are many good programs. After all, the need is great. But with CMAS, the credibility is high.”

In closing, Elizondo reminds us that “the beauty of the CMAS programs is that they confirm that the potential is there in our community. Given the tools and the opportunity, these kids will be successful. But not every parent has the tools they need to help give their kids the best. It falls to the community at large to help.” 



2010 Sponsored Events

“War Along the Border: The Mexican Revolution and its Impact Upon Tejano Communities” Conference
September 23-24, 2010



Dr. Trinidad Gonzales, History Instructor for South Texas College, presenting “The Mexican Revolution, Revolución de Texas and Matanza de 1915.”



UH students, faculty, and staff during one of the conference presentations.



Dr. Sonia Hernández, Assistant Professor of History, The University of Texas-Pan American, presenting “Women’s Labor and Activism in the Greater Mexican Borderlands, 1910-1930.”



Dr. George T. Diaz, History Instructor, South Texas College and Dr. Tatcho Mindiola, CMAS Director.

Poet Wizard from Aztlan

October 15, 2010



Alurista, renowned veterano Chicano poet, reading from his new book, “Tunaluna” with Juan Tejada, Aztlan Libre Press



UH student participating in one of Alurista’s readings.

2010 Sponsored Events

14th Annual "Noche Cultural" Scholarship Banquet

October 21, 2010



AAP-UH and AAP-Austin students being recognized at the scholarship banquet.



Dr. Laura Murillo, President and CEO of Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, being recognized as a Distinguished UH Alumnus.



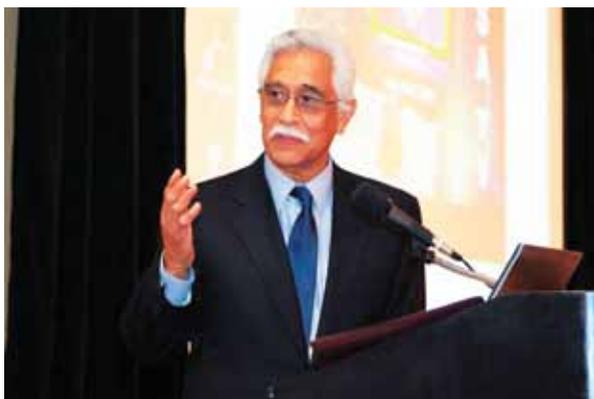
AAP-UH students (L-R) Karen Calderon, Araceli Olazaba, Brisehyda Martinez, Abraham Reyes and Nanette Silva



Mr. Jose Hernandez, NASA Astronaut and keynote speaker for the scholarship banquet.



AAP-UH student Alice Valdez during her testimonial.



Dr. Tatcho Mindiola addressing the guests.



UH faculty Dr. Christina Sisk and Dr. Maria Soliño enjoying the scholarship banquet.

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Center for Mexican American Studies

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

15th Annual



“Noche Cultural” Scholarship Banquet

Keynote Speaker

Gilbert Andrew Garcia, CFA
Managing Partner, Garcia Hamilton
& Associates, Chairman of the Board
of Metro

Thursday, November 3, 2011
6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

University of Houston Hilton Hotel
Conrad Hilton Ballroom

University Drive-Entrance One • Houston, Texas 77204-3028

For more information, contact Laura at ladame@uh.edu or 713.743.3139.

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