



VOLUME 4
ISSUE 2
SPRING
2007

CENTER FOR MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES
Noticias

FROM THE DIRECTOR



Dr. Tatcho Mindiola

In this issue we feature four of our students from the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) at Austin High School. The students' articles include similar elements. They come from a modest socio-economic background, and have strong and supportive parents who stress the value of education. Each has met unique challenges with extraordinary character and an amazingly mature decision-making process.

Laura Hernandez speaks of leaving Mexico by herself to attend Austin High School—with her father's blessing. She says she wanted the challenge of something other than the familiar surroundings of her small Mexican town. She conquered the English language, dealt with self-doubt, and now seeks a college degree at the University of Houston. She wants to major in literature and education with the goal of becoming a teacher. Her independence is remarkable.

Pedro Cervantes comes from a family imbued with ambition and an appreciation of higher

education. He is one of eight brothers. Two have graduated from college, two are currently attending institutions of higher learning, and he will start at the University of Houston in the fall. He is an active young man living a full life by participating in a variety of activities. He says that he experiences pleasure when he accomplishes something that makes his father beam with pride. He aspires to become a chemical engineer.

Rene A. Ramirez likewise comes from a family that stresses education. One sister is a college graduate, another is enrolled at the University of Texas, and he will be a freshman at the University of Texas in the fall. He struggled with being overweight when he was younger. The near-fatal illness of his father several years ago motivated Rene and made him more appreciative of life. His article reveals a strong sense of determination. He plans on majoring in kinesiology.

Sanjuanita Mottu's story also contains strong determination. Her father passed away when she was very young. Yet, by working as a housekeeper, her mother managed to send two older siblings to college. Sanjuanita has helped her mother by

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Graciela G. Saenz, Endowment Board Member: Building a Greater Houston

Houstonians in many different neighborhoods have long profited from the commitment to public service and coalition building of CMAS Excellence Endowment Board member, Gracie Saenz. Her involvement with the CMAS Endowment Board reflects this same passionate commitment to education and to community that has involved her in public service for decades.

The road leading from Houston's East End, where Saenz was born, to her tremendously successful career in both law and politics has been closely intertwined with UH's Center for Mexican American Studies. The era during which Saenz attended high school in Houston was not one when high schools explored or taught revisionist history. Thus, learning the alternative viewpoint of such events as the Mexican Revolution or Mexico's civil wars in CMAS courses was pivotal for Saenz in establishing a sense of identity. She says, "My parents were born in Mexico, but I didn't feel Mexicana. Here, I felt I didn't belong either. Learning what really happened historically made a vast difference to me."

She continues, "Learning about our culture in the CMAS program made me proud. This is a vital component of self-esteem that people need to do their best. This knowledge made me understand the groundwork laid by those coming before me. It gave me a sense of pride, a sense of identity that had been missing in high school." Saenz acknowledges the difference that increased pride in her identity made to her academic life. "Once I had self-esteem added to my desire to do well, I could flourish. It is this same CMAS program that is still very much needed to develop our students."

One of the other valuable services from the CMAS program for Saenz was the tutoring – both formal and informal. She readily admits that she found herself to be mostly under-educated when she arrived at UH. It was only with the help of other students in the CMAS program and the CMAS program tutoring that she was able to catch up.

After graduating from UH in 1978 with a B.A. in Spanish, Saenz spent six years working

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*Graciela G. Saenz,
Endowment Board Member*

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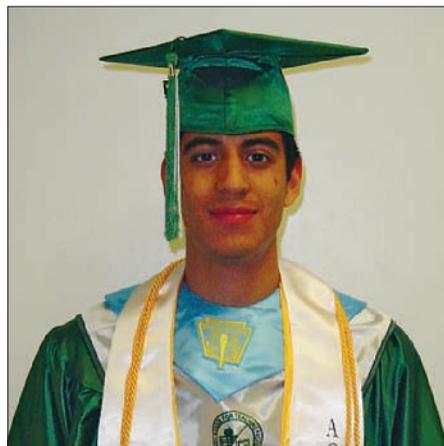
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MISSION STATEMENT

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.

Pedro Cervantes: Athlete and Future Chemical Engineer



Pedro Cervantes, AAP-Austin H.S. student

My parents are from Mexico but they met in Houston, fell in love and married in 1977, and began to have a family. After they had their second son, my father knew he had to improve himself in order to provide for his family. Although he was working full time, he enrolled at Lee Junior College and began studying Electronics. For three years he worked a forty-hour week and then commuted one hour each way to and from school. I remember that he wouldn't arrive home until after midnight, then have to get up early to go to work. His determination paid off when he graduated fourth in his class with a degree in Electronics in 1984.

My parents, especially my father, have always stressed the importance of a college education as the secret of success in life. It has always been his dream to see his eight sons become college graduates and his dream is coming true. My two oldest brothers are UH alumni, one of them graduating in Computer Engineering and the other in Architecture. My next two brothers are students at Texas Southern University. I will graduate from high school in June with a 4.05 grade point average and will continue the tradition by enrolling at UH in the fall. There is nothing as important to me as knowing that I have made my parents proud. When my father is happy with one of our achievements, he smiles in a certain way, and I can tell by the tone of his voice when he talks to other people exactly how pleased and proud he is about our accomplishments.

Since my freshman year at Austin High School, I have been involved in sports and school-sponsored organizations. I was a member of the track, swimming, and golf teams, and also a member of the Science Club, Yearbook, Upward Bound, Math Honor Society, and National Honor Society. I am also in student government and an officer for my senior class. I became interested in being the sergeant-at-arms of the student council because one of my older brothers had held that post when he was in high school. I also wished to get more involved with my class in my senior year and be able to bring ideas forward for worthwhile projects for consideration. Through these organizations, I have been able to contribute to my community by becoming involved in projects such as Toys for Tots, Beach Clean-up, and Operation Gracias, which functions through the Science Club's sponsorship at my school. We obtain the names of needy families and coordinate the donation and distribution of food at Thanksgiving.

However, the most beneficial organization that I have joined is the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) sponsored by the Center for Mexican American Studies at UH. I first heard

about AAP during my sophomore year from friends who were already members. They told me that the program provided tutoring, mentoring, leadership training, SAT preparation workshops, and the possibility of a \$10,000 four-year scholarship. The academic assistance sounded great, but I must admit that the possibility of a scholarship was my biggest incentive to join the program. I knew that with my extremely large family and two brothers currently in college, it would be

difficult for my father to provide for all of our educations and still meet our family's needs. I applied for AAP as soon as I could and was fortunate to be selected in the fall of my junior year. Since then, I have made sure to take full advantage of everything the program has to offer. I am pleased to say that I always exceed the three hour weekly tutoring requirement. In fact, my semester average is six hours/week. When I need help, I know that I can count on one of the mentors or the program counselor. They have always been willing to continue tutoring me after the regular tutoring hours or tutor me over the weekends. Because of their help, support, and encouragement, I managed to increase my GPA, which was a good thing since I began the AAP program in my junior rather than sophomore year.

I know I lead a very busy life, but my parents and the AAP mentors are always reminding me that school comes first. I have learned not to jeopardize my academic standing because of extra-curricular activities. For instance, in my junior year I had to decide not to join the track team. However, in my senior year I was able to join again because I had learned how to manage my time better and be able to keep my grades where they needed to be. Although it is difficult and stressful at times to coordinate my schedule, my hard work has paid off. I rank eleventh in a class of 325 and will enroll at UH in the fall of 2007 where I plan to study chemical engineering. There are very few engineers of Hispanic descent and I want to help change this so future generations will have more role models. I know how important it is to have someone from the same cultural, social, and economic background so that students can relate and their aspirations become more realistic. I want to give back to my community just like my AAP mentors.

My Hispanic culture is a large part of who I am and my family is very important to me, but I must say that the Academic Achievers Program is a support system that has become just as important and as valuable as my family. It is my family and the friends who I have made through AAP that drive me to do my best and be a success.

Laura Hernandez: Conquering New Frontiers



Laura Hernandez, AAP-Austin H.S. student

During the first fourteen years of my life I lived in Ciudad Valles, San Luis Potosi. I had a wonderful yet simple life without struggles or obstacles. My mother and father were both successful teachers. My father had achieved the position of principal of an elementary school, while also teaching sixth grade. My mother also had two teaching jobs. Believe me, the learning environment didn't stop when I left school every day. It followed us all the way home. Even though my parents couldn't spend too much time with my sister and I because of their numerous responsibilities, we were encouraged to seek knowledge. Our daily schedule listed a plethora of extracurricular activities from art and folkloric dance to piano lessons.

When I was about to graduate from middle school, my friends and I were visiting high schools in our city. For most of them the process of finding a school was very exciting, but I felt insecure. I wondered if Ciudad Valles was the right place for me to stay or if I should explore other horizons. I had an exemplary academic record, so completing high school in Mexico would've been easy. One night while alone in my room I started reflecting on my life. A tangle of questions filled my mind, "Where do I want to go? What do I want to do? Where do I see myself in the future?" I could have everything in Mexico by just extending my hand. But that was too simple, and I felt a change was necessary. It was then when I made my decision. I decided to go to the United States for high school.

Moving away from parents at that young age was not a hard decision to make. I knew that learning to become independent was not going to hurt me. I also knew that if I had my father's blessing I could withstand any type of difficulty.

Before I could take a breath again I was already in Houston, miles apart from my loved ones, facing the world by myself for the first time. When I first arrived, two of mother's brothers and their families opened their arms to me, offering me their homes although they were going through hard times.

My first steps at Austin High School were hard. I was dealing with a new language and a new culture that was mysterious to me. Because of my limited English, I was placed in ESL classes. However, I did not feel that I was learning English fast enough and requested to be placed in regular classes. The counselors denied my request but my performance finally gave me the opportunity to enroll in regular classes. Every day as I walked into my classes I was determined to do my best. I excelled in my studies earning high grades and positive comments from my teachers, but to my surprise, no one mentioned college. One day I

heard an announcement that applications for the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) sponsored by UH's CMAS were available. After the last bell of the day, I rushed to the main office, then went home to fill out the application. I was determined to earn a college degree. The only problem was that I didn't know how to go about it.

When my sophomore year arrived, I was put in a journalism class that required me to perform activities totally unknown to me. These tasks included the design of spreads, shooting and editing of pictures, and conducting interviews. These tasks made me feel small and insecure, and I began to question myself. Could I meet the challenge? What if I fail? What will I do if I see an F on my report card? I began to feel that my life could be a complete fiasco, but my determination and curiosity to explore new fields pushed me forward. However, I still had obstacles to overcome. The interviews, for example. I was shy and uncomfortable with my English. But my will to succeed was much stronger. My AAP mentors kept encouraging me. I am proud to say that by the end of the year I was named editor of one of the sections for the yearbook, and by the end of my junior year (and much to my surprise) my peers and teacher encouraged me to apply for editor-in-chief of the yearbook. I did and got the position. I also received an internship at the Houston Chronicle.

During my weekly calls home I talked to my father about my future plans. He was proud to hear that I was performing well in school and becoming my own person, and that I wanted to attend a university. He suggested that it was time for me to come back to Mexico. He also said that if I wanted to stay in the United States that was fine with him. I felt blessed because I had my father's support regardless of my decision. I decided to stay.

I am graduating soon in the top 10% of my class with honors. I am going to enroll at UH and pursue a double major in Literature and Education. I want to find a career that allows me to motivate students who come from challenging backgrounds to achieve their dreams and goals through an organization like AAP.

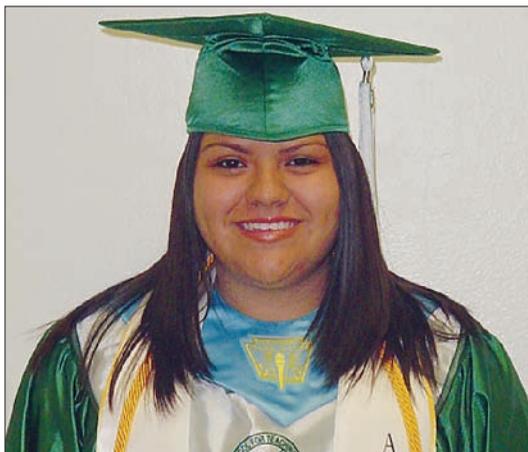
Being a member of AAP has been a wonderful experience, particularly since I am surrounded by people with dreams and goals similar to mine. Every day when I step into the mentoring room I feel able to accomplish anything that I set my mind to. AAP has not only helped me academically, but also spiritually because I have found inner strength and been able to achieve things I never thought possible.

Sanjuanita Mottu: Scholarship Winner

My name is Sanjuanita Mottu and I am a member of the Academic Achievers Program at Austin High School where I am currently a senior serving as senior class president. I was born in Houston, Texas. I am the youngest of three children with an additional older half-brother through my father. My father was also born and raised in Houston and my mother was born and raised in a small town called Dr. Arroyo in Nuevo Leon, Mexico. Both of my parents dropped out of school in order to help their families by working to help pay expenses, but they believe strongly in the value of an education.

My siblings and I began our education in bilingual classes. In the fourth grade my parents decided that it was time for me to move into regular English-speaking classes. The transition from ESL to English was difficult but I managed to continue doing well in school. Later in middle school, I was asked to take a test that resulted in me being classified as a Gifted and Talented student, which was a great honor for me and my family.

Sadly, in 1977 when I was eight years old my father passed away. This had a tremendously difficult impact upon my family. Nevertheless, my mother persevered in holding my family together through the hard labor of her hands as a housekeeper. As one could imagine, that is not a very lucrative job but she was still able to help my oldest sister with her college education. My sister received her bachelor's degree from UH-Downtown and is currently working at Burnet Elementary as a second grade bilingual teacher. Now my mother is helping my brother in his college career. He is attending UH-Downtown and majoring in Criminal Justice. Soon I too will be in college but I have known for years that it will be next to impossible for my mother to provide for both me and my brother's financial support. Thus, I have worked hard to maintain good grades in the hope that I can earn scholarships for college. I feel that I have accomplished my goal. I have managed to maintain a 4.26 GPA and I rank fourth among 332 students. Along with my high GPA I have been applying and receiving scholarships. I have been awarded scholarships from The Bill and Melinda Gates Scholarship Foundation, Houston Children's Charities, Ronald McDonald Scholarship Foundation, Terry Foundation at University of Houston, Project Joy and Hope, Harrisburg Rotary Club, and



Sanjuanita Mottu, AAP-Austin H.S. student

The Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones Scholarship Foundation. I am still waiting to hear from others.

I plan to enroll at UH-Central in the fall of 2007. People around my neighborhood hardly ever talk about college; some think that a high school diploma is excellent. However, I want to prove that I can overcome any obstacle and begin my life's journey. Getting to UH has always been my number one priority. It is just

five minutes away from my house which will help me stay close to my family and my beloved friends. Another important reason why I decided to attend the University of Houston is because of the Academic Achievers Program (AAP).

AAP has helped me so much during my high school education by providing me with tutoring, mentoring, academic workshops, SAT preparation, leadership retreats, and the summer sessions. I know that continuing to receive this type of support through the AAP-UH will help me finish my college career. Ever since I was chosen to participate in AAP at Austin in the summer of 2004, I have been taught crucial skills to improve my scholastic standing.

In the future, I intend to work as a second grade bilingual teacher to improve the life of countless children. I have always admired bilingual education teachers for being able to educate both in English and in Spanish. I also realize how significant an accomplishment it is for a Hispanic woman to earn a bachelor's degree, so I am deeply committed to continuing my studies in the education field until I walk across the stage to receive that precious diploma.

My sister is currently a bilingual teacher at Burnet Elementary. The way she improves the lives of her students has influenced me to follow the teaching path. She is my role model and teachers like her are the reason why our Hispanic students will be prepared for the world to come. We are the future of America and if we want to be successful, we have to educate the youth that follow us. I hope that one day I have the financial means to establish a scholarship program for disadvantaged youth who are willing to work hard for a better life. I know that with my mom by my side and my dad in my heart, I will be successful. Nothing will stop me on my path to a better life.

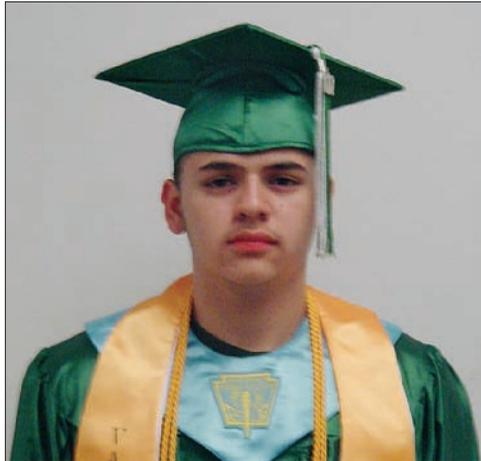
Rene A. Ramirez: Never Giving Up

My name is Rene Adrian Ramirez and I am a senior at Austin High School. I live with both of my parents, Rene and Rosa Ramirez, and I have two older sisters, Adelina and Ruth Ramirez.

My parents have always encouraged my sisters and me to do well in school. As a result, my sister Adelina recently graduated from UH with a bachelor's degree in Communications, and my sister Ruth is currently in her second year at the University of Texas at Austin. I am in the top five percent of my class and will attend either UT at Austin or UH in the fall of 2007. Although I have excelled academically, it hasn't been easy. There were times when I wanted to give up.

For instance, the eighth grade was the hardest time because of my weight. When I was a small kid, I was skinny and never imagined that I would be fat one day. But that day came. As I grew, I gained weight and in eighth grade I weighed more than I ever had before. I received cruel remarks and teasing from my classmates causing a lot of heartache. Many times I didn't want to go to school because I couldn't bear to hear those hurtful remarks. I wanted to quit school, but my parents would not let me. They made me continue with my schooling, and after awhile I learned how to handle the remarks and just keep moving forward, trying to accomplish those things that were important to me.

Just when I thought things were getting better, my dad became very ill and almost died. I remember going into his hospital room and seeing him lying on the bed motionless. I tried to talk to him but he couldn't respond. This can't be happening, I told myself, but it was. At school, all I could think of was my dad, and I worried that I would receive bad news when I went home at the end of the day. I became depressed, and I didn't see the point in working towards anything if in the end it could all be taken away from me in the blink of an eye. After a week in the hospital, my dad recuperated and came home. Having my dad back gave me hope and changed my way of thinking. I realized that you only live once and that you have to try to do the right thing. I told



Rene A. Ramirez, AAP-Austin H.S. student

myself that things would be different.

When I entered high school, I began to exercise and lose my excess weight. I have done very well academically, but it has been a struggle, especially in my junior and senior years. In those years I experienced the challenge of Advanced Placement classes and taking the SAT exam. I also experienced the stress of applying to college. Thankfully, I had the Academic Achievers Program (AAP) to help me.

I heard about the Academic Achievers program at the beginning of my junior year from my friend Claudia Paez, who was a member. She would tell me about the program's activities and encourage me to apply. At first, I wasn't sure I wanted to, but when she told me that the

program helped students academically and prepared them for college, I became very interested. I filled out an application and went to the interview. I realized that I could benefit tremendously from the program. When I received the news that I had been accepted, I was thrilled. The AAP offers many great things, but the best benefit for me has been the academic mentoring. The mentors are there to provide assistance with school work and I have benefited tremendously from their help, especially in pre-calculus. With their assistance I made the honor roll and earned all A's in my junior and senior years, and I will graduate in the top five percent of my class. The workshops on SAT preparation were also very helpful, and with the extra assistance I was able to increase my math and writing scores. They also helped me fill out the applications for college. They are not only great mentors, they are also great friends. We can confide in them and know that they'll be there if we ever need them. Many times all I needed was a friend to listen, and this is what I found in my mentors.

One of the important lessons I learned from the mentors is the importance of giving back to others. I see their willingness to help us and admire them for their dedication. It makes me want to do the same for those who come after me. AAP has given me so much. I don't have enough words to express my gratitude. The program has helped me lay the foundation for a better life and for this I will always be grateful.

From the Director *continued from page 1*

keeping up her grades so she can qualify for scholarships. As the Kudos section indicates, she has succeeded beyond her expectations. She has always wanted to attend the University of Houston, but an attractive financial package from another Texas university has her reconsidering her options.

These students are members of a larger group of thirty-four students who are the fourth cohort of AAP Austin and Eastwood Academy high school students graduating this month. As stated in the Kudos section of this newsletter all of them are seeking

college admission. To date, eighteen will be attending the University of Houston and five will attend other institutions. The remaining applications are pending. We congratulate the students upon their graduation from high school and their decision to continue their education. Indeed, this is how CMAS continues to transform lives through education...one person at a time....

Tatcho Mindiola, Ph.D.
Director

Nicolás Kanellos: Visionary Scholar and Publisher

Throughout its history, Houston has been fortunate to have attracted visionaries and risk-takers in commerce, banking, real estate, and medicine, as well as in research and the arts. This cutting edge approach has made our city vibrant with on-going pioneering in many fields. Luckily for UH and for the greater Houston community, Nicolás Kanellos, Ph.D., the Brown Foundation Professor of Hispanic Literature and Director of Arte Público Press — a brilliant visionary and pioneer — was drawn to Houston in 1979 from a previous academic appointment at Indiana University. In reflecting upon the move to UH, Kanellos speaks of the success he had already garnered with the journal *Revista Chicana-Riqueña*,



Nicolás Kanellos, Ph.D.

which he had founded in 1973. This ground-breaking publication focused on the “new” field of Hispanic literature in the U.S. Such was the need for publication and research in the field that the journal expanded at a fast rate. Exciting outgrowths of activity took place in the nearby communities due to Kanellos’ heavy involvement in the Hispanic neighborhoods. The *Revista Chicana-Riqueña* became *The Americas Review* and was lauded by the likes of the *New York Times* and the *Small Press Review*, along with countless others. This successful literary magazine launched Arte Público Press, founded in Gary, Indiana a year before Kanellos moved to Houston. As the scope of his activities, e.g. community theatre and organizing, grew, and the need for a national forum for publication of Hispanic writers became more urgent, the need for increased funding resources also grew. It was at this point that Kanellos realized he would have to find another city for his press and his research activities. He had been traveling throughout the U.S. presenting papers at conferences and as an invited scholar, and, consequently, had seen several cities that might serve as a new home. However, the confluence of many factors important to both Kanellos’ scholarship and to the continued growth of his press brought Kanellos to UH. Thus, Arte Público Press came to reside at UH.

Looking at the long list of awards and honors accorded both to Kanellos personally and to Arte Público Press, it is hard to imagine a time when scholarship and publication about and by Hispanic authors in the U.S. wasn’t routine. Harder still to imagine is a time when the benefits of realistic Hispanic role models in literature weren’t self-evident. Yet, Kanellos reminds us that his press, whose mission is to collect, preserve, and

publish the literature of U.S. Hispanic writers, has always been so far ahead of the curve in publishing America that it has taken institutions a long time to catch up. He says, “We knew that one day American literature would have to open its gates and start publishing women and minorities. It took a long time -- a long time also for foundations, universities, and editors to pay attention.”

A review of Kanellos’ list of publications reveals a long history of scholarship whose output has ranged across critical editions, books, chapters, articles, and exhibition catalogues. Kanellos has also edited many ground-breaking anthologies with the most recent being the Oxford University Press publication of “Herencia: The Anthology of Hispanic Literature of the United States” and Greenwood Press’s publication of “Hispanic Literature of the United States: A Comprehensive Reference,” which was declared an outstanding academic book by the important library review *Choice*.

One of the most visionary of the projects that Kanellos has designed and implemented is a national research project entitled “Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage.” This project is the first nationally coordinated attempt to recover, index, and commit to print and electronic media the whole of lost Latino writing in the U.S. from Colonial times to 1960. This \$20 million effort involves the coordination of teams of scholars and consortia across the U.S. When complimented on his extraordinary vision in conceiving a project of such scope, Kanellos demurs, “I look around at the past and the present, and the future is clear. I just see what needs to be done.” He continues, “I don’t think there’s any talent in seeing what needs to be done. It takes talent to get things accomplished.” In speaking of this project, he remembers knowing since the 1960s that such a concentrated effort was needed. However, it was not until the 1990s that two components were in place to make the successful execution possible. These two factors were the widespread use of the Internet, and the existence of scholars in Hispanic literature with tenure who had the academic flexibility to direct their own research.

Not surprisingly, the list of Kanellos’ awards, honors, and professional recognition is vast and impressive. Yet, Kanellos views this list as professional acknowledgement for the team he leads as the director of Arte Público Press, and the scholars he coordinates as the director of the Recovery Project. He says, “I see the awards as awards for our whole group at Arte Público and for our writers, and for everyone working on the Recovery

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Ramiro Martinez, Jr., Ph.D: CMAS Visiting Scholar, 2006-07

This year's CMAS Visiting Scholar, Ramiro Martinez, Jr., Ph.D., comes from Florida International University (FIU) where he is a tenured professor of Criminal Justice and Public Health. He is also on the research staff of the Center for Research on U.S. Latino HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse at FIU. His research interests encompass criminology, lethal and non-lethal violence, race/ethnicity, Latino Studies, immigration, and mortality.

Martinez was born and reared in San Antonio, where he resided until 1982. He then moved to San Marcos to attend Southwest Texas State University. There he completed a B.S. in Criminal Justice in 1985 and a M.A. in Sociology in 1987. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from Ohio State University in 1992.

After completing his Ph.D. in Sociology in 1992, Martinez accepted a job offer at the University of Delaware where he earned tenure. It was during this time period that he began to do research on Latino violence. In 1999 Martinez accepted a position at FIU. Through professional connections he was able to gain access to internal data connected with violent crime, principally homicide, for the City of Miami. As Martinez built relationships with the homicide detectives in Miami, he discovered that they had a lot in common with him. At this time, in the mid-1990's, most of the homicide detectives were Latino professionals. They were just as interested as Martinez in the factors leading up to the violent crime. Martinez says, "Through these detectives I was exposed to neighborhoods. I built relationships with city employees and with people on the streets, so I was able to draw data there for many years." With all these factors on his side, Martinez was able to access detailed information on Latinos and on homicides. He says, "Eventually I was able to do the same in other cities, e.g. San Diego. My focus has been the measure of Latino violence related to homicide measured against other groups."

One of the unique historic events that Martinez studied in Miami crime data was the Mariel Boat Wave, a time when thousands of impoverished Cubans landed in South Florida. There was a great deal of community concern and a certain amount of local hysteria related to the fear of an increased crime rate. Martinez' research of the data showed that the initial crime surge was composed of incidents when both the offender and the victim were both members within the group of immigrants. This research finding ran counter to the idea bandied about locally that the murders from the Maribel group would be related to drug-trafficking. In fact, his research showed that most of the homicides grew out of the usual spectrum of factors initiating this type of crime: alcohol-related arguments with close family or friends, or arguments in bars. The few instances of Mariel drug shoot-outs were no more than the instances of the same crime among other racial or ethnic groups at the time.

Martinez accepted the CMAS Visiting Scholar position



Ramiro Martinez, Jr., Ph.D.,

because of his interest in violence among immigrant groups and because it would allow him to compare and contrast Houston and Miami in terms of patterns, behaviors, and other factors, such as race, ethnicity age, and gender. By conducting more extensive quantitative analysis, his research could refine which predictors are more likely to influence drug mortality and drug related crimes at the community level.

While here, Martinez taught an undergraduate upper-division Sociology course entitled "Crime and Deviance in Latino Communities." He says his teaching experience here has been "very rewarding because the students are very open and are excited

about the topics."

Martinez has been recognized professionally many times. For instance, in 2003 he was the recipient of the American Sociological Association Latina/o Section Award for Distinguished Contributions to Research in recognition of his significant cumulative work on Latinos and crime. In 2001-02 he received the W.E.B. DuBois Fellowship from the National Institute of Justice. In 1996-97 he was the recipient of the Ford Foundation and National Research Council Post-doctoral Fellowship. When asked which of his many awards and honors has meant the most to him, Martinez gratefully acknowledges the professional recognition that they all represent. However, the one that made the greatest impact on him was when Ohio State University offered him a fellowship to attend graduate school as a doctoral candidate. He says, "This meant that I could compete with people across the U.S. and even internationally. It proved to me that I could become a successful academician. I hadn't thought of how I was ranked with my peers previously. It was an incredible professional acknowledgement."

Martinez has functioned as a principal investigator for numerous projects funded by organizations such as the National Institute of Justice, the National Consortium on Violence Research, the National Institute of Drug Abuse, and the National Science Foundation. His publication history is extensive and encompasses books, book chapters, journal articles, and book reviews. His most recent book is entitled *Latino Homicide: Immigration, Violence, and Community* (Routledge Press, 2002). In 2006, a book he co-edited with Abél Valenzuela, was published under the title *Immigration and Crime: Race, Ethnicity and Violence* (New York University Press).

Martinez acknowledges the CMAS role with the following words: "CMAS is able to bring to UH strands of Latino scholars and weave these strands together to shape how we look at Latinos in urban society. As CMAS weaves these strands, they help fund research and they help scholars function and draw from their experiences to help others. So, CMAS is the glue for Chicano scholars on campus. If I had come here on my own, I would've felt isolated. But instead, I've felt supported and it's been rewarding. It's been a great experience."

Academic Achievers Program – Spring Update

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

The fall semester 2006 ended with an overall average GPA for the seventy-five AAP-UH students of 3.02. The December 2006 program graduates were: Lourdes Aguinaco, Elizabeth Aleman, and Flor Sifuentes. Please see the **Kudos** section for a list of the students who made the Dean’s List for the fall semester.

Mr. Alejandro Sanchez, a junior in Journalism, was selected as one of the recipients for the Houston Association of Hispanic

Media Professionals 2007 Scholarships. He was honored at a gala on March 20, 2007.

The Annual Leadership Retreat at Camp Allen in Navasota, Texas occurred in February. Seminars were presented in topics as diverse as “The Real World” by the Merrill Lynch Hispanic Professional Network and “My Internship Experience” by former senior AAP students.

The community service project for this semester was planned in conjunction with Junior Achievement. AAP students were coached to present information to inspire younger people to value free enterprise, business, and economics as a way to improve the quality of their lives and the importance of staying in school, the family as an economic unit, and the marketability of bilingualism.

The semester ended with an AAP-UH Graduation Banquet honoring the thirteen graduating seniors and their parents.



Houston Association of Hispanic Media Professionals 21st Annual Scholarship Banquet (HAHMP) March 30, 2007. L to R; Rebeca Treviño, AAP Program Manager, Alejandro Sanchez, AAP-UH recipient, Laura Hernandez, AAP-Austin recipient, Maria Cobio, Special Programs Counselor, Grace Olivares, HAHMP Scholarship Director.



Merrill Lynch presenters with AAP students at the Leadership Retreat. Front row, from the left, Rick Figueroa and, third from left, Jesus Guerra; Back row, third and fourth from the left, Mauricio Ramirez and Randy Garcia.



AAP Group picture during Annual Leadership Retreat 2007.



AAP students participating in camp’s challenge course.



AAP students (L-R) Jorge Sanchez, Marisol Gonzalez, Liceth Castro taking a break.

Academic Achievers Program – Spring Update



Academic Achievers Program at Austin High School, class of 2007

HIGH SCHOOLS

The spring semester has been exciting with the anticipated high school graduation of the entire cohort of thirty-four students: thirty at Austin High School and four at Eastwood Academy. Every member of this cohort has applied to college. To date, eighteen plan to attend UH, three will attend Texas A&M, and two will attend UT-Austin. Ten students are applying to UH-Downtown, and one is applying to the Bradford School of Business and HCC.

Of the thirty Austin graduates, eight are in the top five percent of their class: Melina Alvarez (co-valedictorian), Pedro Cervantes, Laura Hernandez, Sanjuanita Mottu, Claudia Paez, Karen Perez, Rene A. Ramirez (co-valedictorian), and Susan Solis. Of these same thirty Austin graduates, seven are in the top ten percent of their class and another seven are in the top twenty percent of their class. Of the total thirty-four graduates, eleven are the first in their family to graduate from high school, and seventeen are the first in their family to attend college. Please see the **KUDOS** section for a list of those students who made the Honor Roll at the end of the fall semester 2006.

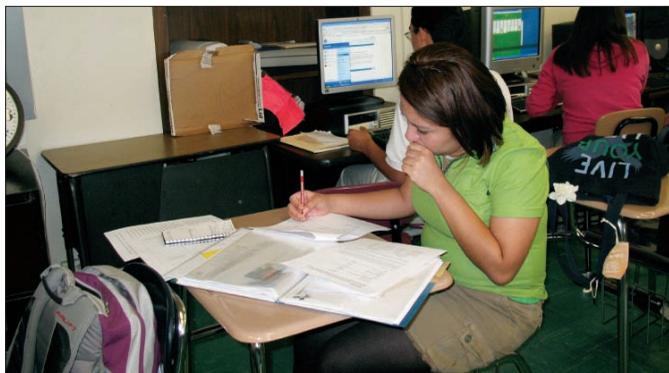
There have been presentations during this semester by a representative from the UH Learning Support Services on the topics of Understanding Procrastination and Developing

a Positive Attitude. This semester also continued the tutoring workshops and college application assistance. The Leadership Retreat took place on May 18-20 with a stated purpose of further equipping the students with skills for their college careers.

The program is currently recruiting students at Austin High School and Eastwood Academy to fill its fifth cohort. Numerous presentations have been made with a goal of recruiting forty students. This new cohort will be launched in a Summer Session beginning June 11th with academic workshops, SAT preparation, and writing courses.



AAP-Austin High School students Blanca Alonso and Keely Gorham studying in the program's tutoring room.



AAP-Austin High School student Laura Hernandez studying in the program's tutoring room.



AAP-Austin High School students during the program's barbeque plate sale.

Saenz *continued from page 1*

for an immigration attorney in Houston. Friends and family encouraged her to go to law school. She says, "I'm a bit of a risk-taker. I have to try, so I can say, 'At least, I tried.' I'm also a woman of faith, so if it is God's will, it will work out." She graduated from UH Law School with her J.D. in May 1986. She had completed a Mexican Legal Studies Program at the Universidad Panamericana in Mexico City during the summer 1984.

From 1986 - 1990 Saenz worked for Harris County as an assistant district attorney gaining experience in many areas of law, including juvenile justice, domestic violence, felony and misdemeanor prosecutions, and grand jury service. She left to form the law firm of Burkhart and Saenz where she practiced criminal and general law until 1992.

In the fall of 1992, Saenz was elected to the Houston City Council where she served three two-year terms. She was the first Hispanic in Houston's history to be elected to an at-large position on Council. She gained further honor in 1994 when Mayor Robert C. Lanier nominated her to be Mayor Pro-Tem for Houston in which capacity she served until her term limitation. In reflecting on her entrance into the political arena, she remembers many mentors, such as Judge Leal, who impressed upon her the importance of leadership for Hispanics in Houston. She still speaks with conviction of how important it is for Houston's Hispanic population to be at the table when resources are handed out. She says, "I came from a poverty experience in childhood. The only way I could have gotten out of the barrio was education. Luckily, I had two teachers, one in fourth grade and one in fifth, who told me I could go to college and they made the logical steps to get there understandable to me."

Ms. Saenz has also been active as the chair of the Houston International Initiatives, a city-sponsored non-profit organization taking small businesses into Latin America for business trade and development. She worked closely with the Greater Houston Partnership, as a member of the Task Force for Interstate 69, that sought to connect Houston, Canada, and Mexico. Saenz chaired the NAFTA Task Force for Houston and in 1994 went to Taipei as a member of the Houston-Taiwan Trade Delegation. During her city council tenure, her active support of the City's international economic development was the reason for her receipt of the 1995 International Service Award from the Houston Junior Chamber of Commerce.

The list of awards and recognitions for Gracie Saenz from a wide array of organizations and entities is long. She has twice been recognized at UH, having received the Distinguished Service Award in 1986 from the College of Law and the Alumnus of the Year Award from UH Law Alumni Association in 1993. She has also received the International Service Award from the Houston Junior Chamber of Commerce in 1995, the Outstanding Citizen Award from the Boy Scouts in 1996, the Hispanic Woman of the Year Award from the Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation in 1996, and she was named to the Hispanic Women's Leadership Hall of Fame in 1996.

In addition to serving on the CMAS Endowment Advisory Board, Ms. Saenz contributes her time and energy to a host of other organizations which at present include such groups as

the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Memorial/Hermann Hospital System, the Hispanic Sports Group LP, Aquila Bancorporation, the Plaza Group, UH Law Center Advisory Board, the Buffalo Bayou Partnership, and the Oaklawn Presbyterian Church. As is evident by her commitment to the betterment of the many communities within our great city, she reminds us, "We are all in this together. We need everyone to be a productive citizen. Education is the most basic key to making this happen. I credit the CMAS program in establishing that sense of pride and knowledge of my own background. Because of that I was able to serve more effectively. It's all about giving back and serving the greater community. We have to teach those who come after us to give back as well."

Kanellos *continued from page 7*

Project. It is our whole group being rewarded for their work, not just me." To name a few of these awards across the decades: the Golden Book Award from the Texas Council for Reading and the Bilingual Child, recognition from the Texas Institute of Letters for "outstanding contributions to a literary Texas," UH Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship, numerous acknowledgements by Hispanic Business magazine as one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics in the U.S., the First Annual Hispanic Publication Award presented by the Hispanic Caucus of the American Association of Higher Education, the Denali Press Award for Best Reference Work awarded by the American Library Association for "Handbook of Hispanic Cultures in the United States" (four volumes), UH Esther Farfel Award given to a faculty member for excellence in research, teaching, and service, a U.S. presidential appointment to the National Council on the Humanities, and the first Brown Foundation endowed chair at the University of Houston. It is this last academic appointment that Kanellos says has contributed the most to changing in a positive fashion the daily practicalities of his life as a scholar and teacher.

Like all visionaries, Kanellos looks toward the future and even more projects. Dear to his heart is the UH Ph.D. program in Spanish, specializing in the language and the literature of Latinos. Begun in 1996-97, the program has already earned a national profile, and places all of its graduates in a highly competitive market. Kanellos says, "We have the potential to become the leading Ph.D. program in Spanish in the U.S." Kanellos looks forward to a time when resources for the program will grow, thus enabling even more scholars to be trained and educated.

As he looks forward to a future of continued research, publication, travel, and fund-raising, Kanellos re-affirms the ongoing invitation to UH and the greater Houston community to get to know Arte Público Press, conveniently located in the Cullen Performance Hall. The scope of its publications is wide-ranging with bilingual books for children, books for young adults, bilingual texts, a much-touted series documenting the Hispanic Civil Rights Movement, books resulting from the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, as well as poetry, plays, fiction, anthologies, and critical editions. Kanellos smiles to emphasize the invitation, "I wish more UH professors and students would avail themselves of our resources. Sometimes we're such a well-kept secret at UH."

KUDOS

The following AAP-High School graduating seniors were awarded scholarships (as of the date of this printing).

Melina Alvarez

*Valedictorian Scholarship (first year tuition waived) at UT-Austin
\$10,000 Texas A&M*

Eva Briones

\$12,000 Scholarship from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

Pedro Cervantes

*\$12,000 from the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo
\$3,000 from the Hispanic Heritage Awards*

Laura Hernandez

*\$2,500 Scholarship from Houston Association of Hispanic Media Professionals
\$1,500 Scholarship from the East End Chamber of Commerce
\$1,000 Scholarship from the Rotary Club of Harrisburg*

Sara Mendoza

Undisclosed amount – Hope Scholarship from Project Joy and Hope

Sanjuanita Mottu

*\$20,000 Regent's Scholarship from Texas A&M
\$12,500 Terry Foundation Scholarship from University of Houston
\$12,000 Scholarship Award from Linda Lorelle and Houston Children's Charity
\$10,000 President's Scholarship from Texas A&M
\$500 Scholarship Award from the East End Lions International Rotary Club
Undisclosed amount – Ronald McDonald Scholarship
Undisclosed amount – Hope Scholarship from Project Joy and Hope
Undisclosed amount – Rotary Club of Harrisburg
Undisclosed amount – Gates Millennium Scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*

Claudia Paez

\$1,000 Scholarship Award from the East End International Rotary Club

Karen Perez

*\$12,000 Scholarship Award from the Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones Scholarship Foundation
\$3,000 Scholarship Award from Zi Theta Kappa Scholarship Foundation
Undisclosed Amount – Gates Millennium Scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*

Rene A. Ramirez

*Valedictorian Scholarship (first year tuition waived) at UT-Austin
\$20,000 President's Achievement Award – UT-Austin
\$12,000 Scholarship Award – Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones Scholarship Foundation
\$10,000 Scholarship – UT-Austin*

Susan Solis

*\$12,000 Scholarship Award – Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones Scholarship Foundation
Undisclosed Amount – Gates Millennium Scholarship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation*

Danielle Tristan

*\$20,000 Century Scholarship – Texas A&M
\$18,000 Academic Excellence Award from University of Houston
\$1,000 Scholarship – Texas A&M*

The following AAP-High School students made the Honor Roll in the fall semester of 2006:

Melina Alvarez	Stephanie Gomez	Karen Perez
Blanca Alonso	Laura Hernandez	Rene A. Ramirez
Eva Briones	Sarah Mendoza	Susan Solis
Pedro Cervantes	Sanjuanita Mottu	Alice Valdez
Joel German	Abraham Arras	Jeniffer Zamarron

The following AAP-UH students made the Honor Roll in the fall semester of 2006:

Lourdes Aguinaco	Efrain Lazo	Dennis Pérez
Diego Almazan	Rosalinda Martinez	Tania Puentes
Miguel Andrade	Yesica Meza	Jorge Sánchez
Carlos Fernández	Efigenia Morales	Yury Solis
Marisol González	Mayra Moreno	Cindy Villarreal
Edith Guerra	Mónica Padron	Celia Zamarrita
	Martinez	

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