

Noted Lecture Highlights Accomplishments of Hispanics and Continuing Challenges

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Princeton, NJ – “Economic and political power among Hispanics must be matched with education power,” Yvette Donado, Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer of Educational Testing Service (ETS) told attendees as she delivered the 2014 Tomás Rivera lecture during the ninth annual American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) conference. Her remarks reflected the conference theme, “America’s Prosperity: The Academic Success of Hispanics.” That lecture has now been published and is available free-of-charge.

The annual lecture is named in honor of the late Dr. Tomás Rivera, a professor, scholar, poet, author and former president of the University of California, Riverside. Rivera also served on the board of trustees of ETS. Although this was the 30th lecture, this is the fifth year that ETS and AAHHE have published and distributed the annual lecture.

Donado drew upon ETS and national reports as well as her own experiences to illustrate the positive benefits of educational attainment and the remaining challenges. She told attendees that that by 2015, if Latinos age 18–24 attended and graduated from college at the same rates as non-Hispanic Whites, the following benefits would incur:

430,000 more Hispanics would be in college and 110,000 would graduate. Increased Hispanic presence would benefit all students. Other benefits would accrue as they enter the workforce, contributing to diversity of thought and action. They would add more than \$130 billion per year to the economy. That new wealth would add \$45.5 billion to public revenues, helping all Americans. The proportion of Hispanic families with less than adequate incomes would decline from 40 percent to under 21 percent.

“There is no need to draw a picture,” Donado said. “Those who neglect the potential contribution of Hispanics to our nation, those who do not support equitable access to educational opportunity for Hispanics, and those who oppose documenting the undocumented do so at their own peril. We often point to our growing numbers and assume that with that growth comes economic and political power. But such power must be won. It will not be handed to us. We must fight for it. Economic and political power must be matched by education power!”

Donado noted that despite many gains, Hispanics continue to lag in key areas including:

Hispanics are less than 3 percent of full-time university faculty and administrators. High school dropout rates, although down slightly, are still unacceptably high. UCLA’s Patricia Gándara says Hispanics have the worst record of college completion (9 to 11 percent for the last three decades; while African-American students’ numbers rose from 11 percent in 1975 to 18 percent in 2006). More than 40 percent of Latina mothers have less than a high school education (compared to 12 percent of African-American mothers). Latinas are twice as likely as other women to live in poverty (20 percent vs. 11 percent). When Hispanic families lack resources and their children attend impoverished schools, negative outcomes are inevitable. Community colleges are the point of entry for most Hispanics going into higher education, but a large percentage are not college ready and require remedial courses. Too many Hispanics lack English-language skills and education to compete for better paying jobs.

“Research and experience have consistently shown correlations between educational attainment and success,” she said. “Education can improve personal and public health and overall quality of life; strengthen communities and societies; increase wealth; heighten interest in environmental quality; and promote harmony and collaboration among people of different backgrounds and cultures.”

Donado noted that progress takes hard work, creativity, initiative and persistence. That progress, she said, must include:

- Α στρονγ σταρτ φορ Ηισπανιχ πρεσχηοολερς, τηατ ις, μορε εαρλψ εδυχατιον
- Ιμπρωεδ τεαχηερ θυαλιτψ αχροσσ τηε βοαρδ
- Λοωερ δροπουτ ρατεσ
- Εασιερ αχχεσσ το ηιγηερ εδυχατιον
- Ηιγηερ ηιγη σχηοολ ανδ ποστ-σεχονδαρψ γραδυατιον ρατεσ
- Ινχρεασεδ νυμβερς οφ Ηισπανιχ χολλεγε πρεσιδεντς, αδμινιστρατορς ανδ φαχυλτψ

“Donado not only presents educational issues pertinent to the Hispanic population, she clearly paints a picture of how we can begin to address these issues, says Loui Olivas, Professor Emeritus at the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University. “Given that the future workforce of America will soon become predominantly minority, led by Hispanics, all sectors of our country must have a collective and vested interest in preparing these future workers. AAHHE is proud to partner with ETS via the annual Tomas Rivera Lecture.”

“A myth persists among some out there that Hispanics don’t care about education, Donado said. “The fact is that along with economic opportunity, education tops the list of Hispanic priorities. So the challenge is to move our communities and our nation from the realm of ‘possibilities’ into the realm of ‘probabilities.’ Our motto should be ‘mission possible’.”

“Our society is changing faster than our capacity to keep up with the changes,” Donado concluded. “Let us not react to the changes around us, let us prepare. Let us shape those changes in a manner consistent with our numbers. Education, too, is evolving. And we Hispanics cannot be mere spectators. We must be players. We must move from doubts and uncertainties, to assured progress, along pathways with built-in and fail-safe mechanisms.”

The Tomás Rivera Lecture may be downloaded at <http://www.ets.org/Media/Research/pdf/PICRIVERA6.pdf>

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CONTACT:

Tom Ewing
Phone: 1-609 683 2803
Email: mediacontacts@ets.org

