

Toward a Latino Attainment Agenda: Shaping Our Own Destiny



by Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D.

TOMÁS RIVERA LECTURE SERIES



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Toward a Latino Attainment Agenda: Shaping Our Own Destiny



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American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education

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PREFACE

The University of Texas System Chancellor Francisco Cigarroa continues a tradition of outstanding speakers in the Tomás Rivera Lecture series of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education. The report contains many valuable insights, making it compelling reading for anyone interested in education policy, reform and, in particular, the future of Hispanics in our nation's education systems.

A physician in a family of physicians, Dr. Cigarroa draws heavily on his experience as a child of the South Texas border region. He paints a portrait of hard work and the pursuit of education inspired by his parents. He likens his experience to that of the late ETS Trustee Tomás Rivera, also a native of the southern Rio Grande area. Like me and so many others, Cigarroa is an admirer of Rivera and his pioneering achievements.

Cigarroa notes that as far as Hispanics and Hispanic education are concerned, "the future is already here." His data and the reforms he has advocated are invaluable for understanding what is happening — or needs to happen — nationally. "Blueprint" or "model" may not be the best descriptors, given the many differences from one region to another. But there is much to ponder here.

ETS is grateful to AAHHE for allowing us to again publish the Tomás Rivera Lecture. Much food for thought — very good food, indeed!

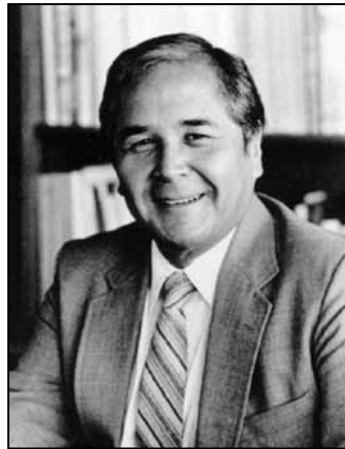


Kurt M. Landgraf
President and CEO
Educational Testing Service

ABOUT THE TOMÁS RIVERA LECTURE

Each year a distinguished scholar or prominent leader is selected to present the Tomás Rivera Lecture. In the tradition of the former Hispanic Caucus of the American Association for Higher Education, AAHHE is continuing this lecture at its annual conference. It is named in honor of the late Dr. Tomás Rivera, professor, scholar, poet and former president of the University of California, Riverside.

About Tomás Rivera



Author, poet, teacher and lifelong learner, Tomás Rivera was born in Texas to farm laborers who were Mexican immigrants. Neither parent had a formal education.

He received B.S. and M.Ed. degrees in English and administration from Southwest Texas State University, and his M.A. in Spanish literature and a Ph.D. in Romance languages and literature from the University of Oklahoma. Rivera also studied Spanish culture and civilization at the University of Texas, Austin and in Guadalajara, Mexico.

He taught at Sam Houston State University and was a member of the planning team that built the University of Texas, San Antonio, where he also served as chair of the Romance Languages Department, associate dean and vice president.

In 1978, Rivera became the Chief Executive Officer at the University of Texas, El Paso, and in 1979, he became chancellor of the University of California, Riverside. Rivera was an active author, poet, and artist. By age 11 or 12, he was writing creatively about Chicano themes, documenting the struggles of migrant workers. He did not write about politics and did not view his work as political. He published several poems, short prose pieces, and essays on literature and higher education.

He served on the boards of Educational Testing Service, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the American Association for Higher Education, and the American Council on Education. In addition, Rivera was active in many charitable organizations and received many honors and awards. He was a founder and president of the National Council of Chicanos in Higher Education and served on commissions on higher education under Presidents Carter and Reagan.

Tomás Rivera Lecturers

2013	Francisco G. Cigarroa	1998	Samuel Betances
2012	Luis Ubiñas	1997	Albert H. Kauffman
2011	Rachel F. Moran	1996	Rolando Hinojosa Smith
2010	Charles B. Reed & Jack Scott	1995	Ronald Takai
2009	Marta Tienda	1994	Norma Cantú
2008	Jaime Merisotis	1993	Gregory R. Anrig
2007	Sonia Nazario	1992	Henry Cisneros
2006	Michael A. Olivas	1991	Toni Morrison
2005	Raúl Yzaguirre	1990	Tomás Arciniega
2004	Angela Oh	1989	David Hamburg
2003	Piedad Robertson	1988	Arturo Madrid
2002	Harold L. Hodgkinson	1987	Ann Reynolds
2001	Félix Gutiérrez	1986	Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.
2000	David Hayes-Bautista	1985	John Maguire

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication reproduces the keynote address delivered at the AAHHE annual conference in March 2013 in San Antonio, Texas. AAHHE is grateful for the leadership of its Board of Directors and the members of its conference planning committee for coordinating the appearance of keynote speaker Francisco Cigarroa.

At Educational Testing Service, Eileen Kerrigan, Marita Gray, Frank Gómez and Bill Petzinger provided editorial and production direction and support. The ETS Policy Evaluation and Research Center (PERC) gratefully acknowledges the guidance and support of AAHHE and particularly its President, Loui Olivas, in the publication of the Tomás Rivera Lectures.

THE AAHHE-ETS ALLIANCE



Working in common cause with President Loui Olivas and the Board of Directors of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education is a great pleasure. In addition to publishing the annual Tomás Rivera Lecture, ETS sponsors AAHHE's annual Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation Competition of which the first prize is named for our President and CEO, Kurt M. Landgraf.

ETS also sponsors the annual Student Success Institute, an exploration of best practices for recruiting, retaining and graduating Latinos in higher education that takes place at AAHHE's annual conference. Finally, we support *Perspectivas*, AAHHE's policy brief on Latino higher education issues, and I am proud to serve on its editorial board.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Donado'.

Yvette Donado
Senior Vice President, People, Process & Communications and
Chief Administrative Officer

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SYSTEM CHANCELLOR DELIVERS TOMÁS RIVERA LECTURE

Thank you very much for that introduction, Ricardo. [Ricardo Romo, President of the University of Texas, San Antonio]

A few years ago, Ricardo and I were the presidents of the two University of Texas System institutions in this city — UT San Antonio and the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

And thank you very much, President Loui Olivas and the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, for inviting me to deliver the 2013 Tomás Rivera Lecture. I am honored to address this distinguished audience of academic leaders in higher education, especially in this city and in homage to my fellow Texan — the great writer, scholar and academic leader, Tomás Rivera.



Ricardo Romo, President, University of Texas at San Antonio, and AAHHE Board Member, introduced Dr. Cigarroa.

Welcome to San Antonio. I know Ricardo will agree with me when I say that San Antonio is a very special place. A special place not only in Texas history, but for my family as well. There is a word in Spanish that describes it perfectly — *querencia* — a place of the heart, where one feels serene and from which one draws strength. That is what San Antonio means to our family. And this is a great city in which to raise your children, educate your family, pursue a higher education and seek employment. I congratulate Mayor Julián Castro and the citizens of San Antonio for their vision to advance excellence in our public education system.

My Cigarroa grandparents fled the Mexican Revolution and settled here in San Antonio, where they raised my father and his siblings. During the Great Depression, my grandfather — Dr. Joaquín Cigarroa, who received his medical degree at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM) in Mexico City — started an open-access clinic to serve the poor in *this* city. He eventually moved his family to Laredo and began a new practice there. My father is also a physician, still practicing in Laredo at the age of 88, and I am a third-generation physician.

Tomás Rivera's circumstances were different from mine. He was from Crystal City — about 90 miles north of my hometown — the son of migrant workers who became a migrant worker himself, traveling with his family from Texas throughout the Midwest, working the fields in Michigan and Minnesota. Even as Chancellor of the University of California at Riverside, he never forgot the experiences of his migrant

"[W]hat Tomás Rivera is saying in his poem [is that in] spite of adversity, we have a dream that provides a better future for our children and grandchildren. You and I are educators, and we believe that education is the key to a stronger, more prosperous and more meaningful life."

"What is happening in Texas and other border states is what the rest of the nation will experience over the next 10 years. In Texas, the future is already here. And so it is instructive to examine trends in Texas to get a better sense of things to come."

life. He wrote an epic poem, titled "The Searchers," in which he compared the migrant experience to a search for identity, for a voice and a place of one's own.

He wrote:

*We were not alone in Iowa
When we slept in wet ditches
Frightened by salamanders at night
Reclaiming their territory*

*We were not alone
When we walked
All over Minnesota
Looking for work
No one seemed to care
We did not expect them to care*

*From within came
The passions to create
Of every clod and stone
A new life
A new dream
Each day, in these very things
We searched*

As we crumbled dust

Everyone here this evening understands what Tomás Rivera is saying in his poem: In spite of adversity, we have a dream that provides a better future for our children and grandchildren.

You and I are educators, and we believe that education is the key to a stronger, more prosperous and more meaningful life.

But we are living in a new era and facing profound changes that are affecting our search for a "better future." The primary question is: How will we adapt and move forward?

For one thing, a major shift is taking place in the demographics of our country, and it is having a profound effect on K–12 and higher education. According to the 2010 census, between the years 2000 and 2010, 50 million Americans identified themselves as Hispanic — an increase of 43 percent over the previous decade. States along the Mexican border, like Texas, are experiencing this sea change at a

more rapid pace. There are 9.7 million Hispanics in Texas, the vast majority of them of Mexican origin. What is happening in Texas and other border states is what the rest of the nation will experience over the next 10 years. In Texas, the future is already here. And so it is instructive to examine trends in Texas to get a better sense of things to come.

The rapid growth of the Hispanic population in Texas is having a major impact on our economy, our education system, our healthcare system and in almost every facet of public life. More than 38 percent of the Texas population is now Hispanic, versus 16.7 percent in the rest of the country. Hispanics are projected to become the largest ethnic group in Texas by 2015.

This increase in population is most notably an increase in young Hispanics:

- **27 percent** of the Texas population is under 18, and almost **49 percent** of that population is Hispanic.
- **47 percent** of the K–12 student population in Texas is Hispanic.
- The median age for Hispanics in Texas is 27, but for Whites it is **41.5**.

The Texas of 2020 is going to look very different from the Texas of 2013. And so it is clear to me that we must nurture the talents and aspirations of the young Hispanics who will soon become our leaders in governance, public service, education, healthcare and numerous other fields — not only in Texas, but across the nation.

Young Latinos stand on the strong foundation built by the courageous men and women who worked for generations to advance the cause of equal opportunity and equal participation. We have our parents and grandparents and earlier generations to thank for their sacrifices and perseverance. We are now poised at the threshold of realizing their dreams — a dream shared by Tomás Rivera and Martin Luther King. And you and I share the responsibility to usher in this new era in a way that makes all Americans grateful for its arrival.

But our challenges are certainly not all behind us. Our challenges are real and present. When it comes to Hispanic education — the key to a better life that everyone here believes in — these are troubling times for our young Hispanic population. For example,

- **34 percent** of Texas Hispanics under the age of 18 live in poverty.
- Hispanics are less likely to graduate from high school compared with Whites. **61.4 percent** of Hispanics who were seventh-graders in 2000 graduated from high school, compared with **74 percent** of White students.

27 percent of Texans are under 18; of these, almost 49 percent are Hispanics.

47 percent of the K–12 student population in Texas is Hispanic.

34 percent of Texas Hispanics under the age of 18 live in poverty.

- Attrition rates are about **37 percent** for Hispanic high school students in Texas.
- In the cohort between ages 25 and 64, only **14 percent** of native-born Texas Hispanic students have college degrees.
- **23 percent** of native-born Texas Hispanics ages 25 to 64 are high school dropouts. In other words, among Hispanic Texans there are more high school dropouts than there are college graduates.
- Let me point out here that these disparities do not exist solely among Hispanics in Texas. Since the 1970s, the disparity in educational attainment across the United States between students in the lowest and highest family-income quartiles has widened. In the 1970s, only **7 percent** of those in the lowest quartile and **37 percent** in the highest quartile completed bachelor's degrees. By the first decade of the 21st century, the percentage of those in the lowest quartile of family income who completed bachelor's degrees had increased only slightly to **9 percent**, while the percentage of those in the highest quartile had nearly doubled to **70 percent**. That is an astonishing disparity! It is our responsibility as leaders in higher education — especially those of us who serve the lowest quartile of family income — to close that gap.

Although these statistics are discouraging, I would mislead you if I gave the impression that no progress had been made in Texas over the past decade. The University of Texas System, for example, has made a concentrated effort to increase Hispanic enrollment in our institutions. This has been a group endeavor involving the UT System leadership, our Regents, Texas legislators and other policymakers, the presidents of the UT System's 15 institutions, admissions offices, the staffs of our outreach programs and our alumni. We've worked too hard to have our successful efforts overlooked or unnoticed. Consider the progress we have made:

- Nearly **40 percent** of all UT System students are Hispanic. Those percentages are significantly higher at our three universities in South Texas — UT San Antonio (45.2 percent), UT Pan American in Edinburg (89.2 percent), and UT Brownsville (88.8 percent) — and at UT El Paso (77.4 percent) and UT Permian Basin (42.2 percent).
- The UT System now has a **majority-minority** student population.
- **Enrollment:** From 2000 to fall 2012, Hispanic enrollment at UT academic institutions increased **8 percent** at UT academic institutions and **59.2 percent** at UT health institutions.

- **Degrees:** From 2000 to 2012, there has been a **112 percent** increase in degrees awarded to Hispanics at UT academic institutions and a **97 percent** increase in degrees awarded to Hispanics at UT health institutions.
- **Half of all degrees** earned by Hispanics in public four-year universities in Texas (excluding health degrees) are awarded by UT System universities.

In spite of this progress, Hispanic **graduation rates** are low at our universities and must be addressed. At UT Austin, for example, only **42.6 percent** of our Hispanic students graduate in four years, or about **10 percent lower** than UT Austin's overall graduation rate. The six-year graduation rate is much better, with Hispanics graduating at nearly **77 percent**; but we are concerned about the financial burden on Hispanic families who must provide two additional years of tuition and other expenses.

UT System's Student Debt Reduction Task Force has made several recommendations that will lower the financial burden of a college education, including more work-study and internship opportunities, competency-based learning credits, accelerated online learning, and rebates and tuition relief for students who graduate in four years. This will help. We must do everything we can to ensure that Hispanic students — and all students — are not saddled with massive loan debt that restricts their choices at the beginning of what should be a successful and fulfilling life.

So we're on the right track at University of Texas System institutions and moving in the right direction. We **are** making progress. We **are** increasing educational opportunities for Hispanics in Texas.

Over the past two years, Texas has been deeply involved in the national discussion on the future of higher education — and if you read the *Chronicle of Higher Education* or *Inside Higher Ed*, you know that the discussion is still lively and ongoing in Austin. We may be a little louder at the moment — it's Texas, after all — but we are grappling with the same issues you are grappling with in your own institutions. How do we make a college education more accessible and affordable for middle-class and low-income families? How do we improve the learning environment on our campuses? How do we use technology to strengthen the classroom experience? How do we adapt to our state's rapidly changing demographics, produce more college graduates and prepare them for successful careers?

And so my team and I have developed a new initiative that we call "A Framework for Advancing Excellence throughout the University of Texas System," which was adopted unanimously by our Board of Regents in 2011 and endorsed by all 15 UT System presidents. The Framework includes an action plan that is bringing

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a higher level of accountability and transparency to our universities and health institutions. We are eager to share our Framework plan with other educators in Texas and around the country.

For our purposes here, I will emphasize how this plan will help us to be more responsive to the needs of **Hispanic** students and their families.

Let me begin with our Framework focus on **expanding educational and health opportunities in South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley**. We have a 40-page comprehensive plan that outlines ambitious and wide-ranging initiatives in education, research and healthcare over the next 10 years in that region of our state. This is an area with an 80 percent Hispanic population, and where the vast majority of our students are Hispanic.

As a native son of the Texas-Mexico border region, I saw how geography became destiny for many of my schoolmates, neighborhood friends and even family members. I have never forgotten a good friend of mine in high school who graduated in the top five percent, but who could not go to college because of expenses and the fact that Laredo did not have a four-year university nearby. I suspect that many of you have had friends in the same situation. For the average person near the border, the opportunities for upward mobility are limited. Consider these facts:

- The median household income in the Valley is about **\$28,000** per year, while for Texas it is more than **\$50,000** per year.
- In the Valley, **40 percent** of “families with children” live below the poverty line, compared to **16.8 percent** in Texas and **13.5 percent** nationwide.
- The Valley has **107 physicians per 100,000 residents**, compared to **195 physicians** per 100,000 residents in Texas and a national average of **220 physicians** per 100,000 residents. The Valley has about half as many doctors as it should have compared to national standards.
- The Valley population is growing at a remarkable pace. According to the Texas State Data Center at UT San Antonio, the current population is **1.26 million** — and by 2020, the population is projected to grow to more than **1.5 million** people.
- This means there is a growing need for doctors and health professionals, teachers and myriad other professions that will improve basic services, educate our children and grow the economy in that corner of Texas.

The UT Board of Regents authorized \$30 million to implement the Framework plan for South Texas. We have established a faculty recruitment program to attract exceptional STEM faculty members and biomedical researchers to our universities and health institutions in that region. In addition, we are increasing math and science teacher training in South Texas by using UT Austin's nationally acclaimed **UTeach** program. I will add here that President Obama has praised UTeach as a model for teacher training, and last week the White House announced that a major gift from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute will be used to extend the UTeach program to 10 top research universities over the next five years. As an article in *Scientific American* has noted, "UTeach has grown rapidly, from a presence on 20 campuses in 2010, to 35 today. The HHMI funding will allow it to reach 45 schools, training an additional 1,750 STEM teachers, for a total of 17,000."

This is why UT Austin is fond of saying, "What starts here changes the world."

The centerpiece of UT System's South Texas plan is the consolidation of two universities — UT Brownsville and UT Pan American — into a single university with a new school of medicine and the promise of becoming a research-intensive university similar to UT San Antonio, UT El Paso, UT Dallas and UT Arlington. A unified university and medical school will help us make a University of Texas education more accessible and affordable to a greater number of students in the Valley — and do so with more efficiency, cost effectiveness and shared resources. When we accomplish this — and we will! — we will forever change the educational and economic landscape of South Texas and the Rio Grande Valley.

The need for better healthcare in that region has long been recognized. The Texas Legislature in 2009 expressly authorized the UT System to establish a medical school and health science center in South Texas. At its meeting last May, the Board of Regents endorsed the establishment of this school as a very high System priority. In December, the Regents unanimously authorized me to work with the Texas Legislature to establish the new university and medical school, and allocated \$100 million over 10 years to support that medical school.

The next day, I traveled to Edinburg and Brownsville to share the good news with UT administrators, faculty members, students, business leaders, elected officials and the people of the Rio Grande Valley. I found overwhelming and enthusiastic popular support for this initiative.

In his State of the State Address, Governor Rick Perry endorsed the university in South Texas. The Senate recently voted this proposal out of their chamber with 30 yeas and one nay; the House last week voted this proposal out of their chamber with 149 yeas and not a single nay. The bill is working its way toward combined

"The centerpiece of UT System's South Texas plan is the consolidation of two universities — UT Brownsville and UT Pan American — into a single university with a new school of medicine and the promise of becoming a research-intensive university ..."

affirmation. With legislative approval, we plan for the first cohort of students to matriculate into a dedicated South Texas admissions track in 2014, to obtain their clinical education in South Texas, and then graduate from the new University of Texas Medical School in South Texas in 2018.

I am proud to plant a larger University of Texas flag in the Rio Grande Valley. But I also have personal reasons for wanting to see more educational opportunities and better healthcare for the people of that region.

When I was a boy, my father provided me with a tremendous experience in understanding the challenges faced by a medically underserved region along the Texas-Mexico border. It was and still is a region with significant healthcare disparities, many of which are now looming public health issues not only for Texas but for the entire country. In shadowing my father as he made house calls, and seeing his love for his practice, I received a firsthand view not only of the beautiful art of medicine, but how this art profoundly touches all classes, from the poorest to the wealthiest, without regard to economic status or homeland of origin. Dad came home with a smile on his face every evening after work, which is why several of his children have chosen medicine as their profession.

My dad is still practicing medicine at 88 years old. Not long ago I asked him if he had fulfilled everything he wanted to do as a cardiologist. He said the only thing he regretted was that he never had the opportunity to train young medical students and share his expertise with them, because there was no medical school in Laredo or the border region.

He also said, "Build that medical school in the Valley, Francisco, so we don't have to keep sending our kids to Harvard and Yale."

I know that this audience, more than any other, understands why this is personal for me. I'm going to help build a medical school in the Rio Grande Valley out of respect for my father, uncle, grandfather and scores of physicians practicing along the border — and in South Texas and the Valley — who have waited their entire lifetimes to see young doctors study and train there, where their hometowns are, where their families are ... and where they can remain and practice the beautiful art of medicine in their *querencia*, in service to the people they love.

I want to combine our universities in the Valley for the same reason: so that students named Gonzales and Smith can attend an internationally acclaimed university within driving distance of their communities. So they can enjoy the benefits of a world-class education in the place where they want to raise their families and contribute something special to their hometowns.

As an eternal optimist, I am pleased that Tomás Rivera ended his poem “The Searchers” on an uplifting note. He wrote that the destination of the migrant’s search comes from within — from an inner strength — but also from what we do **together**:

*From within came
The passions to create
Of every clod and stone
A new life
A new dream
Each day, in these very things*

*We searched
As we crumbled dust*

*We were not alone
After many centuries
How could we be alone?
We searched together
We were seekers
We are searchers
And we will continue to search
Because our eyes still have
The passion of prophecy*

As Tomás observed, “We are seekers. We are searchers.” The search is a lifelong journey. We are not there yet, but we are many steps closer. All of our lives, you and I have been making this journey side by side. Each new step is harder, each challenge is greater. But we search together — all of us as a family seeking to educate our children and grandchildren, to create a new and better life, and to fulfill the dream of our parents and grandparents.

I cannot imagine better friends and colleagues to make this journey with than you — the Hispanic leaders in higher education who are here in San Antonio this evening. You inspire me! Gracias y abrazos a todos!

Let our journey continue together.

Thank you, again, for inviting me to share my thoughts. I am deeply honored to have delivered this year’s Tomás Rivera Lecture.

*We were not alone
After many centuries
How could we be alone?
We search together
We were seekers
We are searchers
And we will
continue to search
Because our
eyes still have
The passion of prophecy
— Tomás Rivera*

CHANCELLOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Francisco González Cigarroa, M.D., was born December 1, 1957 in Laredo, Texas. One of 10 children, Dr. Cigarroa is a third-generation physician. After graduating from J. W. Nixon High School in Laredo, he attended Yale University, where he graduated in 1979 with a bachelor's degree in biology. Cigarroa earned his medical degree in 1983 from The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas. During his postgraduate training, Dr. Cigarroa became chief resident in General Surgery at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, and completed fellowships in pediatric surgery and transplantation surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore.

Dr. Cigarroa joined the faculty of the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio in 1995, where he held the position of director of pediatric surgery before being appointed its third president in 2000. He was president of the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio until 2009. During this time, President George W. Bush appointed him to serve as a member of the President's Committee on the National Medal of Science.

Dr. Cigarroa is a member of several prestigious academic societies, including the American College of Surgery, the Institute of Medicine, the American Board of Surgery and The American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was elected to serve as an Alumni Fellow to the Yale Corporation, the university's governing board, and served as the 2010 President of The Academy of Medicine, Engineering and Science of Texas. President Barack Obama recently appointed Dr. Cigarroa to serve as a commissioner on the White House Initiative on Educational Excellence of Hispanic Americans.

In 2009, Dr. Cigarroa became the first Hispanic to be elected Chancellor of The University of Texas System, a position he currently holds. As Chancellor, he oversees one of the largest public systems of higher education in the nation, consisting of nine universities and six health institutions. Dr. Cigarroa also serves as vice chairman for policy on the Board of Directors of The University of Texas Investment Management Co. (UTIMCO).

Despite the rigors of his job as Chancellor, Dr. Cigarroa still finds time to utilize his nationally renowned surgical skills. Approximately every third weekend, he performs liver and kidney transplant surgeries on children and adults.

Dr. Cigarroa and his wife, Graciela, an attorney, have two grown daughters, María Cristina and Barbara Carisa. In addition to his academic accomplishments, Dr. Cigarroa is an accomplished classical guitarist.

About ETS

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