

America's Prosperity:

The Academic Success of Hispanics



by Yvette Donado

TOMÁS RIVERA LECTURE SERIES



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AAHHE)

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America's Prosperity: The Academic Success of Hispanics



The 30th Tomás Rivera Lecture

Presented at the Annual Conference of the
American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE)

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PREFACE

Once again, ETS is pleased to join with the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) to publish the annual Tomás Rivera Lecture. This year, we are doubly gratified because the lecturer was our own Yvette Donado, ETS Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer.

As Yvette points out, though she had been involved in many important causes over the years, it was her work at ETS that drew her inexorably into the Hispanic education arena. Her humble origins, the growth of the Hispanic population in the United States and the immense education needs in the Latino community moved her to become a more vocal advocate for that community — **HER** community.

The theme of this year's AAHHE Conference, "America's Prosperity: The Academic Success of Hispanics," was both timely and critically important. Education, prosperity and competitiveness are inextricably linked, a fact that educators, policymakers and employers are recognizing more frequently and more deeply. Combined with demographic realities, the conclusion is inescapable: We must create educational opportunities for Hispanic Americans in order to create prosperity for **ALL** Americans.

Our challenge, Yvette says, is to "move from the realm of possibilities into that of probabilities." But she does not merely state the challenge. She proposes a series of steps that could create opportunity, from a stronger start in early education to improved teacher training.

AAHHE and ETS share a mission to increase educational quality and equity for the underserved and underrepresented. Our long-term collaboration is producing dividends for Hispanics and, as a result, for the nation.

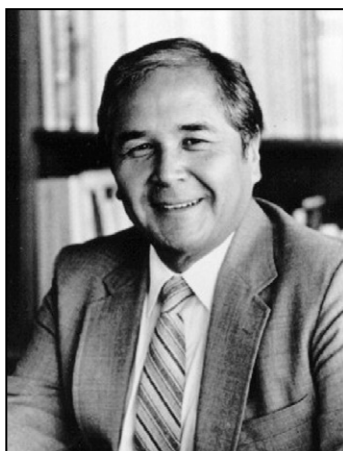


Walt MacDonald
President and CEO
Educational Testing Service

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

2014	Yvette Donado	1999	Jim Cummins
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	Jamie 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 2014 in Costa Mesa, California. 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 Yvette Donado.

At Educational Testing Service, Eileen Kerrigan, Sally Acquaviva, Frank Gómez, Jon Rochkind and MaraGale Reinecke 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



For eight years, ETS has enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership with the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE). Leading our advocacy and philanthropy programs for several years now, I have had the pleasure of working closely with President Loui Olivas in sponsoring and designing the Annual Doctoral Dissertation Competition, the Latino Student Success Institute and the editing of the *Perspectivas* Policy Brief. AAHHE and I are grateful to the ETS Policy Evaluation and Research Center for publishing the annual Tomás Rivera Lecture.

Each of these highly rewarding initiatives aligns with the ETS commitment to support the underserved and underrepresented student populations. We are honored that our colleague, Yvette Donado, was selected to present the 2014 Lecture, a reaffirmation of our common goals and growing collaboration.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lenora M. Green".

Lenora M. Green
Senior Director
Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy
Educational Testing Service

YVETTE DONADO DELIVERS TOMÁS RIVERA LECTURE

I am honored to introduce Yvette Donado to you today. We share much in common. I was born in Puerto Rico; Yvette's family is Puerto Rican. I spent many years working in New York City; Yvette was born and educated there. I grew up in northern New Jersey, and Yvette lives and works there today. We also share a passion for improving the lives of Latinos and other underserved populations through the power of a college education.

Yvette has spoken many times across our nation about the relationship between education and economic opportunity, social mobility and political engagement. She knows, given the changing demographics of this nation and the requirements of today's workplace, that we are at a critical moment in America's history.

If we do not provide opportunities for our growing population of Latino youth to go to college, our nation will not survive in the global economy.

That is why the work that Yvette is doing as the Chief Administrative Officer at Educational Testing Service is so important to the Latino community and young people throughout our country. She is keenly aware of trends occurring in education and within our society. She has a sense of best practices in reaching out to English-language learners and improving classroom pedagogy. And she continues to advocate across our land for young people and their dreams.

It is fitting that Yvette Donado deliver today's Tomás Rivera Lecture. The late Dr. Rivera was a Texas migrant worker who combined his own talent, self-discipline and commitment to education to eventually become the chancellor of the University of California, Riverside. He and Yvette Donado are inspirations for all of us in this room!

Prior to joining ETS in 2001, Yvette spent more than 25 years in the private sector; she knows what it takes to run a business and serve a market. It is no surprise that she was named one of the nation's top five Latina executives by *LATINA Style* magazine in 2013. In 2012, *Hispanic Business Magazine* named Yvette as one of the nation's 50 most influential Hispanics. She is a servant leader, an author, a teacher and an advocate for students everywhere.

Again, I am delighted to present to you, Yvette Donado.



*Elsa Núñez, President,
Eastern Connecticut University,
introduced Yvette Donado.*

“ Prior to ETS’s founding in 1947, college admissions were often based on family, legacy or where you lived. ETS has helped level the playing field to assure equity and quality in education. And that mission is alive and well today, including for Hispanics. ”

Thank you, Elsa [Elsa Núñez, President, Eastern Connecticut University], for the generous introduction. I also thank AAHHE’s Board of Directors for selecting me to deliver the 30th Tomás Rivera Lecture. I am deeply honored.

I am fortunate to know AAHHE’s board members, several past lecturers and many of you here.

The ETS-AAHHE relationship is special. As you know, we work with many education-focused organizations. But our relationship with AAHHE is surely one of the most productive.

Why? It’s because we share a passion for improving educational opportunities for Hispanics. ETS’s mission is to help advance quality and equity in education for all people worldwide. And to that end, last fall, our then incoming CEO, Walt MacDonald, created the ETS Council on the Mission, and I have the privilege of chairing it.

We are evaluating everything we do at ETS to ensure that our products and related services align with our mission — that includes being certain that the needs of the underserved and disadvantaged are top of mind. This is no small task.

And I can assure you that educational opportunity for Hispanics will be ever present in our work.

Giving Back

Prior to ETS’s founding in 1947, college admissions were often based on family, legacy or where you lived. ETS has helped level the playing field to assure equity and quality in education. And that mission is alive and well today, including for Hispanics.

Three milestone events helped me *and* ETS crystallize our thinking about Hispanic Americans. The first was the 2007 Hispanic Heritage Month address by Dr. Juan Andrade, founder and president of the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute.

The second was another Hispanic Heritage Month address, by Dr. Loui Olivas, in 2009. In connection with that address, Loui took his charts and graphs to a meeting with our CEO to illustrate what Loui referred to as “the demographic imperative.”

The third crystallizing event was a presentation at ETS by Princeton University sociologist Dr. Marta Tienda, also in 2009. It followed her Tomás Rivera Lecture

that same year. She spoke about the importance of early childhood education for Hispanics and the need to address the needs of the nation's six million English learners. About 80 percent of them are Hispanics.

Those three events — in rapid succession — were truly transformational for me and ETS. We realized that we had to raise the bar and achieve a higher level of engagement with this important cohort. And we did. It includes strengthening our relationship with AAHHE.

My Story

In helping ETS move full throttle into the Hispanic arena, two things stood out for me.

The first was the realization that I had much to learn. The second was that my own background as a “proud Latina” would be highly valuable.

I was born in New York City of working-class parents who came from Puerto Rico in search of opportunity. Neither completed high school. They made sure, however, that my three sisters and I not only completed high school, but also went on to higher education and postgraduate studies.

My parents always sang to me and my three sisters. My dad was like a poet, reciting axioms, tales and traditions. And my mom was always reading. Today I am a voracious reader because of her example. I owe both of them so much, as do my sisters, all with postgraduate educations and all successful, inspiring professionals.

The stars aligned for me. The founder of a start-up in Manhattan took a chance with a young, recent graduate in sociology. We were small, a software development shop whose services were aimed at the world's largest advertising agencies. When we reached critical mass, I told our president that we needed to take better care of our staff. So, after a return to NYU for what was then education in Personnel and Labor Relations, the president appointed me Vice President, Director of Personnel. That lingo tells you I've been around a while (we now call it human resources). He became my mentor, gave me more responsibilities and eventually promoted me to Senior VP.

I take pride in having been a key factor in the growth of that company into a world-class worldwide operation. People management was my game. I understood deeply that good business practice and success could not be achieved without investing in its “people” and demanding excellence from the leadership team.

“ The first was the realization that I had much to learn. The second was that my own background as a 'proud Latina' would be highly valuable. ”



AAHHE President Loui Olivas presents the painting “Keeper of Beauty” by Albuquerque, New Mexico, artist Edward Gonzales.

I worked there for 25 years. In 2001, our new CEO, Kurt Landgraf, convinced me to join him on his journey at ETS. Educational measurement as a core competency was pristine and the very best in the world. Under Kurt, the former CEO of DuPont Pharmaceuticals, the overlay of business principles and practices ensured sustainability. It’s been my honor and privilege to be part of this chapter in ETS’s history.

Today ETS is a \$1.62 billion nonprofit that administers more than 50 million tests in 180 countries every year. As a nonprofit, we are not encumbered by concern for profits. We do not answer to shareholders. We plow our surpluses back into research and services. In response to an increased awareness of the changing demographics, in 2011, I was asked to lead an initiative that would bring to bear our intellectual capital to help meet the needs of our nation’s nearly six million English learners. I set out to listen and learn. I met with academicians, administrators, teachers, researchers and others. We did focus groups around the country and created an advisory committee of the nation’s top experts.

Today, I am pleased that we have developed and piloted a tablet-based, high-tech EL classification tool. Kids from kindergarten through grade 5 have used it — unaided. Kids are miles ahead of us. They used tablets successfully because they live amid technology.

Teachers loved the measurement tool because the results are available quickly. And administrators knew that accurate classification helps assure proper placement and the right curriculum. You can find out more at http://www.ets.org/research/topics/ella/us_k12.

Soon we will release an ETS-funded study on the economic benefits of bilingualism. Dr. Patricia Gándara of UCLA is leading this effort and we expect it to be a significant contribution to foster more positive attitudes toward language learning. Stay tuned.

ETS is also doing a good deal of research on workforce preparedness. We recognize that SAT® and GRE® scores, while important, are not the only predictors of academic success. So we are looking at noncognitive attributes like leadership, communication and organizational skills, integrity, persistence and others — and developing ways to measure them.

America's Prosperity: Hispanic Academic Success

Over the last decade, we've learned a lot about education from many outstanding Hispanic leaders. We learned, for example, that hundreds of thousands of "dreamers" cannot be left behind. So I became ETS's representative on a national dreamer coalition.

Let me say parenthetically that the plight of dreamers reminds me of that movie "Network." The lead actor's most famous line was when he screamed out a window, "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it anymore." Well, we should not tolerate this anymore. Our country needs these people.

Last September, I delivered a Hispanic Heritage Month address at a major company in New Jersey. "Hispanics are 18 percent of our state's population," I said. "In a generation, they will be one-third. They are your workforce, your customers, your future scientists, engineers, marketers and managers." Heads bobbed in recognition of this fact.

New Jersey is a microcosm of what is happening nationally. Last year, in *his* Tomás Rivera Lecture, Francisco Cigarroa, Chancellor of the University of Texas (UT) System, painted a picture of Texas — also a microcosm. He said that, in Texas, the future was already here. We were delighted to join with AAHHE to publish his lecture, because more people need to be aware of the demographic changes and how the UT system is reinventing itself to welcome them.

Now, some may believe that helping Hispanics achieve their educational aspirations is charity. Wrong! Boosting educational attainment is not good just for Hispanics. Let's make sure that all know *it is good for America!*

Not long ago, some executive search friends said Hispanics don't care about education. I replied politely that survey data show the opposite is true. I cited the example of Parents Step Ahead in Dallas. A school principal said Hispanic (and other) parents would not attend the program. "What if we did it on a Saturday, and offered food and prizes?" responded Lupita Colmenero, the program's founder. "You'll be lucky if you get 60 or so." Well, the next day, hundreds of

“ A school principal said Hispanic (and other) parents would not attend the program. “You’ll be lucky if you get 60 or so,” said the principal. Well, the next day, hundreds of parents and children showed up. ”

“ Societies with higher levels of education have lower rates of AIDS, HIV and infant mortality; longer life expectancies; greater economic output; and are more stable and productive. ”

parents and children showed up, to the point that the organizers had to scramble to get donated food delivered for them. The point: Know your audience.

An ETS report of a few years ago found that, by 2015, if Latinos ages 18–24 attended and graduated from college at the same rates as non-Hispanic Whites:

- ❖ 430,000 more Hispanics would be in college, and 110,000 would graduate.
- ❖ 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.

Although I much prefer an asset model versus a deficit model, we must face the reality that despite our many gains, we continue to lag in key areas:

- ❖ 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).
- ❖ More than 40 percent of Latina mothers have less than a high school education.
- ❖ Latinas are twice as likely as other women to live in poverty.

Conclusion

Research and experience have shown consistent correlations between educational attainment and success. Education improves personal and public health and overall quality of life; strengthens communities and societies; increases wealth; heightens interest in environmental quality; and promotes harmony and collaboration among people of different backgrounds.

Societies with higher levels of education have lower rates of AIDS, HIV and infant mortality; longer life expectancies; greater economic output; and are more stable and productive.

Education may not guarantee well-being in a society, but social well-being is improbable without it.

Given the global economy's escalating reliance on skills and knowledge, and the growing gap in opportunity between the economically advantaged and disadvantaged, the links between education and well-being will grow only stronger.

A critical component of education and well-being is health and healthful eating. I saw recently a report about health problems of Latinos in the Bronx, New York. The rates of obesity, diabetes and other health problems are astounding. Parents need to be educated about nutrition, as it affects not only educational opportunity but also life.

We lack a magic wand. So progress must depend on hard work, creativity, initiative and persistence. That progress, I believe, must include:

- ❖ A strong start for Hispanic preschoolers — that is, more early education, including day care for the children of working parents
- ❖ Improved teacher quality across the board
- ❖ Lower dropout rates
- ❖ Easier access to higher education
- ❖ Higher high school and postsecondary graduation rates
- ❖ Increased numbers of Hispanic college presidents, administrators and faculty

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.”

Education 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 success and fail-safe mechanisms.

I am an eternal optimist. Like you, I hope for a better America down the road. I hope for a more prosperous America with greater opportunities for the disadvantaged. I hope for a day when Hispanics will claim their rightful place not only in education but in every arena in which dedication and intelligence are the essential ingredients.

“Education may not guarantee well-being in a society, but social well-being is improbable without it.”

As a people, it is not our way to be vindictive or seek to right wrongs as if taking an eye for an eye could make life better for anyone. I note that while there's a general malaise, a lack of drive among some Americans who feel betrayed or abandoned by political leaders, we appear to be coming into our own, insisting that our art be recognized with appropriate Presidential distinctions at the Kennedy Center, cheering when one of our own sits on the Supreme Court, ready to hold hands and demand that immigration reform happen now!

So, as I am privileged to meet amazing influential Latinos, I invite us to step up our civic engagement, forget party lines and vote for people with the courage to address the most critical issues facing our country. Let's be determined not to fight over the crumbs that fall off the table where others eat — let's make sure we're *at* the table, representing our own agenda, in our own voice, prepared to take a stand against the injustice and the tyranny of low expectations and the tragedy of school funding by ZIP code!

Those of us in this room are the lucky ones. We're informed, we're educated and we're connected. Let's pledge to use these connections to insist on collaboration by nonprofits, educators and leaders. The recession, while incredibly difficult, has had one redeeming feature: people of every race, ethnicity, religion or political ideology have suffered together.

This is our moment. At once, forces have converged in ways that make it possible for others to imagine what would happen if the undocumented did not come to work for a day, or a week. There is great power in numbers, but without education and a strong agenda intended to lift all boats, we will fall short of our potential.

Yes, my friends. AAHHE "got it" a long time ago. We must catch up with this amazing organization and internalize the insights and many lessons learned here. Our nation's prosperity will depend increasingly on Hispanics. And their education is a sound investment. Thank you.

SPEAKER'S BIOGRAPHY



Yvette Donado oversees human resources, facilities, and corporate quality and process management — leading a staff of over 400 employees in an organization that employs more than 3,000 people. She also chairs the Council on the Mission, an executive body that ensures the alignment of ETS programs and services with the mission to advance quality and equity in education worldwide.

In more than a decade at ETS, she has created a sustainable talent brand, “Learning for Business Results,” to accelerate leadership succession; consistently increased employee engagement as measured by the Employee Commitment Index (exceeding National Employee Study levels); and increased productivity by incorporating enviable benefits, wellness programs and flexibility in policies that foster work-life balance. She also spearheaded ETS’s initiative to address the needs of the nation’s English learners.

Donado is on the boards of the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, Junior Achievement of New Jersey, United Way of Mercer County, Hispanics Inspiring Students’ Performance and Achievement, the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families and the Advisory Council of the Pan American Development Foundation. She is also on the faculty of the Student Success Institute of the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education. She is the former Vice President, Human Resources and Communications, of the executive board of the National Consortium for Graduate Degrees for Minorities in Engineering and Science.

Donado earned a B.A. in sociology from Queens College in New York, a certificate in labor/employment law and human resources from New York University, a certificate in strategic human resources management and an executive MBA from Harvard University. She completed the Executive Development Program at Wharton Business School and a labor relations/conflict resolution program sponsored by Cornell and Boston universities. She authored a chapter in *The Successful HR Executive: Top Human Resources Professionals on Strategies for Managing Costs, Promoting Profitability, and Knowing the Business* (Aspatore Books, 2005). Donado also completed a Harvard Business School course, “Making Corporate Boards More Effective,” in 2009. In 2010, she attended The Teleos Leadership Institute’s program, Executive Coaching and Resonant Leadership.

In 2012, *Hispanic Business* named Donado as one of the 50 most influential Hispanics. In 2013, *LATINA Style* selected her as one of the top five Latina executives in the United States; Dallas-based Parents Step Ahead honored Donado for her sustained support; 100 Hispanic Women gave her its Corporate Partnership award; and in 2014, the Princeton Regional Chamber of Commerce honored her with its Woman of Achievement Award and LatinoJustice PRLDEF gave her its Latina Trailblazers Award. She has addressed conferences at Princeton and Rutgers universities, the College Board®, the United States Hispanic Leadership Institute, the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, the National Hispana Leadership Institute, the International Association of Professional Administrators and Dual Language Education of New Mexico, among others. In mid-2013, she addressed a private-sector human resources symposium in Madrid, Spain, and in early 2014, she addressed the 45th anniversary conference of the National Urban Fellows. An expert on leadership and self-actualization, Donado enjoys speaking on education and assessments and their role in successful careers and productive citizenship. She is fluent in Spanish.

About ETS

At ETS, we advance quality and equity in education for people worldwide by creating assessments based on rigorous research. ETS serves individuals, educational institutions and government agencies by providing customized solutions for teacher certification, English language learning, and elementary, secondary and postsecondary education, and by conducting education research, analysis and policy studies. Founded as a nonprofit in 1947, ETS develops, administers and scores more than 50 million tests annually — including the *TOEFL*® and *TOEIC*® tests, the *GRE*® tests and *The Praxis Series*® assessments — in more than 180 countries, at over 9,000 locations worldwide.

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