

MIGUEL A. NEVÁREZ, PhD:

**HEART & SOUL
OF
EDUCATION**

By
Marco A. Córdova

DR. MIGUEL A. NEVÁREZ, PhD: HEART & SOUL OF EDUCATION

Copyright © 2016 by Border Issues of Texas, Inc

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

The sale of this literary work is strictly prohibited. This is an educational edition of Border Issues of Texas, Inc. a Texas nonprofit organization.

Book cover picture courtesy of Texas State Representative Terry Canales Staff, Dr. Rolando Avila and The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Edited by Ruby D. Brown

Printed in the USA

A very big thank you to the following institutions:



Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	5
Preface	6
Introduction	9
Chapter 1	10
Chapter 2	21
Chapter 3	22
Chapter 4	34
Chapter 5	36
Chapter 6	40
Chapter 7	42
Chapter 8	71

Acknowledgments

I wish to personally thank the following people who without their contributions and support this book would not have been written:

Former University of Texas – Pan American President Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez for entrusting me with the opportunity to carry out this project

Dr. Guy Bailey, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley President

Texas State Senator Juan Jesús “Chuy” Hinojosa

Texas State Representative Armando “Mando” Martínez

Former Texas State Representative Ms. Veronica Gonzales

Texas State Representative Terry Canales

Texas State Representative Óscar Longoria

Mr. Mario Reyna, STC Dean for Business & Technology

Ms. Maria Conde

Mr. Silverio Nieto

Dr. Kimberly Selber

Professor José Skinner

Dr. Rolando Avila

Mr. Josué Esparza

Mr. Anselmo Garza

Ms. Ruby D. Brown

Border Issues of Texas Board of Directors; Mr. Arturo Ramírez, Mr. Manuel A. Alonso and Dr. Juan R. Ramírez

Marco A. Córdova

Preface

Tenacity could be the first word used to accurately describe Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez and his chosen educational path among the Hispanic community in the Rio Grande Valley. His hard work capacity and arduous fight to improve the living standards of our region, regardless of his lack of intellectual training. He was devoted to raising the educational standards of those individuals whom were confronted with the strongest academic, cultural, political or social challenges and barriers.

This is what precisely exalts and separates the work of Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez, as he continually tried to demonstrate to his colleagues and contemporaries of high intellectual and political influence that: the American population of racial origins above and beyond borders, assuming the spiritual conviction which asserts that the son of God is Christ and the concept of American is reflected in George Washington, one may well aspire to an elevated socio-cultural, economic and political scope in this great land of opportunities and fulfilled dreams.

Commitment, dedication and discipline are three characteristics of the strong and brave spirit; something that is only reserved for those such as him who perceive from within via their strong personality. Furthermore, his determination to say things in a clear and lucid manner couple with his vision in preparing the students budding intellect could be noted as an outstanding ingredient when aiding the Hispanics and disadvantaged.

He was constantly seeking to transcend his childhood precariousness, which included playing on the harvested coffee sacks before distribution as well as between the melancholic corners of the enormous warehouse facing the unpredictable tomorrow. It is here, where he battled with

his genuine desire to become a rancher or *barrilero*, and his adolescent rebelliousness which opposed his continuing with the family tradition of becoming a physician. Living in a specter of rigid parental discipline at the hands of his father, he manages to flourish thanks to his mother. Despite the great sorrow and tears she experienced after their separation, it was thanks to his father's tragic absence that he acquired the determination and tenacity to develop into a well disciplined and consistent man, now fully worthy of his apology.

After a national search, in 1981, Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez became the first Hispanic president of our local university. Furthermore, he was the first Rio Grande Valley native to lead this institution which included a vast majority of professionals, academicians, industry leaders, politicians and local eminent personalities. All of these whom have walked through and emerged into service and aiding the overall needs of the South Texas community, by overcoming social, cultural and racial prejudices which were derailed by the determination and participation of the political and community involvement in which he is accredited to.

He led Pan American University through its historic merger with the UT system 1989, via a dynamic and growing community enrolling period which encouraged the use and enrollment of the institution's campus.

Pan American University, an authentic pride symbol of the region and its population, witnessed the diversification of its student community during the 1970's. This diversification reflected a predominantly Mexican-American population and a well-deserved recognition to its main promoter, Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez. The *Wall Street Journal*, in its July 16, 1997 edition, attribute him with the creation of a Hispanic middle class for the South Texas region; making a powerful and comprehensive editorial coverage of his knowledge to its nationwide readers.

The University of Texas-Pan American was established in 1989, after the successful and historic merger of Pan American University with the University of Texas System.

As we briefly made this short, but deserved apology to one of the most outstanding citizens of the Rio Grande Valley; UTPA or UTRGV is one of the fastest growing higher institutions in the UT System, with an updated enrolling registration of almost 19,000 students. These students are disseminated through the Arts & Communication Department, the Education Department and the Business & Administration Department...

The conditions are now provided for the university to become a medical and scientific institution of research centered on the alumni under its new name: University of Texas - Rio Grande Valley.

Salvador Duarte

INTRODUCTION

Do you have what it takes to be a great leader?

According to Kenneth Boulding, leadership is a process by which a person influences others to accomplish an objective and directs an organization in a way that makes it more cohesive and coherent.

The following testimony will give you an idea of how a committed, dedicated, and disciplined human being with the support of many community leaders, raised the educational standards of the Rio Grande Valley.

This book was written based on a series of personal conversations with Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez recorded in the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Campus in 2015.

We hope this tribute would help us reflect on the positive impact and contribution of Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez educational service.

Onto Chapter One!

COFFEE AROMA

Miguel Ángel Nevárez parents and grandparents were merchants. His grandfathers on his mother side were from Ciudad Mier, Tamaulipas, Mexico; where they owned a large grocery store.

His grandmother's name was Elisa Peña Peña, and died at the age of 102 years. She used to say she was "doble peñasco." The last name Peña came from his grandfather's side: Eugenio Peña, from Ciudad Mier, Tamaulipas.

Nevárez doesn't know where exactly his ancestors were born, but what he truthfully knows, is that they were from somewhere in Mexico.

Nevárez does not remember if they were born in Ciudad Mier, but it is something that he always wondered. Dr. Cayetano Barrera, a Nevárez good friend and colleague, also has relatives in Ciudad Mier. For years Dr. Barrera worked to rescue the historical documentation of Ciudad Mier.

In 1910, during the Mexican Revolution, Nevárez's family moved from Ciudad Mier to Roma, Texas. At that time, his mother was three years of age. From his mother's side, there was only her and her brother Humberto Peña who moved to Roma, where they had a grocery store. Years later, after his grandfather died, they moved to McAllen.

When his mother's family arrived in McAllen, they developed a coffee distribution company. It was a coffee bean warehouse store store that distributed throughout the Rio Grande Valley. Nevárez remembers those grounded coffee beans in their pound bags. His mother was in charge of sales and distribution. The warehouse was located on 17th and Erie Street, one block south of Dallas Street. Across the street was the Cantu's warehouse. He recalls

that he liked to play among the coffee bean sacks, before he went to study in Laredo, Texas. He remembers that there was a big grinding mill and trucks in the warehouses, which were used to grind and distribute coffee.

His grandparents on his father's side were traders as well. They were from the City of Durango, Mexico. He never met them, however his mother did. They lived all of their lives in Durango. He believes his grandmother was from Guadalajara, Jalisco. It is to his understanding that she moved to Durango when she got married. There were two brothers and four sisters. His father, being the oldest in the family, studied medicine in Mexico City.

Narvaez's father's name was Miguel Ángel Nevárez Isurieta. On his mother's side they were Peña Peña "doble peñasco", like his grandmother used to say. His grandmother on his mother's side lived here in the United States for many years. He does not recall meeting his grandparents on his father's side, though perhaps, he did when he was small. Nevárez lived in Reynosa, Tamaulipas for a while. The tradition at the time, was whenever a physician or an educator graduated, they had to go through a social service program. They were sent to rural areas where there weren't enough teachers or physicians.

At first, Nevárez's father was sent to Mazatlán, Sinaloa; where he married for the first time and had two children. One of them was named Miguel Ángel like him, but died early. Then, there was Graciela Nevárez, his sister. Nevárez's father was reassigned to Reynosa, once again as part of his social service assignment to rural areas, where medical support was needed. It was in Reynosa, where he met and married his mother Lucila in 1934.

His mother went to school here in the United States, when she arrived at a very young age. She attended primary school in Roma, and high school in McAllen,

Texas. Then, after high school graduation, she turned to coffee selling and distribution.

He lived near Reynosa's main plaza towards the Rio Bravo River; a block down from the main plaza, heading north. The Guadalupana Church was to the east side, across the main plaza, and a block away. Nevárez's parents married in 1935. His mother wanted him to be born a U.S. citizen, so she came to McAllen where most of her family lived. Nevárez was born two days after they arrived. Once he was born, they returned to Reynosa, where they would live until 1940.

Miguel Nevárez was born on June 20, 1937 in the McAllen downtown hospital, where the City Hall is now located. It is between Main Street and 14th Street. His sister was born in 1940, and still lives in McAllen. At the time, they had established in McAllen, with her sister Diana Graciela Nevárez and his brother Antonio H. Nevárez. Antonio was born in 1943, and passed away in 1990, in Houston.

In 1940, as is the tendency in the United States of America, whenever there is a humanitarian crisis and they need certain skilled people, such as field workers, physicians or engineers, doors are opened to the people needed for the country's development. The United States doors were opened to certain professions. One of them was the medical vocation.

There was a physician's shortage caused by World War II. An announcement was made by the U.S. Government to all foreign doctors. If they came and took certain required exams, they could work in the medical field here in the United States. Since his mother spoke English very well, she gave his father an extensive English course. He passed the required exams, and obtained his medical license.



Reynosa, Tamaulipas Main Square Plaza around 1940's

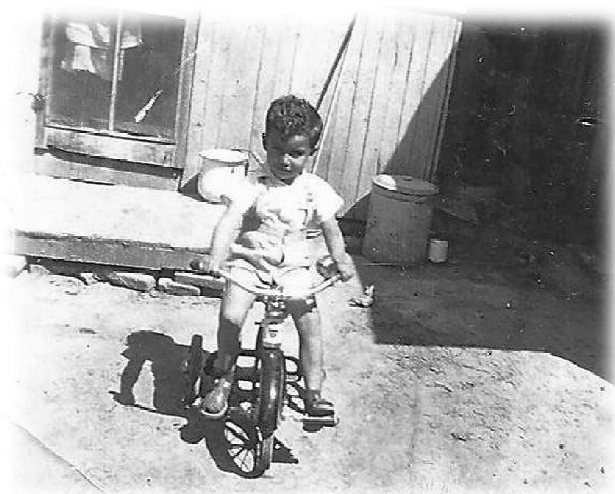
(Courtesy of www.mexicoenfotos.com/antiguas/tamaulipas/reynosa/plaza-principal-de-reynosa-MX1322983819135)

Nevárez's mother was fluent in English, due to the fact she graduated from McAllen High School. Unfortunately, Nevárez doesn't remember what year she graduated. He doesn't remember exactly where his mother lived, but he is sure it was close to the coffee warehouse by Erie Street, in downtown McAllen. Downtown McAllen was about three or four blocks around in those days, he remembers.

He recalls his first three years of age in Reynosa, living between his house and his father's clinic where many patients were consulted. Their house was adjacent to his father's clinic. Aside from working at the clinic, his father was the Health Director for the City of Reynosa.



Mrs. Lucila Nevárez holding baby Miguel Nevárez
(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez riding his tricycle in Reynosa

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

He remembers there was no drinking water, thus people would sell it. “There was a man with a donkey carrying a large barrel with drinking water. He was a *barrilero*,” Nevárez mentioned.

They went door-to-door, selling water throughout the *colonias*. “That was the way you got your drinking water back then,” he said. He remembers telling his mother he wanted to be a *barrilero* when he grew up. Nevárez doesn’t have many memories of his early years lived between Reynosa and McAllen. He lived on 17th Street in McAllen.

Nevárez's father had his medical clinic on the south side of the City of McAllen. He remembers his father being very traditional and strict. He had a sister he hadn't met until adulthood, because she was placed by his father in a Catholic boarding school in Mexico.



Moye Military School London Street, 1940's

(Courtesy of <https://utsalibrariestopshelf.wordpress.com/page/40/>)

Nevárez's father was the kind of person who believed in such traditions. At six years old, young Miguel Nevárez was also placed in a boarding school located in Laredo, Texas. He attended the Saint Joseph Academy for two years. His mother would get melancholy whenever he was about to leave. It was so difficult for her; they often cried together. "It was an Oblate Boarding School," he said. He was there for a few years. Then, he was sent to the very strict Moye Military Academy, outside San Antonio, Texas. He remembers returning to McAllen during vacations. "I knew no one my own age, absolutely nobody," he stated.

He was at Moye Military Academy for solely one year. One of the Oblate brothers, whom he met in Laredo, was reassigned to Brownsville, Texas. Around his fourth year of school, he came to Brownsville to *St. Joseph School*. It was a place with no rooms to stay. He had to live with the Villarreal family on Elizabeth Street.

Hector Villarreal's family was a big family. He was an electrical engineer in the City of Brownsville. The Villarreal's had three daughters and one son. They had an apartment above the garage, where he and the Villarreal's son stayed.

"I never had the opportunity to go to school in McAllen, until God knows how my mother managed to make it happen, considering she was never happy to send me out to study," Nevárez mentioned. He finally stayed in McAllen and began attending to Sacred Heart Catholic School.

He really enjoyed it, because he had the opportunity to make friends. Life was very hard in boarding schools. When he came to McAllen during summer vacation, he did not know anyone. He started playing with practically anyone he could find. "Those were good years for me, when everything was Catholic," he said. He became an altar boy, working with anything related to the church. During that time, he was an eighth grader at McAllen Sacred Heart School. He was there for four years.

Several of his classmates continued studying in seminaries in San Antonio. They ultimately finished their careers as priests. He thought about becoming a priest, but couldn't bear the thought of returning to San Antonio, and being separated from his mother again. "No," he said.

His father always wanted to give him the best education. He wanted him to be a physician, and follow the family tradition. He remembers having some conversations with him about the medical field.

However, he never could stand the sight of blood. He told his father that he couldn't be a physician. His father replied, "You will get used to it. Don't you worry, you'll do fine. I was also like you, but once you get in the profession, you'll become accustomed to seeing blood."



Picture of Dr. Miguel Nevárez taken in 1937. His birth was in 1899, not the year shown on the card

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

He recalls his parents joining a medical society in Reynosa, where they met regularly. It was there that he played with kids of his age, who became his friends for years. His parents remained members of the Reynosa Medical Society. He recalls Dr. Puig and Dr. Ongay from Reynosa.

Nevárez graduated from McAllen High School in May of 1954, at 16 years old. He was in high school for only three years, because he was enrolled in summer school. This helped advance his course credits. As a result of his father's continuous pressure, he did as much as he could, to do exceptionally well.

He used to play basketball and football in high school. "I never excelled in any of these sports," he added. His problem was he entered high school with one class generation, but left with another one. The same situation happened to him at Sacred Heart Catholic School. His school friends were behind him by two years. These were some of the reasons he never got involved in sports much.

Once Nevárez was out of school, he spent most of his time around his favorite places. He enjoyed visiting Dallas and 17th Street, where the Cine Rey and Rex Café are located.

He recalls McAllen paved streets ended on Chicago Avenue. Every other street was gravel. There were people from other parts of the McAllen area, who came to 17th and Main Street. Citizens from 23rd Street and Hackberry Avenue, gathered in downtown McAllen. Nevárez and his friends used to say, "*ahí vienen los de la jeta verde.*" People came from La Paloma; a place where the old McAllen water reservoir tank is located. He used to get together with his friends to compete and play around on the corner of 17th and Chicago Avenue. The Sanchez gas station was located there, as well as a pool table place owned by Donato Lopez. Many people who lived around that particular area liked to play dominoes. He remembers there were several domino tables, ready for individuals to play in the evenings. "At the time, Gonzalez Pharmacy was located on the same block. Further north, there was a television we used to watch, through the window outside from the sidewalk," he said.

He does not remember what type of TV shows he watched back then. He preferred to play in the pool tables. He played pool again when he was Vice President for Pan American University. He remembers there being several pool tables in the student union building. He regularly played pool with the students. He was a very passionate aficionado playing dominoes and billiards; although, he "was never good at it," he stated.

Nevárez siblings, Antonio and Graciela were three years apart. Three and six years of age are not much of a difference, but he minimally hung around his brother. His brother was a very good student, very smart and greatly attached to his grandmother who lived for many years. In

1956, his father died in a car crash while returning from Corpus Christi.

His father had a ranch in Mexico. It's close to Ciudad Méndez, towards San Fernando, Tamaulipas. He remembers his father telling him, *"donde acaba esta brecha, vas a salir directo al rancho."*

Back then, there were only villages, and it took half a day to get to certain rural areas. There was no other way to get to the ranch, but road shortcuts or "brechas". His father would say, *"vete por los ranchos abriendo y cerrando puertas..."* He was very emotionally involved with the ranch.



Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez and his sister Graciela Nevárez in McAllen, Texas

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

THE RANCH

There were three ranches: *Camarillo*, *El Nopal* and *Santa Lucila*. The *Santa Lucila Ranch* was a small ranch which honored his mother. It was close to the small village of Santa Isabel. Nevárez has not gone to this location for the past eight years. In his most recent visit he discovered there was nothing. It was practically a ghost town. Santa Isabel was a very vigorous community in terms of their schools, businesses, and their enormous water dam. He used to frequent the location with his father whenever he had time. They enjoyed devoting time to their ranch.

One Saturday night dinner, both of his parents were invited to attend. However, his father would not go until late in the evening. He had to finish some pending medical diligences. His father arrived late to the banquet, and by midnight, both of his parents returned home. The next day on Sunday morning, his father got up and headed to Corpus Christi to purchase a water pump motor for the ranch. His father stopped in Bishop, north of Kingsville, to visit his relatives. After he dined with some of his family members, he initiated his return home, driving by Highway 77 near Armstrong, Texas. Sadly, he fell asleep at the wheel and went off the road. Despite his efforts to try and control the vehicle, he died instantly on April 15, 1956. "I was in college, at Baylor University that tragic day," Nevárez recalls.

CONSEQUENCES

Miguel A. Nevárez remembers the old McAllen High School where most of the students would get together. This is the present day Chase Bank parking lot. There were several trees on campus. In those days, all Mexican-American students gathered together under one tree and the Anglo students by another. They used to intentionally segregate themselves. Interestingly, sporting events united everyone without distinction. Segregation never happened personally to him. However, he witnessed it on his friends, which never received proper advising to pursue their education. "Of course, it also helped having a father who was a physician," he said. Furthermore, he was a year ahead in school so they didn't really question or bother him. He received good grades in science and math, and did fairly well in English. He does remember other students being much smarter than he. However, due to financial reasons or poor advising, many of his friends did not pursue a higher education. They ultimately ended up working in local stores. Nevárez always believed that anyone during that time could study any professional career. "The key to achieving this, however, rested on advising, guidance and support. Ultimately, if students were helped they could end up being extremely successful," he stated. The UT System Board of Regents agreed this help was fundamental when developing Pan American University, and developing a successful medical school in the Valley. Nevárez was asked, "Why do you want to develop a medical school in the Valley? If we develop a local medical school, no students will come from this area; they will only come from outside areas. Students from this area are not capable to study." He remembers telling them, this was simply not true. Due to this, UTPA developed the Baylor Medical Program; an agreement with Baylor University to show the UT System, he could create medical students here in the Rio Grande Valley. Back then, it was

believed, school teachers did not motivate students to pursue a college career. He believes it was partly racism, because there were counselors and teachers who did not believe a Mexican-American could succeed in life. He feels one of the reasons this was happening at the time, was due in part to a lack of Hispanic professionals in the Valley. His father was a physician in the Valley. He vaguely recalls there being only two other Mexican-American doctors in the area. Dr. Garcia was among them, including one other. There were hardly any Hispanics earning college degrees. Indeed, there were wealthy Hispanics in the region, such as the Guerra family which owned several stores. Few of them had formal education. He always said the biggest compliment this university received during his term as president, was in 1997. *The Wall Street Journal* credited Pan American University with creating a middle class in the Rio Grande Valley. He believes they were right, because the Valley was not like Mexico, where people are either very rich or very poor. Here in the Valley there were poorer than rich individuals. In his case, he said, "we were not poor, but we weren't rich either." His family faced a great obstacle, when his father died, and economic instability set on his family's life.

One of the biggest challenges, was to face the economic collapse after his father's death. Much of his money was invested in the ranch in Mexico. He would go to the ranch pretty often with his father. He enjoyed being and working at the ranch. When his father passed, monetary access ran out. His father had been the sole person whom supported and maintained the ranch in Mexico. At the time, he didn't know a great portion of the ranch's land was under his father's brother name. His uncle, who had never once stopped at the ranch, began to take a personal interest in it. It was precisely then the problems began. When his father died, he realized that it was going to be hard. Nevárez left Baylor University after being there for a year. He said to his father many times, "I'm going to devote myself to the ranch." His mother wanted him to continue with his

education, saying to him, "if you can't go to Baylor because there is no money, then you can go to Pan Am." Pan American College, then, was a two-year college. He remembers recanting to his mother, "I'm going to the ranch to work there." He helped at the ranch for a while, but soon there were several problems and disputes with his uncle in Mexico. His mother fought relentlessly to preserve the ranch; however, his uncle eventually took ownership and sold the ranch.

He used to do livestock branding and horse bathing. He remembers thinking a lot about his father, because they always were together. "Whenever my father wasn't at the ranch, he was fully dedicated to his medical profession," Nevárez recalls.

Miguel A. Nevárez entered Baylor University in September 1954, but left one year later due to his father's death. He was out for two years. In 1958, he married. His family had lost the ranch, as a result of his uncle winning the legal dispute over its ownership, then selling it. Those were devastating times for his family. He remembers his wife telling him, "If you already have two years of college, then finish your career." He said no to continuing his medical career.

Nevárez's wife, Blanca Medina lived down Beaumont and 20th Street in McAllen, Texas. She had five brothers and one sister; it was a big family. He met her when they were students at Sacred Heart School. She finished high school in 1956, but she did not go to college. Mrs. Blanca Nevárez worked for many years with JC Penny. The store was at the corner of Main Street and Chicago Avenue. It later moved to La Plaza Mall. Nevárez started to work different jobs. He worked whatever jobs were available. He drove farm tractors; he worked at Texas State Employment Commission Office, in McAllen. When they first married, his wife asked him to finish his professional career; to which he responded, "I will not

finish the medical career, forget it. I still need two years of pre-med and then four more years afterwards. What about the costs? We are not going to make it, but if you want me to go, then I will go."

He still had the ranch in mind. He had not given up hope of having a ranch. He began a pre-med semester, and two more careers, which he didn't like. He decided to study agriculture because of the ranch he owned. Nevárez graduated in 1961. He worked various jobs. During the summers, he worked for the U.S Immigration Department, at the Bracero Center.

The Bracero Center was located in Hidalgo, Texas. It was the Bracero Processing Center, where he processed people coming to work in the United States. He would get up early, as he worked in two places. He worked with the Immigration Department and with the Texas State

Employment Office. In the Immigration Department, he made sure that all the employment documents were in order, as well as employed those who were eligible to work. He received a stack of papers with names of all those who crossed from Mexico to the United States.

His job was to search through files, to see if they had any criminal records, and the required fingerprinting process.

"Summer jobs were seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours daily, and with good pay," he said.

He remembers getting paid \$1.40/hour, which was good pay at the time. He saved most of the money, since they didn't have time to spend it, considering they worked seven days a week. The money was for his continuing education in Kingsville, Texas.



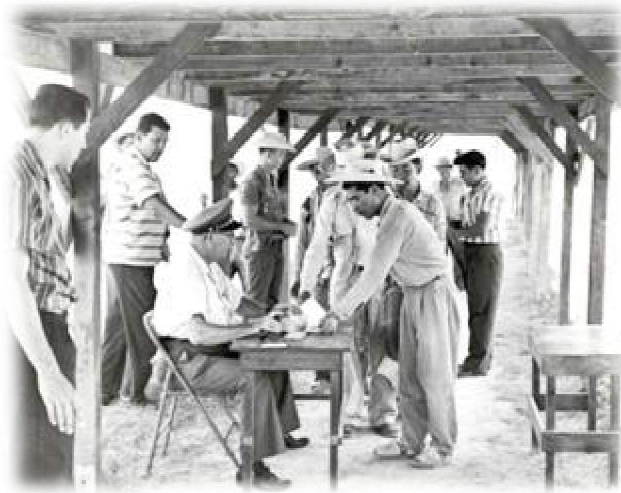


**Dr. Miguel Nevárez and his wife Blanca Nevárez during the
McAllen High School Prom in 1954**

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez working Texas State Employment
Commission office in McAllen**
(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)



**Immigrant Inspector inspecting Braceros for admission,
Hidalgo, Texas, 1957**
(Courtesy of <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/historical-library/library-news/bracero-program-images>)



**Braceros undergoing Customs inspection
at Hidalgo, Texas in 1957**

(Courtesy of <https://www.uscis.gov/history-and-genealogy/historical-library/library-news/bracero-program-images>)

By then, his mother had remarried to a man who had farm land in Mission, Texas. One of his jobs, was helping on the Mission farm. He also worked at The Men's Shop on Main Street, selling clothes. "I hope these words help motivate young people to move forward, despite all the adversities they might encounter," he stressed.

Nevárez's life hasn't always been easy. When he was young they had the means, since his father was a physician, but they were not rich. His father left everything in Mexico to come to the United States. Here in the United States they had a regular house. When his father died, the situation turned out to be quite difficult, because his mother could no longer afford his education. So when he married, his mother told him, "Now you are on your own; you need to seek for yourself."

He used to sell new clothing on Main Street, for one summer. He held part-time jobs, while also studying in Kingsville, Texas. Most of his friends in Kingsville, were

from Mission: Bobby Treddla, Toño Orozco and Reynaldo Chapa. They all rented a house, along with three other students. They used to hang out with many people from Mission, and practiced sports at the Kingsville Naval Base. They worked as sport referees, because they needed to make money in order to survive. They went to the Valley every weekend and returned to Kingsville, to make money. He remembers buying beer in Kingsville was forbidden. They came to the Valley and bought Bacardi liquor bottles. In turn, they would sell them for double the price. They looked for different ways to generate money, to survive and eat. "There was a lady in Kingsville that gave us a midday meal, a homemade type of meal. She served us whatever we wanted, and that was the day's meal. I do not remember the lady's name," he uttered.

He worked multiple part-time jobs until he finished his agriculture career in 1960. The biggest problem he encountered when he finished his career in Kingsville, was limited work in his field. He began working as a health inspector with the State Department of Agriculture in Fort Worth, Texas. He worked at the Swift Meat Processing Plant as a meat inspector. His work journey began at four in the morning at the slaughterhouse. There was a warehouse which had a "mist" that washed meat constantly to keep it moist. He worked there as a meat inspector. Then, he was transferred to inspect meat boxes. Occasionally, he had to go inspect train wagons in Fort Worth, because there was meat imported from Mexico. They chose certain meat boxes to see if they were clean, without worms or other type of bacteria. He was living with his cousin Juan García from Bishop, Texas. During that time, he always had a cold, which he could never get rid of. After nine months, he discovered it was due to the constant climate change. So he said to himself, "This job is not for me."

He had many connections in Mexico. He began to import tomatoes and other produce from Mexico. He used

to deliver produce trucks to Houston, Texas. He focused on produce importation and for a year, he did very well. The following year was very bad. Houston traders could not buy from him anymore, so he lost several produce trucks. "In the agriculture business, there are times where there is a lot of work, and there are times where there is nothing," he added. There was no work for him anymore. He began looking for work in McAllen. A friend told him Zavala Elementary School needed a substitute teacher, and asked if he could go.

Substitute teaching was Nevárez's first job in the education system. During the summer, work in Mexico started to flourish. Somebody from Zavala Elementary School asked him if he'd be interested in teaching part time. He accepted the opportunity, and loved it. However, he told them he did not have a teaching certificate, thus, they provided him an emergency teaching certificate. Meanwhile, he was finishing his certification at Pan Am. He liked teaching, because he would get summers off, and he could go to Mexico to work. "This will help balance everything economically," he said. He began teaching, while going to Pan Am. He liked teaching. He was in Zavala for a year, then switched to Navarro Elementary School. He taught there for several years, and met Eugene Gutierrez the former principal. From there, he went to earn his master's degree in June 1967. He worked part-time at Zavala Elementary School and full-time at Navarro Elementary School for approximately four years. He also worked with migrants in West Texas, collecting surveys. He was happy while teaching at Navarro School. It was then he discovered education was indeed his passion.

A friend of his, finished his master's degree with federal support. It was a type of fellowship. During this time, Russia sent Sputnik Satellite to orbit, and Russian propaganda stated Americans were behind Russia in certain areas. Areas such as, science and mathematics, which Nevárez was teaching. His friends suggested he

apply for this type of grant, because the educational system was looking for innovating teachers who were developing new programs in science and mathematics. He applied and received a fellowship to Michigan State University. During that time, his wife was working with JC Penney and asked for a job transfer to JC Penney in Michigan, which was accepted. They moved in June 1967, and lived there for a year. They almost stayed in Michigan, due to him being offered an opportunity at MSU to finish his PhD. Although, his wife loved to work with JC Penney at Lansing, they made a last minute decision in June 1968, to return to McAllen. In the Valley, he was offered a teaching and training position. His job was to train teachers, so they could do well in their classes. That was the main reason he returned. He also had a part-time job as school bus driver. It was appreciated, extra income, since teaching salaries weren't great back then.

When his father died, his brother went to study in Mexico City. His brother, Antonio, was very young when he left, and was admitted to a boarding school. Antonio studied in Mexico for many years. He came to see his mother every time he had an opportunity. Years later, he began working for Aeroméxico, a Mexican Airlines Company. He was able to land this job since he spoke fluent English, as a result of his studies in the United States, as a child. Time passed, and Aeroméxico eventually transferred him to Houston. There he stayed and lived until 1989, when he died of AIDS. He never married and had no children.

Nevárez's sister on the other hand, struggled just like him. She finished high school, and went to live with their mother. She studied at Pan Am, and finished her teaching career. Graciela Nevárez married Eduardo Izaguirre at a very young age. The Izaguirre family owned movie theaters. They owned El Cine Mexico which was located on the corner of 17th and Beaumont Street. The Cine Mexico was closed, and later my brother-in-law bought Cine El Rey.



**This picture was most likely taken by someone from
La Joya School District when Dr. Miguel Nevárez returned to
the Valley from NYU (1971-72)**

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

Nevárez's sister on the other hand, struggled just like him. She finished high school, and went to live with their mother. She studied at Pan Am, and finished her teaching career. Graciela Nevárez married Eduardo Izaguirre at a very young age. The Izaguirre family owned movie theaters. They owned El Cine Mexico which was located on the corner of 17th and Beaumont Street. The Cine Mexico was closed, and later my brother-in-law bought Cine El Rey.

He also owned Buckhorn Drive-In, which was located between McAllen and Mission. Some of these movie theaters were in San Benito and Corpus Christi. Nevárez's brother-in-law was committed to movie theaters. The problem arose when Mexican Golden Age Cinema came to an end.



Dr. Miguel Nevárez brother Antonio H. Nevárez
(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

CINEPHILE

Cantinflas, Antonio Aguilar, Los Hermanos Dominguez, Pedro Infante, and Pedro Armendariz visited the Valley frequently. Nevárez saw them many times at Cine Mexico. "They came in person touring and promoting their movies in different movie theaters," he claimed. He was a cinema fan, driven by his brother-in-law. At the time, there were *Braceros** (laborers), wandering on 17th Street at midnight. All the bars were closed and they had nowhere to go nor, anyone to hire them. They decided to show them movies at Cine Mexico. His brother-in-law was selling tickets. A friend of his ran the movies, and he sold candy and popcorn. The three ran the entire show.

There were also talent show nights; local talent competed at the Cine México and Cine El Rey. He remembers they had everything on 17th Street. Some competitors sang well, and others did not. This served as their source of entertainment as well.

Without noticing, he became a film aficionado, because of his brother-in-law. Before either were even married, Nevárez and his brother-in-law, were friends. They went to school together, and were roughly the same age. Their mothers had already known each other for a long time

Aside from his brother-in-law, he had other close friends. Pedro Ayala, who was a butcher on 17th Street. Jesus Alanis whom he attended Catholic school with, was also a good friend. They went on to become partners in a Soto la Marina, Tamaulipas Ranch. Another friend, Willie Cantu, owned a store located on 17th Street. To this day, he still has many friends in McAllen. He often said, while working at the university, "Look, how many friends I have here at college, but they are professional friends, whom I

consider colleagues rather than friends. There are some who are colleagues, but they are not my friends. Then, there are, professional colleagues who I can differentiate their friendship. I segregated my friends. There are differences between levels of friends, and these friends were only friends because of professional positions.”

His son Miguel, was his first child, born on March 18, 1960. His son was born whilst studying at Texas A&M in Kingsville, Texas. He has three children, all being born in McAllen. His daughter Mariel Annette was born in 1965, and his youngest son Marco Antonio, was born on August 11, 1969. Miguel did not choose to study. He simply finished high school and two years of college, but did not finish his professional career at Pan Am. He works at the State Attorney General Office in the Child Support Division, where he has more than 20 years working. Annette finished her career at Pan Am in Business Administration. She currently manages a hotel located across the McAllen Airport. Marco graduated from Houston University and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. He worked in a Hyatt hotel until the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games. The Coca Cola Company rented the entire hotel and when the Olympic Games finished, the Coca Cola Company offered him a job. He has been working in Atlanta, Georgia since 1996.

NEW YORK



**Picture taken in New York City, Washington Square Park,
next to New York University
(1970-71)**

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

Miguel Nevárez continued studying his master's degree at Michigan State University, and finished in June of 1967. Then, he moved to McAllen for one year, where he was responsible for a teacher training program. At the same time he was teaching, he was also driving a school bus for the McAllen School District until 1968. Nevárez was promised a school principal-ship position for the next school cycle in the McAllen School District, but before the year was over, the offer was retracted. He was disappointed with the decision, so he applied for graduate school and ended up receiving three college fellowships. He paid all education costs with the fellowships, plus a stipend. However, that money was still not enough. He had to look for another source of income. He received a fellowship

from the University of New Mexico, another in Michigan State University, and yet another in New York University. "I don't know why I chose New York, but it was precisely there where I decided to get my Ph.D.," he stated. He went to New York in June 1969, when his son Marco was a new born infant.

In New York, everything was vastly different in comparison to the year he spent in Michigan. His family wouldn't be with him all the time. He knew nothing of New York, not even how to get there. He remembers looking at the map, and telling his wife, "Let me go by myself, because I'll be bumping around everywhere. I do not know how to get there."

After thoroughly studying the map to find the best possible route, he found how to exit McAllen in order to reach New York City most efficiently, and drove to his new, great adventure.

He traveled to New York alone, and lived at the International House. He arrived five days before school started. He knew nothing about the subway system, and got lost many times. He would enter through one side and get out through another. He didn't know the north from the south side. It was quite a journey. He went on a Sunday, because on Monday he had to present himself. He did not know how to get there. He spent all of Sunday trying to arrive at his campus destination.

"There were a lot of buildings. If you did not look at signs carefully, you easily got lost," he recalls. Finally, he arrived at his destination and called his wife. He told her he would return on Christmas Eve. By then, he would know how to move around.

Nevárez remembers having a car in New York, was a big problem. He had to stop using his car, because he constantly had to be changing places. During the day, he

had to park in one place, and overnight in another. "It was a problem having a car in New York," he replied. He preferred to ride the subway. In his first semester, he did well, but he struggled a bit, academically. His wife was working in McAllen and she constantly sent him money to support him. One of the good things about New York, was the great wages. He started working as a cashier at a restaurant. Although his pay wasn't always sufficient, the food they gave him was amazing. The restaurant manager regularly said to him, "Go to the kitchen and serve yourself." Near Christmas Eve, he drove his car alone, from New York to McAllen.

He stayed in McAllen for a few days, and returned to New York. This time he left his car at home, and took a flight back to New York. It was an Eastern Air Lines flight, one of those economic night flights. It was a very simple flight, with no guest service, only a bunch of letters and parcel packaging. He was flying from McAllen to Houston, and from Houston to New York. He arrived at La Guardia Airport, and went directly to the fast train system. He knew the subway system already. He took the subway from the airport, to Manhattan where he was staying.

His wife supported him a lot, aside from him working part-time. During summer, someone told him about a professor looking for someone to take care of his apartment. He contacted him and made the proper arrangements to work for him. That summer, he took his family to New York, where they spent three months together. They had a good start and rented an apartment in Greenwich Village. They even went to see their children's future school. Unfortunately, his kids and wife didn't like it. They returned to McAllen. They made the decision for him to stay and complete his Ph.D., in two years. The next year, he did a lot of education consulting. He worked with the New York City School District, training teachers, and making money to survive. The following year, he rushed to finish his two year courses and his year dissertation. He

was routinely visiting his home during the course of those two years; he visited the dean of the Education Department at Pan American University. The dean invited him to lecture, and promised him that upon completion of his Ph.D., they would offer him a job position. He was also asked in New York University to stay and work with them, as well as offered a job at the University of Houston. "I liked the idea of being interviewed for the position in Houston, because I wanted to be closer to home," he said. To his surprise, the Pan American Education Department dean retired, and was no longer around. He was employed by Dr. Fred Cunningham, the new dean for the education department.

He was able to complete his Ph.D., due to the scholarships he had received, along with his wife's continuous support. Had he not these two available resources, he never could have accomplished his goal. During those two years, he remembers telling his wife: "Either we will get closer or we are going to get divorced, one of the two." He thanked God, for letting them get closer.

He didn't have his Ph.D. certification yet. He had delivered his dissertation and had completed all his courses. He only needed to defend his thesis. Upon returning to the Valley, he was hired at Pan Am University with the condition that he finish his Ph.D. In November 1971, after Thanksgiving Day, he spent three days in New York City defending and making thesis corrections. Upon his return, his diploma was sealed.

Many people didn't believe he was going to get his Ph.D. He remembers getting a year deadline to get it. "I can make it in half a year," he proclaimed.

MOTHER'S HANDS

Miguel A. Nevárez's mother was a very happy individual. She was always cordial and polite. He could never be as happy as her. She liked to sing, and loved to talk about her personal experiences. She made friends easily, and had several friends around the neighborhood. These are the qualities he recalls most about his mother. "I cannot talk about my mother without talking about my father," he stated.

His father was very strict, and very attached to his Mexican traditions. He strongly believed in being raised and educated in Catholic convents, and this was evident in his methods of discipline. His father was intelligent, and a busy person. Whenever he was not practicing medicine, he was working at the ranch. Nevárez always looked for his mother when he was in trouble, since it was usually she whom did the advising.

His father always stressed he should follow him into the medical field, and constantly pressured him to advance further in his scholastic years. This was the primary reason he advanced and managed to finish high school in three years, at the age of 16. This, however, had nothing to do with intelligence, but rather because of the fact he attended summer school. He was taking classes during summer, as per his father's request, in order to enroll in medical school at a faster pace. He began his first semester in college, but after his father's tragic death everything changed forever.

What he liked the most about his mother's cooking was a very delicious dish she made called *huevo perdido*. She also made other delicious dishes with nopalitos, chicken, cheese and succulent raisin bread, according to Nevárez. He also remembers most of his grandmother's food, because he lived the majority of the time with her.

His grandmother was the one who primarily prepared the food. *Huevo perdido* being his favorite. "*Huevo perdido* is comprised of a mix of corn maize with eggs, and other ingredients. As a matter of fact, all the extra ingredients ultimately cause the egg to get lost in the mixture. Hence the name, which when translated to English, means "lost egg." His parents named him Miguel in honor of his father, Miguel Ángel Nevárez Isurieta.

He was very young, when he was at boarding school in Laredo. As a matter of fact, he believes he was the youngest student, about six or seven years old. His older friends actually helped him get dressed, because he was not even capable of dressing himself at the time. A friend would hand him a shirt, and another would help him decide which pair of jeans to wear. This was his routine for getting dressed while attending boarding school.

When he was about to finish school at Sacred Heart, he was almost recruited to go study at a Catholic seminary, in hopes that he would become a priest. He seriously considered the recruiting efforts, but he never made a definite decision.

PAN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez began working with Pan Am in August 1971. By January 1973, he was the Pan American University Vice President for Student Affairs. In late May 5, 1981, he was selected as the new Pan American University President.

Many people didn't believe he would get his Ph.D. There were times, that even he did not believe he would complete it. However, one thing he knew for certain, he would try his best to do so. This was the only way he could know if it was attainable. Upon his return to the Valley, he told everyone the only thing he was lacking was the defense of his thesis, in order to attain his Ph.D. Several people doubted he would finish, considering it typical for many individuals to complete most of their doctorate school, with the exception of their thesis. Finally, there came a point in time, he had everything ready, and he defended his thesis. It was approved by the committee.

His first job at the university, was as an assistant professor in 1971. He taught courses in the education department. Every time he came to the Valley, he visited Pan Am to greet people he knew. During that time, he was invited to lecture about education during his vacations. He met Dr. Arnulfo Martinez, who was a professor at the Pan American University History Department. Dr. Martinez was then the vice president for student affairs, when Dr. Nevárez realized that he was going to start working for Pan Am.

During his first semester, Dr. Martinez asked Nevárez, if he could help him as his assistant, and he accepted. At the same time, he was assigned program director for a new program being developed at Pan Am, entitled the Title Three Program. This program was meant to develop four

programs in the student affairs department, which included counseling and student advising.

Dr. Nevárez began developing and coordinating these programs. Everything was done in the first semester when he started lecturing at Pan Am in 1971. After that, he was teaching education classes while assisting Dr. Martinez. In reality, he was executing three jobs. It wasn't until January 1973, Dr. Arnulfo Martinez created the department of international affairs, and was assigned as vice president. This meant the position of Vice President for Student Affairs was now open. Dr. Nevárez worked a year and a half for Dr. Martinez in the student affairs department. He continued reporting to the academic vice president, and developing several programs for the student affairs department. He was there until 1981.



Picture was probably taken when Dr. Nevárez held the position of Asst. Dean of Men (1972)

Courtesy of the Nevárez family

He worked as vice president for eight and a half years. He later acquired other responsibilities under Dr. Ralph Shilling. When he started working as vice president, Dr.

Shilling asked Nevárez to accompany him to Austin, Texas during the legislative sessions. He started working in Pan American University in 1971, and retired from Presidency at University of Texas Pan American in 2004. He continued to teach and administrated the UTPA Coastal Studies Laboratory until 2003.

Dr. Nevárez began with government relations. Then, he worked in developing programs for foundations and corporations. These were programs meant to help students. One of the major achievements he reached, was making the university more community accessible. If a student had a high school diploma, he/she could enroll in the university. Prior to these programs, students who had completed high school but did not score well in their admissions exam, had no financial support when attempting to attend college. Fear of not obtaining financial support, as a result of their poor academics, was one of the main reasons students refrained from applying to the university. These students did not have the university minimum requirement of a "C" to qualify for financial aid and could potentially encounter problems paying student loans.

Dr. Nevárez strongly believed providing programs, such as the ones they were developing, would strongly assist individuals with the financial support and advisement they needed in order to pursue their career goals. "I saw absolutely no reason why these students shouldn't have this financial support accessible," he noted. The battle was equally difficult when it came to financing students with poor academics, and students attempting to qualify for student loans. It was because of this particular barrier, the University Learning Center was created, and to date continues to help students facing troubles in academics, in order to prevent ineligibility of receiving financial aid.

The university learning center was a joint effort among faculty members in Mathematics and English Departments. This collaboration helped students tremendously. The overall percentage of individuals who were graduating steadily increased because there were more students enrolled as a result of the newly available resources. This was considered a major effort, when in reality all they did was help our students achieve their goals. There was a time Dr. Shilling told Nevárez, "You're getting to develop other programs. You are doing more of what you wanted." That opened the doors wider for him.

Nevárez was working with the student association, and several individuals who had graduated from Pan Am. Many of these students had important public positions, and were considered Valley leaders. This proved to open many doors for him personally, particularly, when he applied for the university presidency.

On May 5, 1981, the Pan American University Academics Board elected him as the new Pan American University President. Dr. Ralph Shilling informed him he would be taking his vacations during the summer. By August, Nevárez began to formulate the university budget for the following year. He got the presidency in early June of 1981, making history as the first Hispanic president of Pan American University. There were only four Hispanics across the United States who were presidents of universities. Larry Cavazos was President at Texas Tech, and two others, from New Mexico Highlands University and the State of California. However, he was the youngest of the four. He was very proud to be elected the new Pan American University President. "Many people congratulated me, others never imagined they would have chosen a Hispanic for such a prestigious position. In fact many people within the university didn't like the idea at all," he recalls.

Luckily, he always maintained a strong support system during his 23 years as university president. Any proposal he made to them, they initially opposed. But sooner or later, he always managed to convince them his proposals were what was best for the university. He called them, "his loyal opposition" because most of the time, he could count on them. He told them many times there were two kinds of bells, "those big bells announcing the weather is about to change and suddenly begin making a lot of noise. These bells are the ones we must pay attention to, because they do not sound very often. Then, there are the little bells, with a little breeze, immediately start making very thunderous noises all the time. These types of bells are not worth paying much attention to," he added.



Dr. Miguel Nevárez celebrating his selection as Pan American University President, May 5, 1981

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

Dr. Nevárez's wife always helped him with his education. When they first married, he was still focused on his bachelor's degree. His wife was very proud when he became the university president, but also very nervous. One of her primary concerns was the fact that the Pan

American Education Board was focused on making the university more open to the community, by hosting events and things of that nature. Nevárez told his wife that they would be hosting several events in their home, and she would be in charge of hosting such events. She grew nervous at the thought of this, because she had never taken on such a task.



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez and his wife Blanca Nevárez
welcoming guests**

(Courtesy of the Nevárez family)

“I’m not going to mention any names in terms of who did not approve of me being selected as president. One thing I will say is there was, and always will be racism in the Valley. Despite the fact racism is not as open, but I still feel it very present in the Valley. For example, where I live currently, there are several Anglos. Some are very attentive, and others who do not like me at all. However, there were and are many people, who will not admit that there was opposition due to racial motives,” he remarked.

At the same time, there were certain people who sincerely believed a change towards Hispanic leadership was necessary, and openly supported this change. When Nevárez entered the presidency, it was 60% Hispanic. The number of students grew, because when he began his presidency, there were only 8,000 students, and by the time he retired there were 17,000. The percentage of Hispanics in the university was already 83%, back then. One of the reasons he felt the merge with the UT System in 1989 was necessary, was to provide graduate programs and professional development programs. San Antonio, Corpus, Kingsville, Laredo, and Edinburg were all lacking in this area. As a result, several university presidents gathered in an attempt to establish accessible educational programs. The education coordinating board told them most of the time that there was no need for such programs. However, from San Antonio to Austin, and across northern Texas, these mentioned programs existed, and were successfully functioning.

The Rio Grande Valley educational programs were nothing when held in comparison to those of the Texas northern universities. Therefore, they needed political pressure to demand approval for the creation of these programs in the valley. One of the first things they tried to do, was establish a state research, which proved there was need, interest, and sufficient population for such graduate programs. The research particularly had to depict there was enough population numbers from San Antonio to the south side of the state to successfully develop such graduate programs in south Texas universities. These numbers would be compared to those of functioning graduate programs around the state. The university presidents presented their research findings to the UT System, but had no final solution. It was then they decided to merge the four southern universities: Corpus, Kingsville, Laredo, and Edinburg, thus creating a university system. Carlos Truan and other Hispanic legislators helped support

their effort. The new university system promised to provide more political influence.

It was somewhat controversial, because Nevárez recalls a person, whose name he will not mentioned, once said, "Why do the poor want to get together with the poor? What the poor should do, is get together with the rich and not the poor; Kingsville and Corpus are equally poor... "

In 1987, an amendment was passed instructing Texas A&M and the University of Texas to go to south Texas to see how they could help. This led to a lawsuit that MALDEF placed in Brownsville for discrimination. Norma Cantu and Al Kauffman were the lawsuit lawyers and they ultimately won the case at a local level. Then, they proceeded to file a law suit against Pan Am, Laredo, and Corpus because they were not offering the educational programs needed. "That was the only time I was happy someone had sued me," Nevárez commented. A Brownsville judge ruled there was discrimination, and consequently the state lost the case. They appealed to the Supreme Court. It was a very scandalous moment in which most of the state learned of what was occurring at the university. After all the disagreements, they came to meet with the university presidents. The UT System administration asked them what they needed in order to function more effectively. They voiced their opinion, the best way to provide necessary programs was to incorporate the UT, and in turn help the future of our population.

The first thing they had to do was obtain permission from their respective board members. Dr. Nevárez managed to acquire the permission from the nine members to take action and try to be part of the UT System. He took into account being part of the UT System, the board would no longer exist. They had to decide how to act, knowing this meant they would no longer have a job. Some of them asked Nevárez why he wanted to associate the university with the UT System. He replied, "It will help develop

graduate programs for our students.” All they want is to have the Hispanic numbers, to prevent civil rights violation; Austin didn’t have the Hispanic population numbers. That was the only reason they want us, “for their benefit,” the board told him.

There were five board members in favor of joining, and four against it. The board gave him authorization to proceed. He had to talk to some Valley leaders to educate certain members of the board. “If this had not occurred we would not be talking about the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley right now,” Nevarez stated. There was an attempt to merge with the UT System in the 70's, when Ms. Mary Alice Shivers was the Pan American College President Board. There were people who supported the idea, but it was never approved, due to the fact the overall academic benefits weren't thoroughly explained. There were several students, and other individuals in the Valley who suffered as a result of such decisions. Austin simply wanted to use the Hispanic population numbers to their benefit. The amendment did not pass. They knew many individuals of this region were in favor, while others continued to oppose it.

Dr. Nevárez met with those in favor and explained, they were going to try to do it again, and asked for their continuing support. They supported him. This proposal and potential merge was attempted for many years. He often found himself asking those who were opposed to it, why they did not agree. They explained they never heard about academic benefits. He explained to its faculty they would be part of the UT System, and how they all would benefit from it.

The UT System always began discussing and making decisions with the City of McAllen leaders. They persuaded McAllen to make changes and thought the issue was resolved. The UT System customarily functioned like that, according to Nevárez. He remembers telling them once,

"This is not the proper way to work down here, because there are 32 mayors and 32 city council members." People from McAllen, like Morris Atlas, who had been in the university board, Othal Brand, Dr. Ramiro Casso and Dr. Lauro Guerra were all his supporters. Furthermore, Moises Vela, from Harlingen, who initially did not support his proposal, proved to be a loyal supporter of joining the UT system.

Making the university more open to the community was one of our major goals. The board often said the university was closed to the community. Eventually, the university began to be more community inclusive. "Nowadays, the university is a lot more open. Now we have extensive community programs such as HESTEC and the Distinguished Speakers Series. Dr. Rolando Arreola began developing such events, which opened the university to the community," Nevárez said.

One of the most difficult experiences he confronted during his administration, was when pushing for the university merging proposal with the UT System, and its approval. Despite the votes of five to four in favor, there were instances he did not have sufficient votes to continue. This is when he tried to convince two or three more board members to make this happen, by demonstrating what the educational benefits were.

From 1980 to 1983, Nevárez was being closely observed. There was even a time in which faculty suggested a no confidence vote. The vote was presented to see if it would be passed by the faculty senate, but it didn't. There was, however, much publicity concerning the issue. There were particular professors who had established good relations with certain media agencies whom they routinely provided information to. "There was a woman that always had me asking myself, I wonder how that lady knows so much information? She seems to be in all meetings," he mentioned.

Many people were watching everything he was doing. If he did something wrong, he was criticized. However, he learned to live with that, as well as identify who his opponents were. "When individuals begin to make observations on your actions with scrutiny, you acknowledge some of them and you ignore the rest," he said. The majority of the time the agenda was rarely concerning how to make educational advancement, but rather how to get rid of Nevárez. You had to develop thick skin and learn to take everything with a grain of salt. In Nevárez's opinion, they could say anything they wanted about him; he knew he was doing his job well.

What really bothered him, were the moments they got involved with his family. Somebody told him once, when he was promoted as vice president, "you are not going to last in that position." He remembers telling them, "We'll see! Why do you think I will not last long?" He was told, "Because you are going to end up involved with a student or a secretary." Lack of basic qualities such as self-control and respect were the Anglo perception toward Mexican-Americans, back then. Dr. Nevárez often asked himself why he retired in 2004. It was his faith in God and prayer that helped guide him as to when he should leave. He did not want anyone else to tell him that it was time for him to retire. "I prayed, 'You tell me God, is it time?' I always wanted this sign from God before I retired," he remarked.

Most importantly, he required three other things to occur in order for him to retire. First, he did not want someone to tell him that it was time for him to retire. He wanted to go by his own free will. Secondly, he wanted to go, but leave the door open for another Hispanic to take over the university presidency. Finally, he wanted to spend more time with his family. He felt he had missed out on monumental moments in his family's lives. For example, he had missed his son's graduation at Houston University, because he had to attend graduations at UTPA. Missing his son's graduation really hurt him tremendously, as a parent.

There were various other occasions throughout his 40 years of service he was not there for his family. For example, when he left to New York in August 1969, his son Marco was a mere two weeks old. He left him with his mother. "Well, I was not there and I can't turn time back. However, I have grandchildren now, and I want to spend as much time as possible with them," Nevárez affirmed.

These were the three things he wanted. First, retire on his own terms from UTPA. Second, leave the door open for a Hispanic president. Third, spend time with his family. There was a fourth reason he forget to mention. He wanted to know if after retiring from the presidency, he would continue to love teaching. He realized, indeed he liked it a lot.

He continued working after he retired. He was teaching part-time and heading the UTPA Coastal Studies Lab at South Padre, Island. This is where he developed educational student field trips for middle and high school students. They began trips on a rented boat and gave students a bay tour for two hours around the ship's canal.

When Nevárez developed this program, there was nothing of that nature. There were seasons when they toured the bay every day. However, the best months for tours proved to be October and part of November. By April and May they had full classes. Besides these jobs, he continued lecturing at UTPA's Education Department.

Those were two of the things he liked the most. In May 2013, he decided to step down from his position. "It is now 2015, and I am still here on campus," he said.

Campus activities



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez signing an educational agreement with
Universidad Autónoma de Tamaulipas**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez hosting HENAAC conference in 2002

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez with Miami Dade College President Dr.
Eduardo Padrón**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez during one of his many
UTPA Commencement Speeches**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



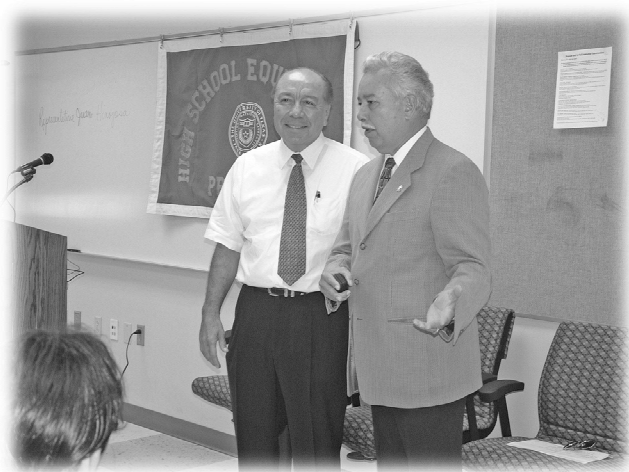
**Dr. Miguel Nevárez with former Nuevo León Governor
Fernando Canales Clariond**

(Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez with former Texas Governor Rick Perry

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez and Texas State Senator Juan Jesús
“Chuy” Hinojosa visiting UTPA**
(Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Dr. Rolando Arreola, Dr. Juan Hernández, Dr. Miguel
Nevárez and Dr. Rodolfo Arévalo**
(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez and US Congressman Rubén Hinojosa announcing a nearly \$28 million grant to UTPA for GEAR UP project
 (Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez, Mr. Alonzo Cantú and Dr. Rolando Arreola during a UTPA Foundation/VAMOS Match scholarship donation
 (Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez with former UT System Chairman
Bernard Rapoport and former US Senator Lloyd Bentsen**
(Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**During the South Texas / Mexico Economy Development
Conference**
(Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Mr. Carlos Garza and Dr. Miguel Nevárez during a scholarship/internship donation
(Courtesy of University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



STC President Dr. Shirley A. Reed and Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez signing an academic agreement in 2000
(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez spending time with students
(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**During the UTPA 75th anniversary Kick-Off Celebration;
 pictured are Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez, and Veryl Goodnight
 unveiling the bronze bronco**
(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)

Colleagues & friends



Dr. Miguel Nevárez, Dr. Lino García Jr and Professor Carlos Calderón; both good friends and supporters
(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Miguel Nevárez with Texas Tech President Lauro Cavazos and an unidentified colleague
(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Pictured here former State Representative Renato Cuellar, former Texas Senator Carlos Truan and Dr. Miguel Nevárez

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Dr. Cayetano Barrera and Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Ms. Carol Rausch and Dr. Miguel Nevárez with an
unidentified colleague**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



Ms. Margaret McAllen, Dr. Miguel Nevárez and Dr. Sylvia Domínguez

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Dr. Miguel Nevárez and Dr. Dahlia Guerra during
a FESTIBA event**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Mrs. Blanca Nevárez, Dr. Miguel Nevárez and Dr. Blandina
Cárdenas**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)



**Former UTPA presidents Dr. Blandina Cárdenas, Dr. Miguel
Nevárez and Dr. Robert S. Nelsen**

(Courtesy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley)

Dr. Miguel A. Nevárez does not think that UTPA'S and UTB'S history can be wiped out. He sees buying land to begin building the new university buildings. All that is now built in UTPA is not new; these buildings are at least twenty to forty years old. That alone signifies UTPA's history will not be erased. The campus is here now. "I do not know why they have to do everything they are doing to develop a medical school. The UT System can develop a medical school wherever they want and whenever they want. They are actually doing something similar in Austin, by developing a medical school. However, they are not changing UT Austin for a medical school within the university. Why are they doing all this here? The only reason they are doing it is because of the Permanent University Fund. The PUF by law gives them money that is coming out of an area with minerals in West Texas. The state gave it to the Texas A&M System and UT System, and it was constitutional," he stated.

Dr. Nevárez continued, "If you are going to make a change, you have to do it constitutionally. What does constitutionally mean? You have to go to the state voters to make a change. You cannot create a university that already exists within the PUF; it must be a new university. Something similar was created in El Paso, Texas. El Paso was not El Paso, it was the State School of Mines and Metallurgy, a school that became the University of Texas - El Paso. That is what they are doing here, because it is a new university it is now eligible to receive funding from PUF. There is already money that is coming to all universities that are not part of the PUF, via state funding. A university cannot receive funding from both sources. The university gave up the Higher Education Assistance Fund (HEAF) for the PUF, since oil prices were raising."

It is not possible to spend PUF funds to develop a medical school, hire more faculty and administrative staff. Funds can be utilized to construct all the medical school buildings and all the necessary equipment. The medical

school administration is only going to worry about its faculty operating salaries, which incidentally are very pricey. The state will however give the entire initial budget to UTRGV, as well as give the medical school money to operate. There will be competition within the different UTRGV colleges for funding, because there are several other colleges such as the Engineering, History, Education, and the Arts. "Right now, for example, the medical school dean salary is higher than other deans. There are students who are teaching at UTPA as instructors, and earning \$50,000 teaching four classes. Each class had an average of 125 students. UTRGV administrators will hire medical professors in charge of two classes, with 15 to 20 students per class, making around \$150,000. Is there a reason why medical schools are not within academic institutions? No, because they are very expensive. It is standard to separate the two; such is the case for most of Texas universities which clearly separates its medical institutions," Nevárez said.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley will work, and for good. Nevárez thinks it's a good idea. There will be headaches along the way, especially since they will have to adapt to each other. According to him, it will not be easy to put together the medical school the way it is being organized. For example, where is the third and fourth medical school year established? They are already established in Harlingen. Where will they establish the first and second medical school year? Here in Pan Am? Is there another medical school other than the first and second which are separated by 75 miles? Dr. Nevárez does not know of other medical schools in the same situation.

He believes both academic institutions never should've been separated. UTB has no campus. They separated from *Texas Southmost College*, who said, "This campus is already ours. Although, you have constructed the buildings, this is our property."

What happens if you build a house on someone else's land? Whose house is it? Does it belong to the person who made it, or the person who owns the property? UTB really do not have a campus. He sees more problems at that level right now, and it's not going to be easy. Both universities have secure job positions, but some employees will have to change jobs. These jobs will not be exactly the same, because they are reorganizing the academic departments in order to get engaged. This entails that they may not be working in exactly the same job they previously had. The university will keep most of the professors, because there will be more students. Furthermore, more professors will be needed, because there will be similar educational programs that UTPA and UTB already have. There will be only one education department for students studying at UTRGV, and they will have to engage each other.

Dr. Miguel Nevarez strongly supported the creation of *South Texas College* during his administration, because they realized there were many students who were academically unprepared. There were semesters in the remedial classes program where they had 60 classes, and many of their resources were going to support students who were not academically prepared. They wanted to develop a master's and Ph.D. program, but they had no money. They needed to develop these types of educational programs, but there was also a need to support the new generations who were enrolling.

He wondered, how to develop a community college. At that time, Gilbert Leal was TSTC President, and Nevárez told him, "Come to McAllen and help me." He remembers Gilbert Leal also suggested developing a community college. Back then, the McAllen mayor opposed the creation of a community college, because he had invested his money in the produce business. He needed people to raise his crops. The McAllen mayor usually said, "Why educate the community."

The agribusiness became too expensive in the Valley. It began to move to Mexico and Latin America. Nevárez recalls telling then McAllen's mayor, "We need to bring the industry business here." "How are we going to educate the people? We will no longer need people to work in the fields. What we need is a community college," the mayor said. "What a good idea you have mayor, as a result, our local economy has to change," Nevárez declared.

The City of McAllen started making a lot of changes, trying to attract companies to invest in the region. One day the mayor asked Nevárez for help to develop the community college.

There were a lot of movers and shakers who supported Dr. Nevárez administration at that time. "These individuals were always accessible. The best way to do something is where everyone wins, and no one loses. The more you win, the more support you will have. I learned that long ago," he addressed.

WISDOM COMES WITH AGE

“There is a saying ‘the devil knows more for his age than for being the devil.’ I am old and have received many jabs in my life. I think it is a shame the community or schools do not take advantage of people with lots of experience,” Nevárez said.

There is time to give opinions. He always said there are two good things about his tips. First, he does not charge for giving advice. Second, you do not have to take it, if you don’t want to. But, if it does so happen that he is right, he will surely say, "I told you." He stresses the devil knows more for being old and wise.

Under Corporate America there is always a transition, but not in education. This phenomenon is seen in government presidencies. There is always a transition team. Another system with different agendas arises. He thinks there should not be a continuation, because they have to do different things.

A former UTPA president called Nevárez several times for advice. He told him, "I’m going to tell you what I think, but I will not get offended if you do not take my advice. Ultimately, you are the only one who knows the whole issue. I only have one piece of information.”

Dr. Nevárez was once told, “Before you make changes, observe your surroundings, and if you see something that should not be there, ask why it is, where it is. Maybe there’s a good reason why it is as it is. Always ask before you start making changes. Sometimes, there are things that appear to be wrong, however, upon making a change you realize there was a reason why it was, and it served a purpose.

“If you are given a good reason, then let it happen, and if not, make the changes.”

Since Dr. Miguel Nevárez left the university, he has become involved with the American Council on Education. This program has around 40 to 45 higher education professionals from across the nation. It is a one year internship program. Interns choose and go to another school where they spend the year learning. They get together for a week, three times per year, and create presentations, tests, and give them an apprenticeship.

These are courses for people who are academic directors and deans, with intentions of aspiring to higher university positions. In this year, they are given the necessary academic tools to succeed. Such programs have helped Nevárez tremendously, but also gave him the opportunity to share his experiences as a former university president.

He remembers an analytic conversation in one of his classes, where many of the interns were interested in knowing what was happening in the Valley, how they were doing it, and what were the results of the new university merger between UTPA and UTB. There was an occasion, he told Dr. Blandina Cardenas and Dr. Robert Nelsen when they were elected as presidents, “I will not get into things that do not concern me, but if you ever need advice, call me.” They called him a few times.

Dr. Nevárez has a ranch in Soto la Marina, Tamaulipas. The problem he is facing with that ranch is how things are currently in Mexico with the drug cartels. He had 127 cows, and 7 bulls, which they took from him. Today, he doesn't consider spending time in Soto la Marina. His ranch has a very nice and cozy river he enjoys immensely.

Nevárez feels his Mexican roots are calling him, but he gradually is realizing that he will not be able to accomplish his goal. He still doesn't give up hope.

He recognizes he feels much better when he is facing the beach. There are two things that he has always loved. The first, is to be at the ranch enjoying a campfire, while gazing at it. The other, sitting on the beach contemplating the waves. "These two things bring me much inner peace," Dr. Miguel Ángel Nevárez concluded.

Resume

NAME: Miguel A. Nevárez

EDUCATION:

H.S. Diploma, McAllen (TX) High School 1954

B.S. Degree, Texas A & I University, Kingsville, TX 1960

M.A. Degree, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 1968

Ph.D. Degree, New York University, New York, NY 1972

UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR: Agriculture MINOR: Science

MASTER'S MAJOR: Elementary Education MINOR: Science, Mathematics

DOCTORAL MAJOR: Science Education MINOR: Behavioral Science

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUBJECT: A comparison of the effectiveness of three methods (English, Spanish, bilingual) of oral presentation of a selected sequence (COPEs) of science activities to Spanish speaking children.

OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

*Educause Summer Institute, 2002

*Governor's Executive Management Seminar, 1985-86

*Strengthening Developing Institutions Programs (SDIP)

*Workshop on Expanding the Base of External Funding (1980), Dallas, TX

*Council for the Advancement and Support of Education Conference
on Raising Money Through an Institutional-Related Foundation
(1979), St. Louis, MO

*Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)
Seminar for Senior Development Professionals (1979), Snowmass, CO

*Workshop of the Regulatory and Procedural Requirements for Administering
Title III and Title IV Programs, Sponsored by National Association of College
and University Business Officers (1979), Memphis, TN

*Workshop on Strengthening Developing Institutions Program (SDIP)
Guidelines (1978), St. Louis, MO.

*Grantsmanship Training Program, sponsored by The Grantsmanship Center
(1978), San Antonio, TX

*Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Summer
Institute in Educational Fund Raising (1978), Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH

*Southwest Institute of Fund Raising, Seminar (1977), National
Society of Fund Raisers and The University of Texas, Austin, TX

*Institute for Educational Management, Summer Program (1975), Harvard
University, Boston, MA

*Management by Objectives in Colleges and Universities, Workshop (1975), University of Colorado, Denver, CO

*Academic Administration, Summer Seminar (1972), Texas A & M

*University and Texas Coordinating Board for Colleges and Universities, College Station, TX Theme: Resource Management in the Administration of Higher Education (1975), University of Colorado, Denver, CO

*Academic Administration, Summer Seminar (1972), Texas A & M

*University and Texas Coordinating Board for Colleges and Universities, College Station, TX Theme: Resource Management in the Administration of Higher Educational National Science Foundation, Summer Institute (1972),

University of Houston, Houston, TX Subject: College Teacher Program in Elementary *Science Education, Competency-Based Teacher Education Teaching the Educable Mentally Retarded, Summer Institute (1968), Pan American University, Edinburg, TX

*Texas Certification in Elementary Education (1964)

FELLOWSHIPS:

*NDEA Academic Year, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI June 1967 to June 1968

*TTT Project, New York University, New York, NY, September 1969, August 1971

* N.S.F. Institute, University of Houston, Houston, TX Summer 1972

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

*2004-2013 Executive Director Coastal Studies Lab

*2005- Professor of Educational Leadership The University of Texas-Pan American Edinburg, Tx. 78539

*1981-2004 President / The University of Texas-Pan American Edinburg, TX 78539

*1976-81 Vice President for Student and University Affairs Professor of Elementary Education Pan American University, Edinburg, TX

*1973-76 Vice President for Student Affairs Associate Professor of Elementary Education Pan American University, Edinburg, TX

*1972-73 Co-Director, Basic Institutional Development Program Associate Professor of Elementary Education

*1971-72 Associate Dean of Men Acting Director of Counseling and Testing Assistant Professor of Elementary Education Pan American University

*1968-69 Assistant Principal Navarro Elementary School McAllen Independent School District, Texas

*1963-67 Elementary Teacher (Self-contained and departmentalized science and mathematics) Navarro Elementary School McAllen Independent School District, Texas

*1962-63 Farm Field Representative (Migrant Workers) Texas Employment Commission McAllen, Texas

*1961-62 Farming and Ranching Soto La Marina, Tamaulipas,

Mexico

Teaching:

- *Doctoral Level Education Course; Higher Education Law EDUL 8340 – Fall 2011
- *Higher Education Finance EDUL 8343 – summer 2011
- Policy, Politics and Governance of Higher Education EDUL 8342 – Spring 2011
- *Topical Seminar EDUL 8334 – Fall 2010
- *Problems in Education EDUL 8336 – Summer 2010
- *Doctoral Internship EDUL 8350 – Spring 2010
- *Student Affairs in Higher Education EDUL 8341 - Fall 2009
- *Higher Education Financing EDUL 8343 – spring 2009
- *Educational Politics and Policy EDUL 8303 – Summer I 2008
- *Masters Program for Principals – 2005 - 2008
- *Presentations American Council on Education Fellows Program – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010
- *Remarks at Presidential Meeting on Math and Science Education, White House, March 16, 1998
- *Remarks to Committee on Education and Labor, United States House of Representatives, Workforce 2000 Employment Readiness Act of 1989", June 14, 1989
- *Census Bureau Staff - Committee on Education & Labor, June 12, 1989
- *Community College Transfer Initiatives Seminar, Tomas Rivera Center, San Antonio, April 8, 1989
- *Remarks to Symposium: Hispanics and Management - Building A
- *Partnership for the Future, Graduate Management Admissions Council, "Attracting Hispanics to Graduate Management Education", January 27, 1989
- *Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Congress of the United States, "Financial Aid and Access to Higher Education for Hispanic Students", June 22, 1988, Washington, D.C.
- *Department of HEW, Office of Education, Proposal Review Session, Special Services for Disadvantaged Students Silver Spring, Maryland (1979)
- *Committee on Agriculture, Texas-Israel Exchange, Coordinating Board, Texas College & University System, 1985-1992
- *Committee on Teacher Advisory, Coordinating Board, Texas College & University System, Co-Chair, Subcommittee on Quality, 1985
- *Committee on Minority Recruitment and Retention, American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business, 1986
- *Board of Directors, Council for Career Development of Minorities, 1985

- *Panelist, "Minorities and Women in Higher Education: Past Accomplishments and Future Responsibilities", American Association of State Colleges and Universities 25th Annual Meeting, Bal Harbour, Florida, November 26, 1985
- *Reader - Bilingual Education Teacher Training Program, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C. (1979)
- *Evaluation Panelist, Emergency School Aid Act, Department of Health, Education And Welfare (1976)
- *Committee for Bilingual/Bicultural Elementary Teacher Preparation (undergraduate), Pan American University, June 1972-January 1973
- *Chairman, Task Force for Designing the Bilingual/Bicultural Competency-based Teacher Preparation (undergraduate and graduate programs), Pan American University, June 1972-January 1973
- *Teaching Assistant, Elementary Science Methods, New York University, New York, N.Y., January 1971-August 1971
- *August 1971 Instructor, Elementary Math Teacher In-Service Training, McAllen Independent School District, McAllen, TX
- *Member, Writing Committee on Curriculum Guide in Elementary Math and Science, McAllen Independent School District, McAllen, TX
- *Consultant, Auditor, and Evaluator to Bilingual/Bicultural Elementary Programs in South Texas, August 1971
- *Research: Consultant and Research Assistant, New York City Bilingual Consortium (Project BEST), New York, NY, March 1971- August 1971
- *Research Assistant, Conceptually-Oriented Program in Elementary Science, New York University, NY, September 1970-March 1971
- *Researcher, Elementary Science for Spanish-Speaking children, New York City Public School, New York, NY, October 1970-May 1971
- *Professional: Mentor for American Council on Education Fellows Program, 2006-2010 Vice Chairperson, Texas International Education Consortium (TIEC), 2001-2003