



American Association of
Hispanics in Higher Education, Inc.



OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS COMPETITION

2025

DEADLINE: SEPTEMBER 6, 2024

www.aahhe.org

OUTSTANDING DISSERTATIONS COMPETITION 2025

Given the needs of the growing English language learning population in the United States, AAHHE especially welcomes the submission of dissertations relating to English-language learners (ELLs).

INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE) is proud to announce the Outstanding Dissertations Competition 2025. AAHHE recognizes the need to greatly increase the number of Hispanics receiving doctoral degrees, entering higher education on the tenure track, and serving in faculty, administrative, and leadership roles.

Although Hispanics are the fastest-growing population in the country, they are underrepresented in all areas of higher education: undergraduate, graduate, faculty and administration. Gains are being seen every year in the number of Hispanics earning doctoral degrees and serving in full time faculty positions. However, the percentages are not climbing commensurate with the population's growth.

Through this competition, AAHHE provides an opportunity to spotlight top doctoral students and reward excellence in doctoral-level Hispanic student performance. The goals are to encourage greater numbers of prepared students to enter and complete doctoral programs and to enhance the quality of the dissertations they write.

COMPETITION ELIGIBILITY

The competition is open to any Latinx who has completed a dissertation as part of a doctoral degree program in the social sciences, broadly defined, and/or anyone whose dissertation research conducted as part of a doctoral degree program focuses on the Latinx community. Additionally, the dissertation needs to have been completed between December 2022 and September 6, 2024.

Dissertations are eligible if they are in domains related to education, linguistics, psychology, or the social sciences. Studies using any research approach (historical, experimental, survey, quantitative, mixed methods, etc.) are eligible. Dissertations in the humanities, basic sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics are not eligible. Previous applicants are ineligible to reapply.

GENERAL PROCEDURE

The judging occurs in two phases. The first phase is based on dissertation abstracts received by the deadline. The writers of the top seven to ten dissertation summaries (semifinalists) will be asked to submit a copy of the complete dissertation. Judging in the second phase determines the top three dissertations and honorable mentions, if applicable.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the dissertation:

- appropriateness of the research approach used
- significance of the impact of the research in the field
- creativity and innovation of the study
- scholarly quality of the dissertation
- significance of its contribution to Latinx community

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

The dissertation summary for the first round of judging is due on August 6, 2024. The summary must reflect accurately, concisely, and precisely the research of the full dissertation.

It is very important that each candidate follows the dissertation summary preparation instructions carefully. The dissertation summary should include a title page, a letter of recommendation signed by the chair of the dissertation committee or university personnel who can address applicant's leadership potential, a main report section and an appendix. Detailed instructions are available at www.aahhe.org.

AWARDS RECOGNITION

Two levels of winners will be recognized: finalists (first-, second-, and third-place winners) and honorable mentions (out of the remaining semifinalists). The three finalists will be formally recognized at the 20th Annual AAHHE National Conference scheduled for March 19-21, 2025.

The three finalists also will receive:

- a monetary award (\$3,000 for first place, \$2,000 for second place and \$1,000 for third place)
- an AAHHE certificate
- support to attend the 2025 AAHHE National Conference to present their dissertations in an individual concurrent session

Details about all aspects of the competition are online in the Outstanding Dissertations Competition 2025 Guidelines section at www.aahhe.org.

2024 COMPETITION WINNERS

FIRST PLACE



Melissa Yzaguirre, PhD, LMFT

Degree Granting Institution: Michigan State University

Family Therapists' Lived Experiences of Discussing Ethnic-Racial Socialization with Latino Parents

Melissa Yzaguirre is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy at the University of San Diego. She received her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies with a concentration in Couple and Family Therapy from Michigan State University. Dr. Yzaguirre's primary research and clinical interests are to improve mental health outcomes and strengthen family

relationships in systemically marginalized communities, especially Latino communities. As a systemically trained clinician-researcher, she aims to increase culturally relevant practices available for mental health professionals to improve how they conceptualize and operationalize ethnic-racial and cultural diversity in the therapeutic context.

SECOND PLACE



Natalie Muñoz, PhD

Degree Granting Institution: Howard University

Soy de Aquí y de Allá/I'm from Here and There: Exploring how HBCUs' contribute to Afro-Latino (a,e,x) students' Ethnic/Racial Identity Development and Mental Health

Natalie Muñoz is a proud Afro-Latina and currently serves as an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Rutgers University-Newark. She recently completed her PhD at Howard University Social Work. Natalie has served as an advocate for underserved college students, building mentorship programs for Black and Latine students for

the last 15 years. Her research interests focus on AfroLatine ethnic/racial identity, mental health and educational inequities.

THIRD PLACE



Amy Nuñez, PhD

Degree Granting Institution: Indiana University, Bloomington

"I Wish They Knew We Existed": The Academic Experiences of Latinx College Students in Mixed-Status Families

Amy Nuñez is an Assistant Professor in the Teacher Preparation Program at Heritage University. She received her bachelor's in Elementary Education at Eastern Washington University where she was also a Ronald E. McNair Scholar. Her graduate studies led her to Indiana University, Bloomington where she received her Ph.D. in Education Policy. Nuñez' research utilizes qualitative methods with Critical Race

Theory (CRT) and Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) to address barriers historically underrepresented students face in K-12 and higher education institutions, especially students who come from Latinx, low-income, first-generation, DACA, and/or undocumented backgrounds.



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c/o AAHHE

**2455 East Sunrise Boulevard, Suite 816
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**AAHHE is proud to announce the Outstanding
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**The first deadline is September 6, 2024.
Visit www.aahhe.org for details.**