

The Brilliance, Tenacity and Strength of Latinos in America



by Michele Siqueiros

Tomás ${\cal R}$ ivera lecture series



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF HISPANICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AAHHE)
2017

The Brilliance, Tenacity and Strength of Latinos in America



The 33rd Tomás Rivera Lecture

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

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Michele Siqueiros, President, The Campaign for College Opportunity

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PREFACE

ETS is pleased to join once again with the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education to publish the 33rd annual Tomás Rivera Lecture. This year's lecture was delivered by Michele Sigueiros. Ms. Sigueiros is President of the Campaign for College Opportunity, a research and advocacy organization whose mission is to ensure that all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college in order to be part of a vibrant workforce, economy and democracy. It is a mission ETS shares, and Ms. Siqueiros is a leader with whom we are honored to collaborate.

Ms. Sigueiros, whose mother migrated from Mexico with a sixth-grade education, grew up in Los Angeles and was the first in her family to graduate from college. Under her leadership, the Campaign for College Opportunity has built a broad, statewide network of supporters; published reports on higher education's impact on the California economy; fought for legislation to increase access to Pell Grants and to improve college readiness and success; and helped make it easier for community college students to transfer to the California State University system.

Ms. Sigueiros earned a bachelor's degree in political studies from Pitzer College, with honors in Chicano/a studies, and a master's degree in urban planning from the University of California, Los Angeles. Before joining the Campaign for College Opportunity, she served as Senior Project Coordinator with the Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment; was founding Program Manager for Public Allies–Los Angeles; and worked as the Assistant Director of Constituency Services for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials Educational Fund. Among her public honors, the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation named Ms. Sigueiros its Woman of the Year in 2015.

In her Tomás Rivera Lecture, Ms. Sigueiros underscored the strength of the Hispanic community and encouraged her audience to fight harder than ever for educational, economic and political opportunity and social justice. She promised that the Campaign for College Opportunity will do its part. ETS is proud to stand with the Campaign for College Opportunity in that work.

Walt MacDonald President and CEO

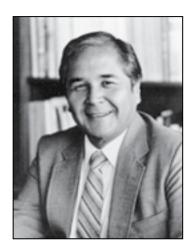
Educational Testing Service

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ABOUT THE TOMÁS RIVERA LECTURE

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

About Tomás Rivera



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

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

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

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

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

Tomás Rivera Lecturers

2017	Michele Siqueiros	2001	Félix Gutiérrez
2016	Antonia Hernández	2000	David Hayes-Bautista
2015	Manuel T. Pacheco	1999	Jim Cummins
2014	Yvette Donado	1998	Samuel Betances
2013	Francisco G. Cigarroa	1997	Albert H. Kauffman
2012	Luis Ubiñas	1996	Rolando Hinojosa Smith
2011	Rachel F. Moran	1995	Ronald Takai
2010	Charles B. Reed & Jack Scott	1994	Norma Cantú
2009	Marta Tienda	1993	Gregory R. Anrig
2008	Jamie Merisotis	1992	Henry Cisneros
		1991	Toni Morrison
2007	Sonia Nazario	1990	Tomás Arciniega
2006	Michael A. Olivas	1989	David Hamburg
2005	Raúl Yzaguirre	1988	Arturo Madrid
2004	Angela Oh	1987	Ann Reynolds
2003	Piedad Robertson	1986	Alfredo G. de los Santos Jr.
2002	Harold L. Hodgkinson	1985	John Maguire

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication reproduces the keynote address delivered at the AAHHE annual conference in March 2017 in Irvine, California. AAHHE is grateful for the leadership of its Board of Directors and the members of its conference planning committee for coordinating the appearance of keynote speaker Michele Siqueiros.

At Educational Testing Service, Eileen Kerrigan, Sally Acquaviva, Terri Flowers, Jon Rochkind and Darla Mellors provided editorial and production direction and support. The ETS Policy Evaluation and Research Center (PERC) gratefully acknowledges the guidance and support of AAHHE and particularly its President, Loui Olivas, in the publication of the Tomás Rivera Lectures.

THE AAHHE-ETS ALLIANCE



For 11 years, ETS has enjoyed a partnership with the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE). As Executive Director of the ETS Center for Advocacy and Philanthropy, I have had the pleasure of working closely with President Loui Olivas in sponsoring and designing the Annual Doctoral Dissertation Competition and the Latino Student Success Institute, and editing the *Perspectivas* Policy Brief. AAHHE and I are grateful to the ETS Policy Evaluation and Research Center for publishing the annual Tomás Rivera Lecture.

Each of these highly rewarding initiatives aligns with the ETS commitment to support the underserved and underrepresented student populations, and with our mission of helping to advance quality and equity in education for all learners. We are honored that Michele Siqueiros was selected to present the 2017 Lecture.

Berna M. Heen

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

Michele Siqueiros Delivers Tomás Rivera Lecture

On behalf of the AAHHE Board of Directors, I am honored to introduce the 2017 Tomás Rivera lecturer, Michele Siqueiros, President of the Campaign for College Opportunity. The Campaign is a California policy advocacy organization that builds partnerships to effect needed policy change and produces research to inform California leaders, elected officials and the public about the urgency of postsecondary education for California's future.

Like Dr. Tomás Rivera, whom we commemorate each year in this lecture, Michele Siqueiros is a leader in higher education who has changed the way Californians think about the role of colleges and universities in their state. She has pushed them to rethink and enact policies to better serve all students, regardless of color, background, age, income and other characteristics. The Campaign has taken the lead to change state policies that act as barriers, sidelining students on campuses and filtering out many promising students. Under Michele's leadership, the Campaign monitors effective implementation of state policies, ensuring that they are carried out to the benefit of students. This is no small feat in a state that



Elizabeth R. Gutierrez Director of State Policy Lumina Foundation

has two university systems — the University of California with its 10 campuses, the California State University with 23 campuses — and 113 community colleges serving a total of 2.7 million students.

One of the many campaigns that she has championed in Sacramento is creation of transfer pathways to ease student transitions from California community colleges to the Cal State campuses by offering transfer modules of standard courses at all colleges as a set of easily understood requirements for transfer to the universities. To provide up-to-date information for policymakers and the public, the Campaign issues its biennial report on the *State of Latinos in Higher Education in California*, as well as annual research reports to support needed policy changes.

Michele currently serves on the Boards of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, The EdSource Advisory Council, and Alliance for a Better Community. In 2011, Gov. Jerry Brown appointed her to the California Student Aid Commission, the state agency responsible for distributing and awarding over \$1.7 billion annually in Cal Grant aid to California college students. In 2015, the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation named her their Woman of the Year. Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) named Michele their HOPE Treasure in 2014. That same year, *La Opinion* newspaper gave her the Hispanic Leader Award for her

leadership in education. She received her bachelor of arts in political studies and Chicano studies from Pitzer College and her master of arts in urban planning from the University of California, Los Angeles.

I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Michele for 10 years. She is a valued colleague who has been my "go-to" California policy expert. She is a strong Latina leader who is unafraid to speak out on behalf of students. Following in the steps of Tomás Rivera, she reminds California leaders of their commitment to serve all students and the serious consequences of not taking action to fulfill this commitment.

It is my honor to present the 2017 Tomás Rivera lecturer, Michele Sigueiros.



Strawberry Fields by Rocio Juarez

Buenas noches. Thank you, everyone.

First, I can't even begin to tell you how honored I am to do the Tomás Rivera Lecture for AAHHE. When Loui called me and asked me if I would do it, if I was available, I said yes. And then he sort of paused and said, "You know it's a really big deal, right?" Loui, I know it's a really big deal. I'm really honored.

I'm also really proud to show you my college copy of ... Y No Se Lo Trago La Tierra, which if you were up here with me and you looked really closely you would see where I took off the "Used Book" sticker, and on the inside you would see that it cost me \$6.50, which at that time for me still seemed like a lot. You'd be able to see how much I loved the book just by seeing all the notes I wrote in it. And you'd also know that my best friend Lilia apparently didn't want to spend \$6.50 because she borrowed it and then she put little tabs everywhere she thought there was

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I'm focusing this
lecture on the
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and strength of
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United States ...

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something important to note. I think it's a great example of how resourceful we all are and, more importantly, even though it only cost \$6.50, I think all of you in this room know how truly valuable this copy is to me. It wasn't until my freshman year in college that I was ever asked to read stories as relevant or beautiful and magnificent as this novel was to me.

While an undergrad at Pitzer College, one of my work-study jobs was under the tutelage of Dr. Harry Pachon, who many of you know led the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute when it was based at the Claremont Colleges, and as all of you know it continues its good work now at USC. So Tomás Rivera certainly represents to me the best of our community and brings with it so many wonderful memories for me.

You know, I gave a lot of thought and I have to admit I really struggled with what I wanted to lecture you about. First, I'm incredibly humbled because I'm not sure I should be lecturing you about anything. I know that each of us in this room can share data and important research that we have each contributed to or learned from the many challenges facing our community — challenges that we must address and correct, important data that shines the light on the inequity that still persists, that shines the light on the need to improve educational outcomes, stop the school-to-prison pipeline, ensure true quality K–12 education that prepares all students for college (regardless of ZIP code or race), that shines the light on the inequity in higher education and the lack of accountability in supporting students through graduation.

As someone who loves research and has a deep appreciation for the work that each of you do, I really struggled with what research I should share. You will be glad to know that Dr. Olivas did not give me hours to share all the data I thought would be important tonight. I also know that you've just kicked off this conference and all of you are going to be sharing research and data very closely.

So I decided that I would focus on the brilliance, tenacity and strength of our community. And since I'm focusing this lecture on the brilliance, tenacity and strength of Latinos in the United States, it seems appropriate that I would start with the brilliance of Tomás Rivera. Many of you are familiar with his story: He was a migrant farm worker as a child, a job that was always on his professional *vita*. He understood the power of that experience of working alongside those who harvest the food that feeds this nation. He bookended that experience by serving as the first Mexican American to be named Chancellor of a University of California campus — UC Riverside. In between, he was a teacher, a poet, a writer, a college professor, a husband and a father. As many of you know, he died much too young, only 48 years old. But in those 48 years he built a legacy and a foundation that allows all of us to stand on his shoulders. Tomás Rivera would certainly be incredibly impressed with the gathering in this room.

I'm going to also say that my mother is a part of that community of brilliant Latinos. She is graceful, smart and fearless. In the 1960s, she crossed the border from Mexico without papers. As a young widow leaving three of her children behind to escape a sexist society with clear ideas about how she should live her life and what she should do, she came here to work hard so she could feed those children. She sacrificed everything, knowing that the biggest payoff would not be for her, it would be for her children and grandchildren.

My stepfather Jose is a man who escaped the civil war in El Salvador. He swept floors, cleaned churches, worked in factories and did whatever it took to pay the bills — that's the kind of work ethic I am inspired by.

I know that all of you come from strong, brave, smart and fearless people. And tonight, that's who I want us to call forward.

Today, as we feel our community under attack by the president of the United States, as we worry about U.S. Department of Education actions that could curtail progress in advancing college preparation and opportunity for more students, today as the U.S. Attorney General threatens civil rights protections, as Homeland Security and ICE sweep in to break up our families, today as all this unfolds, I want to pause and hopefully remind us all of the power we still hold, the opportunities that still exist, and the need to call on the privilege — yes, the privilege — that each of us in this room has to move our agenda forward.

I'm reminded by what Martin Luther King Jr. said, especially in these times: "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

So I'm going to start with my next slide to share that the future is bright. In many ways, we are making progress in our community:

- Our growing numbers across the United States (1 out of every 6 Americans)
- We are the new majority here in California (39% of the population)

[My mother] sacrificed everything, knowing that the biggest payoff would not be for her, it would be for her children

and grandchildren.

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- We have record low dropout rates
- And record high college enrollment and graduation rates

That's the good news. Of course, the future is also challenging.

As I mentioned, there's:



- The attacks on civil rights and equality
- Retreat on progress to combat sexual assault on our college campuses
- The false choice of "school choice"
- And of course, the attack on immigrants and the undocumented
- And I know you had an excellent conversation earlier today about the vulnerability facing DACA students

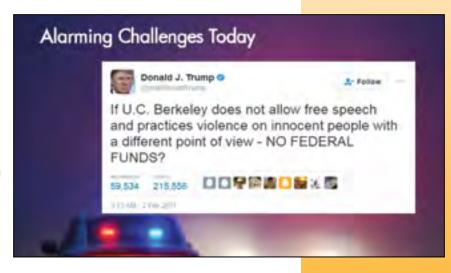
There are clearly lots of challenges facing our immigrant community. I don't know if you know, because I just learned this a few days ago, because Dr. Olivas is constantly educating me:



- Did you know that of the 12 million undocumented people in this country, 40% are between the ages of 19–23 years old?
- Did you know that of the 1.3 million DACA students, 65% are enrolled in college and over a third of them are in California?

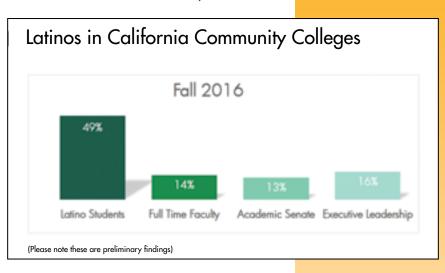
I could spend a lot of time talking to you about the many threats facing us under this administration. This is only ONE tweet:

But I decided I would just preview a few findings that I thought you would be interested in. Thankfully I get to work with very smart people, including our Policy Research Director, Dr. Leticia Bustillos, and she has been charged with putting together a first-of-itskind, as far as we know, analysis of diversity in higher education here in



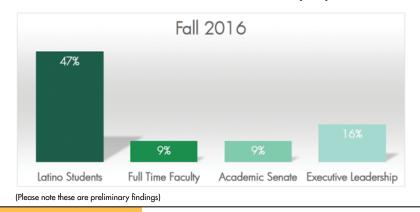
California. We've essentially looked at every single community college, Cal State and University of California. Instead of just analyzing students, which we do in our biennial state of higher education reports, we decided that this time we would analyze campuses. We would analyze how many faculty are Latino, we would analyze how many academic senators are Latino, we would analyze how many college leaders are Latino. And so I'm going to preview systemwide findings. And just so you know, they're preliminary. My team has literally been working for the last few months. This is a report we plan to release in the late summer, early fall.

I'd like to show you what it looks like in our community colleges. The first bar shows you the percent of community college students that are Latino. Only 14% of full-time faculty at our community colleges are Latino. Only 13% of the Academic Senators at our community colleges are Latino. And in terms of leadership, 16% of our community college leaders are Latino. And I see Chancellor Francisco Rodriguez, who makes up one of the 16%, here and I'm sure there are a few others.

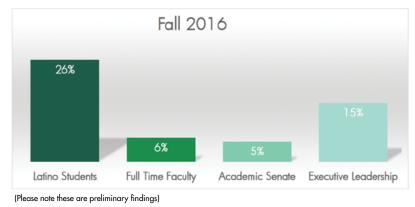


The next slide is for the Cal State system. Just in case you thought it might be better: 47% of Cal State students are Latino, 9% of full-time faculty are Latino, 9%

Latinos in California State University System







of Academic Senators are Latino, and 16% of leaders in the Cal State system are Latino. And I see Dr. Tomás Morales of Cal State San Bernardino is here.

I want to show you the last slide for the University of California, where you can see that 26% of the students are Latino, 6% of full-time faculty are Latino, only 5% of Academic Senators are Latino. and 15% of UC leaders are Latino.

So I think this is a perfect role for AAHHE moving forward, because clearly this room is filled with people that have Ph.D.s, master's degrees, experience and cultural relevancy. And the next time anyone tells us that there are not enough Latinos for the positions available, maybe we should just open conference registration to them so they can spend a few days here in Irvine.

We come from descendants who built pyramids and used zero in advanced mathematics long before other cultures did. Our history is rich, even

if it's denied or goes untaught in too many U.S. classrooms. In fact, you know it's powerful when our authors are banned from classrooms and when Chicano studies is a threat to the academy.

Each of us understand the contributions that our community has made and the sacrifices we continue to make in order for this country to be great. We harvest, pick, package, cook and serve the food that fills the bellies of all Americans regardless of race. We build roads, buildings, houses, and clean streets, we keep gardens nicely manicured and children well cared for — including those children who we love and nurture that are not our own. We sew clothes, manufacture furniture, put things together in industries across the nation. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to buy or wear [something] or visit a single part of this country that did not have a contribution by a Latino in it. And thanks to the sacrifices of those

who came before us, who worked with their hands and encouraged us to work with our minds, each of us is here today, celebrating the privilege of having had the opportunity of college so we could reach our own dreams.

So yes, today I do want to continue to talk about the brilliance, tenacity and strength of Latinos in the United States. Yes, I'm talking about you. I'm talking about your brothers and sisters, your mothers and fathers, your aunts and uncles, your friends and



colleagues — the long list of brilliant people whose shoulders you stand on and who have inspired each of you to ensure that more brilliance in our community is celebrated.

Unlike many of you in this room, I haven't had the privilege of being a Profe – and as a Latina, sometimes the first thing that comes to mind when I hear the word "lecture" is my mom passionately — and probably appropriately — getting on my case about something. I want to channel my mom a little and give you that kind of lecture.

There is no more important time than today to make sure that each of us in this room doubles down in defense of our community, does more than we think is possible to defend ourselves when we are under attack, to remember that in spite of all that has gone bad and wrong in our nation, we come from descendants who started and came here with nothing and made something from it. We will fight and yell the mantra given to us by Tomás Rivera, reminding ourselves that whatever comes our way, whoever tweets an attack — the earth will NOT devour us.

So my lecture to you today is to:

- 1. Speak up even more than you have before.
- 2. Act with others to protect all immigrants under attack.
- 3. Demand the representation we deserve in our local government, school boards, city halls, state legislatures and federal government.
- 4. Raise and give money to candidates who value the brilliance of our community.

- 5. Consider running for office and sharing your own brilliance on behalf of our community.
- 6. Sponsor good laws and work with good attorneys.
- 7. Use the resources, the data, the research, the knowledge in front of you for good.

And I added at the very last minute:

8. Don't simply defend diversity and equity, force others to defend inequity and lack of diversity.

All of us know that there are many moments when each of us has had to pick our battles, let that one ignorant comment slide, not fight for that one position in our college, not battle with the college president or colleague on that one particular issue. We will always have to pick our battles, but I hope it's clear to all of us that today — at this time — we do not have the luxury of being as selective.

We are going to have to wade into more battles than we would like. We are going to have to be more uncomfortable than we are used to being. We are going to have to get comfortable with a growing list of attacks and enemies. But this is not the time to retreat and fold. This is not the time to simply hope that the policies pursued won't be so bad after all.

This is the time to call forward all the brilliance we hold and to make sure we shine a light on it. This is the time to call forward every ounce of strength our ancestors used when they crossed that border, picking those fields, protesting lynchings, fighting segregated education, demanding college opportunity, shining a light to discrimination, battling against police brutality.

In Tomás Rivera's classic book, tragedy after tragedy befalls our community. And yet — the earth did not devour him. No se lo trago la tierra.

This is the time. And each of you — all of us — have the brilliance, the tenacity and strength for this time. I promise you, the Campaign for College Opportunity and I will do our part. I hope each of you will be alongside me.

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In Tomás Rivera's classic book, tragedy after tragedy befalls our community. And yet — the earth did not devour him. No se lo trago la tierra.

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SPEAKER'S BIOGRAPHY



Michele Siqueiros, President The Campaign for College Opportunity

Michele Sigueiros grew up in Los Angeles and was the first in her family to graduate from college thanks to federal, state and college financial aid. As the daughter of a hard-working immigrant mother from Mexico with only a sixthgrade education, she is passionate about the power of college to change lives, and the ability of policy-making to expand or constrain college opportunity for others.

As the President for The Campaign for College Opportunity, Siqueiros works to expand access and success in college for California students by raising public attention on the critical challenges facing higher education, mobilizing a broad coalition of supporters and influencing policymakers. The Campaign's mission to increase

college going and completion rates is driven by a strong belief that California's future economic success depends on our ability to produce the best-educated workforce in the nation, and that our diverse population of young adults deserves the same opportunity provided to previous generations — regardless of race or socioeconomic status.

Under her leadership in 2010, the Campaign led the effort for historic transfer reform that will make it easier for students to transfer from any California Community College to the California State University system. The Campaign has also assembled a statewide network of over 12,000 coalition supporters; involved over 50,000 young people and their families through the "Save Me a Spot in College" and "I'm One in A Million" scholarship contests, which awarded over \$670,000 in scholarship dollars; released prominent reports on higher education's impact on the California economy, access and success rates and workforce needs; and sponsored and passed legislation to increase access to Pell Grants, promote college readiness, innovate community college student success efforts and reform remedial courses. In the past eight years, she has raised over \$9 million dollars and serves as a state and national spokesperson on higher education in California, with regular contributions to major newspapers and TV outlets across the state.

Previously, she advised local policymakers and managed organizational partnerships as Senior Project Coordinator with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment in the City of Los Angeles, as founding Program Manager for

Public Allies-Los Angeles, and as the Assistant Director of Constituency Services for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund.

In 2015, the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation named her their Woman of the Year. Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) named her their HOPE Treasure in 2014. That same year, La Opinion newspaper gave her the Hispanic Leader Award for her leadership in education. In 2008, La Opinion named her one of Los Angeles' Mujeres Destacadas (Outstanding Women).

Sigueiros currently serves on the Boards of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, the EdSource Advisory Council and the Alliance for a Better Community, and is a member of the Statewide Leadership Council for the Public Policy Institute of California. From 2011 to 2014, she served as a gubernatorial appointee to the California Student Aid Commission, the state agency responsible for distributing and awarding over \$1.5 billion annually in Cal Grant aid to California college students. From 2005 to 2010, she served as an appointee of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa on the Board of Neighborhoods, overseeing the citywide system of neighborhood councils.

Sigueiros graduated from Pitzer College with a bachelor of arts degree in political studies with honors in Chicano/a studies. She received her Master of Arts in urban planning from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She lives in the City of Los Angeles.

Notes

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About ETS

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

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