



Contact: [Media@EdExcelencia.org](mailto:Media@EdExcelencia.org)

## **Business and Education Trailblazers Chosen to Lead Board of National Nonprofit Accelerating Latino Student Success**

*Results Focused Leaders in Education, Industry, and Policy Advance the Talents of the Latino Community on Excelencia in Education's Board of Directors*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 11, 2025)** – *Excelencia* in Education, the nation's leading organization focused on accelerating Latino student success in higher education, announced today two respected change agents in business and higher education will lead its board of directors in 2025. With decades of combined experience in postsecondary education, the private sector, and policy, the full 10-member board will contribute their expertise and vision as *Excelencia* continues to increase Latinos' degree attainment through 2030.

"*Excelencia* remains steadfast in growing Latino excellence through higher education," said Sarita Brown, co-founder and president of *Excelencia*. "We are honored our chair, vice chair, and the full board keep *Excelencia* at the forefront in shaping the national agenda for expanding Latino talent for the workforce and civic leadership. By informing, catalyzing, and highlighting the colleges and universities that intentionally serve Latino, and all, students, *Excelencia* serves our country."

The leaders of *Excelencia's* board of directors in 2025 are:

**Board Chair:** [Massey Villarreal](#), chief executive officer and president of Precision Task Group, Inc., is a respected business leader and long-time advocate for the Latino community and higher education. Villarreal is immediate past chairman of the Texas Association of Business (TAB) and serves on the Texas Association of Community College Business Advisory Council, the WWII Museum, and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) National Council. He was the first person to serve as chairman of a local, state, and national Hispanic chamber, including the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He has also served on the Texas State University System Board of Regents.

**Board Vice Chair:** [Elizabeth Béjar](#) serves as provost, executive vice president, and chief operating officer of Florida International University, one of 46 institutions that has earned the Seal of *Excelencia* for striving to go beyond enrollment to intentionally SERVE Latino students. Dr. Béjar is a key member of the university's executive leadership, overseeing an annual budget of approximately \$1.4 billion and providing

strategic oversight of the institution's academic and student success portfolio. Her expertise lies in understanding the changing landscape of higher education; working to propel the value proposition of higher education with intentionality and through the lens of student learning and success and research excellence. Dr. Bejar leads critical strategic initiatives, including the development of the university's 2030 Strategic Plan, along with an implementation plan to further FIU's mission to curate a meaningful student experience that leads to excellent outcomes. She joined FIU in 2003 and has held several key leadership positions.

Since its founding in 2004, *Excelencia* in Education has improved Latino students' higher education achievement through a portfolio linking leadership, data, and evidence-based practices. The organization's national [Presidents for Latino Student Success \(P4LSS\) network](#) comprises over 200 college and university presidents and chancellors, representing only 6% of institutions yet enrolling 33% and graduating 35% of Latino students nationwide. Additionally, *Excelencia* conducts analysis on issues impacting Latino students' college journeys and promotes evidence-based practices advancing their success to inform policy and compel action.

"As a business leader, I know *Excelencia* in Education's mission to accelerate Latino student success in higher education is essential in keeping America first in the global economy," said Massey Villarreal, chief executive officer and president of Precision Task Group, Inc., and chair of *Excelencia's* board of directors. "Working with colleges and universities in our national network that intentionally serve Latino, and all, students grows talent that will translate into a skilled workforce and capable leadership."

The other members of the executive committee are:

- [Carlos E. Santiago](#), past chair, commissioner emeritus of the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE)
- [Geronimo M. Rodriguez Jr.](#), secretary/treasurer, former chief advocacy officer at Ascension Texas
- [Sarita E. Brown](#), co-founder and president of *Excelencia* in Education

The other leaders in *Excelencia's* board are:

- [Audrey Dow](#), partner at Secoya Affect
- [Maria Harper-Marinick](#), senior fellow at the Aspen Institute
- [Andrés Henríquez](#), director of STEM education strategy, US Division, at Education Development Center, Inc.
- [Juan Sánchez Muñoz](#), chancellor of the University of California, Merced
- [Havidán Rodríguez](#), president of the University at Albany, State University of New York

"The leaders on *Excelencia's* board bring diverse perspectives and share a commitment to transforming higher education to ensure Latino, and all, students thrive," said Deborah Santiago, co-founder and CEO of *Excelencia*. "They are taking responsibility for increasing Latinos' degree attainment with the understanding that doing so benefits everyone."

Meet the *Excelencia* in Education Board of Directors:

[EdExcelencia.org/about/our-people](http://EdExcelencia.org/about/our-people)

###

**About *Excelencia* in Education**

Launched in 2004 in the nation's capital, *Excelencia* in Education leads a national network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to tap the talents of the Latino community and address the U.S. economy's needs for a highly educated workforce and engaged civic leaders. With this network, *Excelencia* accelerates Latino student success in higher education by promoting Latino student achievement, informing educational policies with a Latino lens, and advancing evidence-based practices. For more information, visit: [EdExcelencia.org](http://EdExcelencia.org)