

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COMMISSION ON EDUCATION  
EXCELLENCE FOR HISPANICS

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K-12 EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE BREAKOUT SESSION

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THURSDAY,  
APRIL 28, 2016

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The Subcommittee met in the Alvarado Room, California State University, Fullerton, 800 North State College Boulevard, Fullerton, California, at 10:30 a.m., Patricia Gandara, Chair, presiding.

PRESENT:

PATRICIA GANDARA, Chair  
ALICIA ABELLA  
ALFREDO ARTILES  
VERONICA MELVIN  
KENT PAREDES SCRIBNER

## P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

10:35 a.m.

1  
2  
3 CHAIR GANDARA: Can we just introduce  
4 ourselves to the group starting with Alicia?

5 MS. ABELLA: Good morning. I'm Alicia  
6 Abella, and I come to you from New Jersey. When  
7 I'm not participating in the White House  
8 Commission, I work for AT&T Labs Research.

9 MR. SCRIBNER: Good morning. I am  
10 Kent Paredes Scribner, and I serve as the  
11 Superintendent of the Forth Worth Independent  
12 School District, Forth Worth, Texas.

13 CHAIR GANDARA: I'm Patricia Gandara  
14 and I am co-director of the Civil Rights Project,  
15 Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA. I'm a local  
16 actually. I'm co-chair of this subgroup with Dan  
17 Cardinali, who is based in Washington, D.C. with  
18 Communities in Schools Program there. Dan is not  
19 able to be here today.

20 MR. ANTILES: Good morning. Alfredo  
21 Artiles. I'm a professor at Arizona State  
22 University, and my research is on the dissection

1 of language, race, and disability. I'm also  
2 Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Teachers  
3 College at ASU.

4 CHAIR GANDARA: And Veronica, I guess,  
5 is going to join us. She is coming back in just a  
6 second. Veronica is executive director -- there  
7 she is.

8 You are executive director of?

9 MS. MELVIN: LA's Promise.

10 CHAIR GANDARA: LA's Promise.  
11 Nonprofit that operates schools in south LA.

12 Just really, really quickly so that we  
13 know who is in the room. We don't have time to  
14 go through what you do but if you can just give  
15 us your name and where you're from, that would be  
16 just really great we know who is with us today.

17 MS. ZAMORA-MEJIA: Elizabeth Zamora-  
18 Mejia. I am from the city of Orange, and I'm an  
19 alumnus of California State.

20 PARTICIPANT: Folks, you're going to  
21 have to spell your names when you introduce  
22 yourselves.

1                   PARTICIPANT: Do you want us to pass  
2 around a piece of paper for that?

3                   PARTICIPANT: That will help. Okay.  
4 Sorry to interrupt you but there's a lot of  
5 people here.

6                   PARTICIPANT: We'll do that. Let me  
7 get it started for you.

8                   (Off-the-record introductions.)

9                   PARTICIPANT: Can I stop you for one  
10 minute?

11                  PARTICIPANT: Yes, sir.

12                  (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
13 went off the record at 10:37 a.m. and resumed at  
14 10:38 a.m.)

15                  (Off-the-record introductions.)

16                  CHAIR GANDARA: Wow, we have a  
17 powerful group in the room, guys, and not enough  
18 time to really take advantage of all of that.

19                  We have two guiding questions this  
20 morning. I guess we start with the commissioners  
21 thinking about this. I think we've always had  
22 the tradition of asking for comments from the

1 group that is here as well, particularly given  
2 that we have such a powerful group.

3 Latinos have made progress in  
4 education from cradle to career. In an effort to  
5 continue driving that forward, what can we do in  
6 2016 to 2017 to help ensure public and private  
7 sectors target support and investments. That is  
8 the guiding question here.

9 I don't know if anybody -- I loved  
10 actually Moe's comment right now in the  
11 commission meeting about it's one thing to have  
12 recommendations and to put your recommendations  
13 forward but if you don't have political power or  
14 authority or will, how much good does that do.

15 I don't know that we'll resolve that  
16 one here but I think it's a subtext to all of  
17 this. Any thoughts from my fellow commissioners  
18 here? What can we do to ensure and public and  
19 private sectors target support and investments in  
20 the Latino population?

21 MS. MELVIN: I think, you know, in  
22 light of the fact that this might be our last

1 year together and our ability to have a big  
2 hurrah because we've been doing this, some of us,  
3 for six or seven years, right?

4 CHAIR GANDARA: Or maybe all our  
5 lives.

6 MS. MELVIN: Yes, yes. I wonder if  
7 there isn't something that we can do that brings  
8 together the various pieces that we've been  
9 working on over the years. I was giving this  
10 some thought on my commute over this morning.  
11 When I think about our work as a subcommittee for  
12 K to 12 I often think about the ultimate goal  
13 that we want is for our kids to graduate ready  
14 for college and anything else that awaits them  
15 afterwards.

16 I also saw, and I don't know if any of  
17 you guys caught, My Brother's Keeper commercial  
18 with President Obama and Steph Curry. Did you  
19 guys see that? So there was a commercial where  
20 President Obama was a mentor to Steph Curry  
21 inside the White House and he was encouraging him  
22 -- encouraging people to be mentors and take on a

1 deserving youth to get them to the next step in  
2 life.

3 I wonder if there isn't some kind of  
4 public/private partnership we can do, whether  
5 it's on a public ad campaign or something, that  
6 really celebrates our success around graduation,  
7 the fact that we have made significant gains, but  
8 also the fact that we need more. And then some  
9 kind of a call to action. I think we can brain  
10 storm what a call to action would be. That's  
11 what I was thinking on this morning.

12 CHAIR GANDARA: So let's just play  
13 this out a little bit more then. If we were to  
14 do that, we would perhaps try to engage various  
15 privates and NGOs or something and a campaign  
16 that would sort of celebrate the successes that  
17 we have had.

18 MS. MELVIN: Yes. I think it's  
19 something positive. Positive messages either  
20 around graduation, around college going, around  
21 mentorship possibly because I still think that  
22 population that isn't getting to that finish line

1 is a population that needs that persistence the  
2 most when you talk about upward trends. I'm not  
3 sure exactly what it is but I can imagine you can  
4 narrow down on what it might be.

5 CHAIR GANDARA: In the Latina's report  
6 we report that we've had over the last -- I  
7 forget.

8 MS. MELVIN: It was a decade.

9 CHAIR GANDARA: Yeah, a decade of like  
10 14 percentage point increase in Latinas  
11 graduating. I mean, that is astounding. More  
12 than for any other group. Of course, we have a  
13 whole lot farther to go which is part of the  
14 reason. I think that is worthy of note.

15 Alfredo.

16 MR. ANTILES: I was thinking that  
17 philanthropy is increasing playing a significant  
18 role in research funding, program funding, and  
19 policy creation. As we know, they have very  
20 close connections with private sector and I think  
21 we need to be strategic in engaging with the  
22 philanthropic world in ways that will begin to

1 open discussions about inequality.

2 We have two examples, the W.T. Grant  
3 Foundation and the Ford Foundation having massive  
4 investments in inequality. I think we need to  
5 engage with those discussions and find ways of  
6 networking those interests to other areas of the  
7 philanthropic world as they interface with the  
8 federal government and open discussions within  
9 that context about the Latino agenda and the  
10 future of this nation in that regard.

11 CHAIR GANDARA: And so you're  
12 suggesting that we as a commission should be  
13 doing this?

14 MR. ANTILES: I think we should be  
15 creating context for opening discussions.

16 CHAIR GANDARA: That is a great idea  
17 that we would use whatever authority we have from  
18 our position to --

19 MR. ANTILES: To convene groups and  
20 discussions, having dialogues, open discussion  
21 forums. Publications that will bring together  
22 some of these actors. People in this room are

1 involved in some of these efforts.

2 CHAIR GANDARA: Any other comments?

3 MR. ANTILES: Just thinking aloud.

4 CHAIR GANDARA: What's that?

5 MR. ANTILES: I'm just thinking aloud.

6 CHAIR GANDARA: Well, we all are.

7 Sometimes the best ideas come that way.

8 Any others? Alicia.

9 MS. ABELLA: I mentioned that I'm with  
10 AT&T Labs Research so I wear the STEM hat on this  
11 committee. While the numbers are good for  
12 Latinos, for Latinos they have improved, they  
13 have not improved in the STEM field.

14 Again, this is more thoughts from this  
15 morning's meeting but there was mention of AP  
16 courses. I was trying to bring up the data that  
17 I recently saw from the Department of Labor on  
18 the Latinos taking AP courses. Some of them are.  
19 A very small number of them are.

20 Then the grades they get on the AP  
21 exam are extremely low. There is an opportunity  
22 perhaps to have partnerships with industry,

1 private sector places that have engineers,  
2 professionals on board that can help these  
3 students through some of these courses whether  
4 it's mentorship programs or something like that.

5 The average AP score for, let's say,  
6 Computer Science AP was like 2. That's out of 5.  
7 That's really low. They might be taking the AP  
8 courses but it's not helping them in terms of  
9 college. That was one idea.

10 The other one was --

11 CHAIR GANDARA: What do you think is  
12 going on there? Why is it not helping them?

13 MS. ABELLA: Well, the score is too  
14 low. The universities I look at those AP classes  
15 and --

16 CHAIR GANDARA: No. Why do you think  
17 the scores are so low?

18 MS. ABELLA: Oh, why the score is low.  
19 What's that?

20 MS. MELVIN: Kent knows that.

21 MS. ABELLA: Okay. We'll get to that.  
22 Then there was the comment that Ricardo Romo made

1 about affordability at schools. Right? I didn't  
2 get a chance to tell the story there but I'll  
3 tell a story, a recent story, I think I told you  
4 last night, that I had a conversation with a  
5 young woman, a Latina, who wants to do computer  
6 science. I'm like, "Yes!" My major is computer  
7 science.

8 She got into a highly-selective  
9 university, CMU, Carnegie-Mellon, in computer  
10 science. She came from a disadvantaged  
11 background, public high school in New Jersey.  
12 Last week she had to decline CMU because she  
13 can't afford it so she has to go now to another  
14 school. I told her she'll do well, I'm sure,  
15 because she has the drive to do it, but she could  
16 have gone to CMU except for the affordability  
17 issue.

18 If there is anything I will do after  
19 I'm done with this commission is to continue to  
20 help propagate what is necessary for those  
21 students to get the information, the  
22 scholarships, the fellowships, engage the parents

1 in understanding this process because, in fact,  
2 I'm going through this process currently with my  
3 son who is a junior in high school.

4 I understand how complex it is and I'm  
5 living in it, let alone for those families that  
6 don't understand all the complexities. It is  
7 overly complex but I will do my darneest to help  
8 at least those locally to me help them not have a  
9 situation where a girl wants to go to CMU and  
10 can't because of an affordability issue.

11 Then there was another one with a  
12 slightly different issue. Again, I'm throwing it  
13 out there for brainstorming. They came up to me  
14 and said -- she's a junior in high school and she  
15 said, "I have a dream to go to MIT or to go to  
16 CMU." She said, "Do you think I can get in?"  
17 She also wants to go into STEM. I asked her,  
18 "What is your GPA?" She said, "It's a 2.2 out of  
19 4."

20 Herein lies another issue. Here they  
21 are a junior in high school doesn't understand  
22 the qualifications, the expectations of some of

1 these schools. She followed it up by saying,  
2 "Would it help that I'm a Latina and I want to go  
3 into STEM? Won't that help me?"

4 So there is also some education in  
5 terms of that in the qualifications and  
6 requirements needed that it's not enough to be a  
7 Latina to get into a university. You also have  
8 to have the grades. You have to have the right  
9 course work and guiding them through what that is  
10 because clearly the guidance counselors aren't  
11 helping enough. That's just my thoughts from  
12 this morning.

13 CHAIR GANDARA: I want to hear from  
14 Kent about the AP thing but can I just follow up  
15 with a question about a little more information?  
16 Now, she could not afford CMU. Is that because  
17 she didn't know about scholarships?

18 MS. ABELLA: She's applied to like  
19 several of the Hispanic scholarships and she  
20 hasn't heard back yet from them which is  
21 surprising to me because I'm like you have to  
22 already notify the universities in May of this so

1 she already has to know. I don't know why that  
2 is. I asked her, "You filled out your FAFSA,  
3 right?" She said, "Yes."

4 CHAIR GANDARA: So she's got a Pel  
5 grant.

6 MS. ABELLA: Yes. But, again, CMU's  
7 tuition is like close to \$70,000 a year. She got  
8 something but it's not enough.

9 CHAIR GANDARA: Not providing enough.

10 MS. MELVIN: I would just say quickly  
11 on that one because we deal with this with our  
12 students all the time, we encourage them to apply  
13 to their dream schools or A schools, their B  
14 schools they know they can get into, and then C  
15 schools.

16 Often times they are admitted to all  
17 A, B, C and they go to C and they make their --  
18 you know, you'll ask them what school they want  
19 to go to and they get in there but they make  
20 their decision based on affordability.

21 A hundred percent in terms of our kids  
22 are making decisions not on what they -- so we

1 work so hard to get them in, which we did on  
2 these smaller numbers, right? But then they are  
3 not making the best decision for them except for  
4 when you consider that affordability issue.

5 For them if they see, you know, even  
6 down to the community college level being that C.  
7 Like she could be -- you know, I've got kids that  
8 are UCLA bound and all these other ones. They go  
9 to the community college because of  
10 affordability.

11 CHAIR GANDARA: So this is a really,  
12 really important issue. There's a lot of data  
13 that show that Latinos generally under match so  
14 they go to schools that are less rigorous and  
15 will provide them fewer opportunities than they  
16 actually qualify for. What you basically are  
17 saying is it's an affordability issue. Is this a  
18 judgment by the kids that, "I don't want to go  
19 hugely into debt?" or is it --

20 MS. MELVIN: Right.

21 CHAIR GANDARA: Okay. It's not the  
22 total impossibility of doing it. It's the fact,

1 "I don't want to go into huge debt."

2 MS. MELVIN: They fear debt.

3 MR. SCRIBNER: And that's for half or  
4 small percentage of students who do go on to  
5 college. The majority of our students -- I spent  
6 many years as a superintendent in Phoenix,  
7 Arizona and just started in Fort Worth here six  
8 months ago and can see some similarities but,  
9 again, some great differences. The majority of  
10 our students in Fort Worth, much like in my  
11 previous life, began in community colleges.

12 To the question around what progress  
13 have we made and what will we be doing with  
14 regard to cradle and career, I would suggest we  
15 take a look at those communities and there are a  
16 few who have done good work with this idea of  
17 collective impact.

18 We have students in our school  
19 building seven-and-a-half hours a day so from  
20 birth to graduation of high school they are in a  
21 school building 15 percent of their lives. We  
22 cannot do this by ourselves. It has to be a

1 community effort.

2 There are some communities that are  
3 doing great work from cradle to career mobilizing  
4 education leaders, business leaders, the  
5 philanthropic communities, nonprofits, faith-  
6 based organizations, parent groups, and really  
7 identifying those metrics that matter.

8 The question on STEM we know in north  
9 Texas that one of the biggest issues we have is  
10 teacher pipeline, teacher quality. There are 7  
11 million people in Dallas-Fort Worth community and  
12 we hired almost 7,000 new teachers a year in  
13 Dallas ISD, Forth Worth ISD and all of the  
14 surrounding cities. Of the 7,000, almost 7,000  
15 new teachers, only 2,300 hundred of them are  
16 certified.

17 The number of universities -- excuse  
18 me. Only 2,300 graduates from the local  
19 universities certification so we are hiring non-  
20 certified teachers, alternative certified  
21 teachers, teachers from other communities and  
22 getting them alternatively certified.

1           That is a pipeline problem. That is  
2 not sustainable. Teacher quality certainly is  
3 one of the issues. Then with regard to -- there  
4 has to be a community effort to address these  
5 issues.

6           Secondly, with regard to preparation  
7 of students, what we're finding is the leakage  
8 happens immediately. We have a great initiative  
9 for our students, in Forth Worth anyway, to  
10 attend preschool and 80 percent of our students  
11 do.

12           Yet, only 50 percent are kindergarten  
13 ready so there is either a quality gap or  
14 attendance gap with the students. Then only 30  
15 percent of our students can read at the grade  
16 level in 3rd grade. This is across the spectrum.  
17 I say kind of jokingly this is an incredibly  
18 complex issue.

19           From my perspective what we ought to  
20 do is take a look at those communities that are  
21 handling these large-scale complex social  
22 problems better than others and replicating the

1 -- I use your term, Alfredo, from several days  
2 ago about not replicating practice but  
3 replicating process. You know, what are the  
4 design elements that work. From my perspective  
5 it has to be a community-wide collective effort.

6 CHAIR GANDARA: Our co-chair Dan  
7 Cardinali is totally dedicated to this with the  
8 work that he does in seeing the wrap-around  
9 services for kids. When Alicia raised the issue  
10 about the AP scores being so low she said you  
11 can't quite explain this?

12 MR. SCRIBNER: Yeah. It's a number of  
13 things. I mean, students need to be prepared.  
14 In order to compete on the AP exams, certainly  
15 there is going to be a wide range of student  
16 preparedness.

17 My personal philosophy is to  
18 accelerate learning and to push students into  
19 honors, in AP and IB who otherwise perhaps  
20 wouldn't be. I know there is push and pull there  
21 with some teacher groups in terms of only send  
22 students who are prepared.

1           I disagree with that. I think that we  
2 ought to accelerate and expand opportunities,  
3 expand expectations and deal with students kind  
4 of where they are, but certainly it's a pipeline  
5 issue. We've got to build a strong foundation if  
6 we are going to build a structure on top of it.

7           CHAIR GANDARA: So can I take it from  
8 your comment that in a sense it's okay if the  
9 scores are low because we're getting kids in  
10 thinking about rigorous course work even if they  
11 are maybe not going to make it all the way to the  
12 goal line?

13           MR. SCRIBNER: Absolutely. The  
14 initiative in another life back in Phoenix as  
15 superintendent where we had all of the 11th grade  
16 students take the ACT test during the school day  
17 at no cost to them. Of course, now they have all  
18 students taking the college entrant exam and the  
19 score went down.

20           But that's okay because over time it  
21 will creep back up. It will build back up and  
22 you are exposing students to the process, to

1 college. They are getting into the clearing  
2 houses. They are receiving post cards at home  
3 and emails and you are beginning that connection.

4 CHAIR GANDARA: They are also in a  
5 different peer group.

6 MR. SCRIBNER: Yeah, exactly.  
7 Different peer group. It's a kind of  
8 socialization conversation as well.

9 MS. MORALES: Jeanette Morales. We  
10 are talking about the end product but also  
11 looking at the districts where our students are  
12 going. Not just that the scores are low but the  
13 overall numbers of students taking AP courses are  
14 low because our school districts where the  
15 minority students are at don't have the resources  
16 to offer the AP.

17 We're talking about teachers not being  
18 certified and have the districts where the  
19 shortages of certified teachers in math and  
20 science having them going to the districts. We  
21 were in San Bernardino and we heard from many of  
22 the school districts here in California that

1 don't have enough students to justify having AP.

2 MR. SCRIBNER: Yeah. You know what?  
3 I called their bluff on that one. I've been a  
4 superintendent now for 13 years and people pay  
5 for their priorities.

6 What we're in the process of in my new  
7 position is this idea of selective abandonment,  
8 getting rid of those programs and those  
9 activities that perhaps are not -- that we've  
10 always done because we've always done them, or  
11 there is some micro-political reason that we are  
12 going with this group and not this one.

13 I think absolutely public education is  
14 underfunded in Texas and I'm sure in California  
15 as well. But given the funds that we have, I  
16 think we have an opportunity to identify those  
17 few things that we really care about and then  
18 abandon the others.

19 We have 800 programs in Fort Worth,  
20 Texas. We need 18. The way I get from 800 to 18  
21 as a superintendent and stay alive is by  
22 mobilizing the community and having them all

1 agree on a fewer set of objectives. The high  
2 quality organizations, high performing companies,  
3 and public sector organizations that are  
4 successful as compared to their peers typically  
5 are doing fewer things well.

6 I would say let's take a look at that  
7 system. If rigor in the classroom and AP in  
8 honors and IB are a priority, what in the  
9 organization could we shift dollars from. That  
10 is not an easy endeavor because we elect school  
11 boards and their brother-in-law programs and all  
12 that silliness. I get all that. I've been doing  
13 this for awhile.

14 CHAIR GANDARA: We hope you survive  
15 this.

16 MR. SCRIBNER: Right. You can't go  
17 too fast but you can't let the status quo absorb  
18 you either. You got to find the sweet spot.

19 CHAIR GANDARA: That's great.

20 Yes.

21 MS. ALHAN: Maria Pastrada Alhan and  
22 I have a comment. I am going through the process

1 with my own daughter so hearing you talk about  
2 funding just really struck a chord. My daughter  
3 is a 4.1 student and got accepted to half of the  
4 universities that we wanted to go to and decided  
5 on William and Mary. For us it's like how are we  
6 going to pay for this.

7 We have begun to really think  
8 strategically because she deserves it. Some of  
9 the things I want to share with you all, and I'm  
10 sure some of you are familiar, but just so it's  
11 documented. I said, "Okay, you got in but every  
12 summer you are taking two classes at a junior  
13 college and you are transferring those and you  
14 bring it down from four years to three years.  
15 Let's be strategic about this."

16 If I had to do it over again, I would  
17 tell every parent encourage your children to take  
18 as many AP courses as possible because as a  
19 parent I did not realize, and I'm in the  
20 business, how valuable that AP course is. I  
21 think parent engagement and enlighten your parent  
22 are going to reap so many benefits at the end of

1 the day.

2 MR. SCRIBNER: As is dual enrollment,  
3 as is concurrent enrollment. All those  
4 opportunities for all students of all  
5 socioeconomic strata, but certainly for low  
6 income communities that's a huge advantage.

7 MS. MELVIN: She can start now in the  
8 next enrollment period.

9 CHAIR GANDARA: I really appreciate  
10 those comments because basically what you're  
11 talking about is figuring out strategies. I  
12 mean, we're not going to get William and Mary to  
13 come down from their \$60,000 a year tuition right  
14 now but strategies for addressing that, that's  
15 very helpful. Thank you.

16 MS. ALHAN: That incident you spoke  
17 about, that one individual, I thought you can do  
18 it. Say yes and make it happen, right? There  
19 are strategies.

20 MS. ABELLA: There are strategies. I  
21 think my point also and what that story made me  
22 realize is that we have to start with that

1 strategy in freshman year so they have that  
2 strategy in place before but now it's almost too  
3 late for this one. I mean, there are still  
4 little strategies that she can do but the AP  
5 courses are gone.

6 MR. SCRIBNER: And what is the macro  
7 approach? There are always points of light where  
8 we point to the kid who has overcome the  
9 obstacles and we say the system is not broken  
10 because that one kid made it, but the 999,000  
11 others didn't.

12 It's all about how do we take those  
13 because that's social capital. That's  
14 understanding that community college in the  
15 summer can help you on the bottom line  
16 financially so how do we get that idea to the  
17 community.

18 MS. MELVIN: I will just add one quick  
19 example of that on the dual enrollment. So we  
20 have started a coalition of about 10 high schools  
21 in South Los Angeles that are working with our  
22 local community college to do pathway programs

1 that are either four to six courses at the junior  
2 college that students start taking their junior  
3 year.

4 Between their sophomore and junior  
5 year they start. They take it during the summer,  
6 they take it during winter. If they want, if  
7 they can fit it in their schedule, online during  
8 the school year. They are all programmed into  
9 certain career pathways. There is a STEM 1,  
10 there's a Computer Science 1, there's a Health 1.  
11 It's based on the student's interest to give them  
12 that step forward into the post-secondary.

13 MR. SCRIBNER: And the only way to  
14 take that to scale is to engage the community in  
15 a good comprehensive high school with good  
16 staffing you are about 300 students to one high  
17 school counselor. On average about 400 and some  
18 are up to 500. I don't know how many times  
19 you've seen your high school counselor but on  
20 average it's two hours for the entire school  
21 year.

22 CHAIR GANDARA: In California the

1 ratio is one counselor to every 900 students.

2 MR. SCRIBNER: So that's obscene. A  
3 child whose parents don't have the social capital  
4 to help them decide between William and Mary and  
5 Vanderbilt, we need to have communities empowered  
6 around this helping students with their personal  
7 essays to apply, helping students to make those  
8 kind of determinations. Again, that's  
9 nonprofits, that's business, that's philanthropy,  
10 that's churches. That's everyone focused on a  
11 few important goals.

12 CHAIR GANDARA: Yes.

13 MS. ZAMORA-MEJIA: Elizabeth Zamora-  
14 Mejia. I'm an education lawyer. I'm an  
15 education lawyer and to me this conversation what  
16 is very impactful for me is that you have  
17 educated parents who are running into these  
18 issues. Think about our demographics here in  
19 California.

20 I mean, we represent school districts  
21 across the state. What impacts me, like my  
22 parents, think about parents who don't speak the

1 language. Think about parents who don't have a  
2 system. They don't even understand the process  
3 to be able to not just figure out how we are  
4 going to pay for it. I mean, back it up and  
5 figure out -- they don't know the process.

6 For me the research that you've done  
7 what is really important is parent engagement and  
8 not at the high school level. You have to start  
9 back in elementary and focus really at the middle  
10 school level. But they need to know the process.  
11 If you have a complaint, if you have concerns  
12 what do you do with school administration.

13 Then they need to understand the  
14 college pathway, what you have to do, what your  
15 options are, what financial aid is. If you would  
16 have given this information to my parents, they  
17 would have been like, "Forget it. Don't even  
18 bother." In fact, I had to do it on my own.  
19 Thank goodness I had a counselor and mentors but  
20 my parents couldn't help me through that process  
21 so I feel for these kids.

22 CHAIR GANDARA: Most of the parents

1 can't.

2 James.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: James Rodriguez, Cal.  
4 State, Fullerton. This is a really interesting  
5 conversation like everyone else has chimed in. I  
6 think there are some tensions that are being  
7 revealed here but I really do think it comes back  
8 to affordability driving decision making. I  
9 think that is really the critical element.

10 One of the tensions that I think  
11 about, and having listened to the conversation  
12 there are many of them in your comments, is the  
13 ability for improvement. We think about the  
14 sacrifices that families make to send their  
15 children to college to provide them that  
16 opportunity. Right?

17 You get them to the point where they  
18 can go to college. But I also think it's about  
19 the sacrifices that have to be made in terms of  
20 the strategies for the affordability issues.  
21 What is the nature of the experience for a Latino  
22 and Latina going through high school and then

1 when they eventually get to a college or  
2 university, whether they start out in a community  
3 college or they go to a four-year college or  
4 university, what are they sacrificing in terms of  
5 the experiences they are going to have because  
6 it's being driven by an affordability issue.  
7 I think it's just a real interesting tension that  
8 comes to my mind.

9 I just wanted to put that out there  
10 because I think there are tensions in education  
11 where what the purpose and function of education  
12 is, but I think that ultimately one of the things  
13 that is of high value is that how you identify  
14 yourself while you're in high school, how you  
15 identify yourself while you're a college student,  
16 and how that impacts the nature and the  
17 experiences you're having.

18 I certainly see that because at Cal.  
19 State over 40 percent of our population is  
20 Latino. We have a high percentage of first  
21 generation college students.

22 CHAIR GANDARA: Okay. Thank you,

1 James. I know we're being pressured to tie up  
2 but there was a question in the back.

3 MS. TORRES: Leticia Torres. It  
4 boggles my mind what you mentioned earlier. How  
5 are these teachers and why are these teachers in  
6 a position where they are teaching without  
7 credentials. It's obviously affecting the  
8 learning process.

9 I also wanted to bring up that in our  
10 school district in our high school there is a lot  
11 of problems where we have these students that are  
12 being held back because of common core. We have  
13 students that want and are able to do higher  
14 classes but they can't because they are freshmen  
15 and they have to stay down because of common  
16 core.

17 CHAIR GANDARA: That's interesting.  
18 That is a bad implementation of common core.  
19 That should not have to be.

20 MS. TORRES: We have to get around  
21 that.

22 CHAIR GANDARA: I'm taking down notes.

1 MS. MELVIN: You may want to talk to  
2 our attorney friends in civil rights. That just  
3 sounds like an odd one. They should go hand in  
4 hand. They shouldn't be opposing.

5 MS. MELVIN: It sounds like an excuse  
6 rather than a reason. That's probably school  
7 practice more than anything. I don't know if it  
8 has to do with common core and AP. Generally  
9 speaking schools tend to have their paths pre-  
10 established and it's by grade level if when it's  
11 on your honors and AP course levels.

12 If your child you feel is advanced and  
13 can be in those AP courses starting in that 9th  
14 grade because many times in 9th grade they don't  
15 put them into AP courses because they don't want  
16 to see kids fail. That's common practice.

17 If she wants to do it, it takes a  
18 momma like you to go in there and be very vocal  
19 and say, "My daughter can handle it and I want to  
20 put her into these courses." Or my son. So that  
21 is where that parental advocacy is extremely  
22 important. Then you bring in her transcripts and

1 her grades and all that good stuff to help out on  
2 that.

3 CHAIR GANDARA: I am sorry to have to  
4 call this to a close. We are being super  
5 pressured. This always annoys me, actually,  
6 because there should be more time for this kind  
7 of interaction. I think it's been very rich.  
8 Believe it or not, I have a lot of really great  
9 ideas and notes on here. Thank you so much for  
10 joining us.

11 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter  
12 went off the record at 11:10 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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Session

Before: United States Department of Education

Date: 04-28-16

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