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.

CHAIR GANDARA: Can we just introduce ourselves to the group starting with Alicia?

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

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

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

MR. ANTILES: Good morning. Alfredo Artiles. I'm a professor at Arizona State University, and my research is on the dissection
of language, race, and disability. I'm also Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Teachers College at ASU.

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

You are executive director of?

MS. MELVIN: LA's Promise.

CHAIR GANDARA: LA's Promise.

Nonprofit that operates schools in south LA.

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

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

PARTICIPANT: Folks, you're going to have to spell your names when you introduce yourselves.
PARTICIPANT: Do you want us to pass around a piece of paper for that?

PARTICIPANT: That will help. Okay.

Sorry to interrupt you but there's a lot of people here.

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

(Off-the-record introductions.)

PARTICIPANT: Can I stop you for one minute?

PARTICIPANT: Yes, sir.

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

(Off-the-record introductions.)

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

We have two guiding questions this morning. I guess we start with the commissioners thinking about this. I think we've always had the tradition of asking for comments from the
group that is here as well, particularly given
that we have such a powerful group.

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

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

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

MS. MELVIN: I think, you know, in
light of the fact that this might be our last
year together and our ability to have a big hurrah because we've been doing this, some of us, for six or seven years, right?

    CHAIR GANDARA: Or maybe all our lives.

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

    I also saw, and I don't know if any of you guys caught, My Brother's Keeper commercial with President Obama and Steph Curry. Did you guys see that? So there was a commercial where President Obama was a mentor to Steph Curry inside the White House and he was encouraging him -- encouraging people to be mentors and take on a
deserving youth to get them to the next step in life.

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

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

MS. MELVIN: Yes. I think it's something positive. Positive messages either around graduation, around college going, around mentorship possibly because I still think that population that isn't getting to that finish line
is a population that needs that persistence the
most when you talk about upward trends. I'm not
sure exactly what it is but I can imagine you can
narrow down on what it might be.

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

MS. MELVIN: It was a decade.

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

Alfredo.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAIR GANDARA: Any other comments?

MR. ANTILES: Just thinking aloud.

CHAIR GANDARA: What's that?

MR. ANTILES: I'm just thinking aloud.

CHAIR GANDARA: Well, we all are.

Sometimes the best ideas come that way.

Any others? Alicia.

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

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

Then the grades they get on the AP exam are extremely low. There is an opportunity perhaps to have partnerships with industry,
private sector places that have engineers, professionals on board that can help these students through some of these courses whether it's mentorship programs or something like that.

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

The other one was --

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

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

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

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

MS. MELVIN: Kent knows that.

MS. ABELLA: Okay. We'll get to that.

Then there was the comment that Ricardo Romo made
about affordability at schools. Right? I didn't get a chance to tell the story there but I'll tell a story, a recent story, I think I told you last night, that I had a conversation with a young woman, a Latina, who wants to do computer science. I'm like, "Yes!" My major is computer science.

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

If there is anything I will do after I'm done with this commission is to continue to help propagate what is necessary for those students to get the information, the scholarships, the fellowships, engage the parents
in understanding this process because, in fact,
I'm going through this process currently with my
son who is a junior in high school.

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

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

    Herein lies another issue. Here they
are a junior in high school doesn't understand
the qualifications, the expectations of some of
these schools. She followed it up by saying,
"Would it help that I'm a Latina and I want to go
into STEM? Won't that help me?"

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

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

MS. ABELLA: She's applied to like
several of the Hispanic scholarships and she
hasn't heard back yet from them which is
surprising to me because I'm like you have to
already notify the universities in May of this so
she already has to know. I don't know why that is. I asked her, "You filled out your FAFSA, right?" She said, "Yes."

CHAIR GANDARA: So she's got a Pell grant.

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

CHAIR GANDARA: Not providing enough.

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

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

A hundred percent in terms of our kids are making decisions not on what they -- so we
work so hard to get them in, which we did on these smaller numbers, right? But then they are not making the best decision for them except for when you consider that affordability issue.

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

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

MS. MELVIN: Right.

CHAIR GANDARA: Okay. It's not the total impossibility of doing it. It's the fact,
"I don't want to go into huge debt."

MS. MELVIN: They fear debt.

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

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

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

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

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

The number of universities -- excuse me. Only 2,300 graduates from the local universities certification so we are hiring non-certified teachers, alternative certified teachers, teachers from other communities and getting them alternatively certified.
That is a pipeline problem. That is not sustainable. Teacher quality certainly is one of the issues. Then with regard to -- there has to be a community effort to address these issues.

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

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

From my perspective what we ought to do is take a look at those communities that are handling these large-scale complex social problems better than others and replicating the
-- I use your term, Alfredo, from several days ago about not replicating practice but replicating process. You know, what are the design elements that work. From my perspective it has to be a community-wide collective effort.

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

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

My personal philosophy is to accelerate learning and to push students into honors, in AP and IB who otherwise perhaps wouldn't be. I know there is push and pull there with some teacher groups in terms of only send students who are prepared.
I disagree with that. I think that we ought to accelerate and expand opportunities, expand expectations and deal with students kind of where they are, but certainly it's a pipeline issue. We've got to build a strong foundation if we are going to build a structure on top of it.

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

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

But that's okay because over time it will creep back up. It will build back up and you are exposing students to the process, to
college. They are getting into the clearing houses. They are receiving post cards at home and emails and you are beginning that connection.

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

MR. SCRIBNER: Yeah, exactly.

Different peer group. It's a kind of socialization conversation as well.

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

We're talking about teachers not being certified and have the districts where the shortages of certified teachers in math and science having them going to the districts. We were in San Bernardino and we heard from many of the school districts here in California that
don't have enough students to justify having AP.

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

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

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

We have 800 programs in Fort Worth, Texas. We need 18. The way I get from 800 to 18 as a superintendent and stay alive is by mobilizing the community and having them all
agree on a fewer set of objectives. The high
quality organizations, high performing companies,
and public sector organizations that are
successful as compared to their peers typically
are doing fewer things well.

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

CHAIR GANDARA: We hope you survive
this.

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

CHAIR GANDARA: That's great.

Yes.

MS. ALHAN: Maria Pastrada Alhan and
I have a comment. I am going through the process
with my own daughter so hearing you talk about
funding just really struck a chord. My daughter
is a 4.1 student and got accepted to half of the
universities that we wanted to go to and decided
on William and Mary. For us it's like how are we
going to pay for this.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. ABELLA: There are strategies. I think my point also and what that story made me realize is that we have to start with that
strategy in freshman year so they have that
strategy in place before but now it's almost too
late for this one. I mean, there are still
little strategies that she can do but the AP
courses are gone.

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

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

MS. MELVIN: I will just add one quick
element of that on the dual enrollment. So we
have started a coalition of about 10 high schools
in South Los Angeles that are working with our
local community college to do pathway programs
that are either four to six courses at the junior
college that students start taking their junior
year.

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

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

CHAIR GANDARA: In California the
ratio is one counselor to every 900 students.

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

CHAIR GANDARA: Yes.

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

I mean, we represent school districts across the state. What impacts me, like my parents, think about parents who don't speak the
language. Think about parents who don't have a system. They don't even understand the process to be able to not just figure out how we are going to pay for it. I mean, back it up and figure out -- they don't know the process.

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

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

CHAIR GANDARA: Most of the parents
can't.

James.

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

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

You get them to the point where they can go to college. But I also think it's about the sacrifices that have to be made in terms of the strategies for the affordability issues. What is the nature of the experience for a Latino and Latina going through high school and then
when they eventually get to a college or university, whether they start out in a community college or they go to a four-year college or university, what are they sacrificing in terms of the experiences they are going to have because it's being driven by an affordability issue.

I think it's just a real interesting tension that comes to my mind.

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

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

CHAIR GANDARA: Okay. Thank you,
James. I know we're being pressured to tie up but there was a question in the back.

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

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

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

MS. TORRES: We have to get around that.

CHAIR GANDARA: I'm taking down notes.
MS. MELVIN: You may want to talk to our attorney friends in civil rights. That just sounds like an odd one. They should go hand in hand. They shouldn't be opposing.

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

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

If she wants to do it, it takes a momma like you to go in there and be very vocal and say, "My daughter can handle it and I want to put her into these courses." Or my son. So that is where that parental advocacy is extremely important. Then you bring in her transcripts and
her grades and all that good stuff to help out on
that.

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

(Whereupon, the above-entitled matter
went off the record at 11:10 a.m.)
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In the matter of: K-12 Education Subcommittee Breakout Session

Before: United States Department of Education

Date: 04-28-16

Place: Fullerton, California

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

__________________________
Neal R. Gross
Court Reporter