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Member Spotlight: Nancy Gonzales, Ph.D.

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Faculty Page

What interested you in becoming a developmental scientist?

I have always been fascinated by factors that support human growth and resilience, particularly in vulnerable populations, and the implications of research in developmental science for social policy and practice. I am ultimately most excited by the potential for developmental science to improve individual lives, families, and communities.

Do you have a mentor or mentors who have been instrumental to your career and, if so, whom and how?

My graduate school mentor, Ana Mari Cauce, was instrumental in my career and I've come to understand this more and more as the years have passed since I finished my doctoral degree. A Latina and current President of the University of Washington, Ana Mari is a bold leader who has never hesitated to speak her mind. Since her days as an assistant professor, she has always leaned in with insightful opinions and probing questions that challenged her students and colleagues to be better.

What words of wisdom might you pass on to someone on their very first day after deciding to get a Ph.D. in developmental science or related?

A PhD is an important accomplishment that you should celebrate with zeal because it will open many doors. Whatever you might choose to do next, your work is bound to evolve in very interesting ways if you remain open to new opportunities and stay focused on what matters most to you. For this reason, I advise my students not to worry too much about what comes next. Throughout your evolving career, I also suggest you find collaborators from different disciplines and backgrounds who will stretch your thinking and ultimately make your work more impactful and rewarding.

Who inspires you?

I am inspired daily by creative individuals who are willing to ask new questions and pursue new ideas, especially students and young scientists. While I admire the foundational scholars and theories on which our disciplines have been built, I am especially inspired when I see students apply existing knowledge to new populations and questions in contemporary society.

What is a typical day like for you?

There is nothing typical about my day now that I am serving as University Provost at one of the largest public universities in U.S. that prides itself on innovation. Each day carries new challenges and out of the box ideas. The only constant is my focus on student access, student success, and academic excellence. My daily meeting schedule might include administrators, academic leaders and faculty, industry partners, federal agencies, government or university collaborators across the country and across the globe, and often all of the above in a single day. In more ways than I ever imagined, my typical workday offers many opportunities to pursue my career-long interest in promoting equity.

The 2021 Hispanic Heritage Month theme from the National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers is "Esperanza: A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope.' What brings you hope?

I draw hope from the renewed commitment we have witnessed in the past year on matters of inclusion, equity, and antiracism. I believe true shifts are occurring, but we need to keep pushing to make sure they are sustained. I also draw hope from our Latinx youths who are leveraging their cultural pride and their voices to lift their communities.

Visit the

Latinx Caucus website

to learn about benefits, networking opportunities, and more!