

Dr. David Lopez's Speech
The National Hispanic University 30th Anniversary

Bienvenidos a todos. Welcome, everyone to The National Hispanic University's 30th anniversary celebration. I'm glad to see so many of you here today—our students, alumni, faculty, and our many distinguished guests from the San José community and beyond. I also want to welcome students and faculty from several of our institutions in *The Laureate International Universities* network, who are watching this event live via webcast.

I am excited to showcase our university to all of you, and to share with you this special community here in the heart of San José. I, for one, am proud of all that we have accomplished together, and I am filled with hope for all that is yet to come.

Many of you already know, The National Hispanic University was founded in 1981 by the late Dr. Roberto Cruz, a man who dedicated his life to creating equal higher education opportunities for Hispanics and others. When I first met Dr. Cruz many years ago, I asked him if he had plans to expand the school. He said to me, 'Dr. López, the university is not in brick and mortar. The university is here [points to head] and here [points to heart], and we've got to provide an education especially for Latino students. That's what we're doing here.'

When Dr. Cruz passed away in 2002, I felt it was my personal and professional obligation to keep his dream alive. And now I stand before you proud in the knowledge that we have stayed true to his vision. Dr. Cruz led with his head and his heart, and today all of us at The National Hispanic University strive to do the same. Together, we have built a truly special place: a university dedicated to supporting the continued success of our community. And now that we have the brick and mortar and great programs, it is time to offer students across the nation the chance to join our *familia*. Our virtual familia.

I'm delighted to announce today, that in addition to continuing our campus-based programs, The National Hispanic University will begin offering our programs entirely online. Our new fully online Master of Arts in Education with a specialization in Teaching and Learning will begin April 30, and on June 25, students can begin the new online Bachelor of Arts in Child Development, which includes a choice of concentrations in Early Biliteracy Development or Early Intervention.

It's important to begin our online portfolio with these two programs as they address a great need in our community. In the past decade, Hispanics have become the largest and fastest growing group in the United States, and over the next 30 years, the Hispanic population is projected to grow exponentially. As the Hispanic community grows, so does the need for educators who can support the success of students from a range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

At the National Hispanic University, we have a vision that every student will reach their full potential and graduate from college. These online education programs will help our students take this vision into their own classrooms, their schools, and their communities. By expanding our programs to an online format, we, for the first time, can offer these opportunities to students outside of San José and the bay area. We will continue to harness our passion and lay a foundation that keeps our community strong for generations to come.

But we are not the only ones working toward these goals. Our community is very fortunate to have leaders committed and dedicated to the success and prosperity of Hispanics. Today, I am proud to welcome one such leader, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa. Considered one of the top Latino political voices in the U.S. Mayor Villaraigosa has been a passionate champion of Hispanic issues since the early days of his career. One of his primary focuses has been improving quality of life and opportunities for Hispanics through education.

As a member of the California State Assembly in the 1990s, Mayor Villaraigosa was at the forefront of a 9.1 billion-dollar initiative to revitalize California schools. Once in office, he began his relentless fight to

turn around the Los Angeles public school system, driven by the belief that every child—regardless of their income level or ethnicity—deserves a quality education. Mayor Villaraigosa also founded and currently oversees the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, a major collaboration between the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Unified School District to rehabilitate the city’s challenged schools. This project is one of the largest school turnaround initiatives in the country, serving nearly 17,000 students in some of L.A.’s most impoverished communities.

Last year, in recognition of his exemplary service to the Latino community, Mayor Villaraigosa was given the distinguished Edward R. Roybal Award for Outstanding Public Service by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. Mayor Villaraigosa is a reform-minded leader and a champion for quality education. We are honored to have him participate in our 30th anniversary celebration event and to recognize his tireless efforts to improve access to quality education for the Hispanic community.

At this time, I ask Mayor Villaraigosa to join me at the podium.

[Mayor Villaraigosa joins Dr. López at the podium.]

Mayor Villaraigosa, in honor of your unrelenting efforts to make world-class education a reality for Hispanics and others, and your belief in educating a new generation of students to guide our nation to a bright and hopeful future, The National Hispanic University proudly confers upon you the degree Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa.