

Summary

Melissa A. Martinez is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education at Texas State University. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Administration from The University of Texas at Austin in 2010 and her B.A. (1998) and M.Ed. (2002) at The University of Texas at Brownsville. Her research focuses on equity and access issues along the P-20 education pipeline, particularly in relation to college access, college readiness, and developing college cultures for underserved communities, equity-oriented school leaders/leadership, and the experiences of faculty of color. Dr. Martinez has 19 peer-reviewed journal articles, six book chapters, and has presented 24 papers at national conferences. In August of 2013, Dr. Martinez was awarded a three-year \$90,000 grant as a part of the Greater Texas Foundation's Faculty Fellows Program to support her work related to student postsecondary readiness. Dr. Martinez was also awarded the 2016 American Educational Research Association Division A Early Career Award.

2016 Presidential Excellence Award in Scholarly/Creative Activities Narrative

Melissa A. Martinez

My research interests reflect my P-20 philosophy of education, positionality as a critical scholar, and interdisciplinary approach to studying and addressing issues in the field of educational leadership. In joining your program, I hope to continue to pursue my specific scholarly interests, which focus on the development of school-university partnerships, issues related to educational equity in P-20 settings, and the education of diverse student populations, specifically Black and Latina/o students.

The previous excerpt is from my original letter of intent when I applied to my current tenure track Assistant Professor position in the Education and Community Leadership program at Texas State University. Now in my fifth year as faculty, I can attest that this philosophy, as a P-20 critical and interdisciplinary scholar in education, continues to serve as the foundation for my scholarly and creative activities. While more refined today, my research agenda, which focuses on issues of equity and access along the P-20 educational pipeline, particularly with regards to college access and readiness for students of color, the preparation of equity-oriented leaders and social justice leadership, and the experiences of faculty of color in academia, is deeply meaningful to me, both personally and professionally, and reflects my goal to engage in scholarship that speaks to the needs of marginalized communities in order to inform local, state, and national contexts and scholarly discourses.

I feel very fortunate to be able to pursue research interests that I am passionate about and that I know are critical to the field of education. It is this drive that has in part enabled me, as an early career scholar, to be so productive in my research. So much so, that some of my mentors and colleagues have described my scholarly output as “remarkable” and “impressive” given my

18 peer-reviewed journal articles, six book chapters, and 24 paper presentations at national conferences, all since I joined the faculty in fall 2011. Such compliments are humbling, but I know my high productivity also reflects my strong work ethic, my initiative to pursue independent and collaborative projects, and the continued support I have received along the way from mentors that have seen my potential. I believe it was this potential that the Greater Texas Foundation (GTF) saw in me as well when they awarded me a three-year faculty fellowship to support my research in August of 2013. The \$90,000 grant supports my multi-site case study examining the college going culture and college readiness efforts at three Texas high schools that serve racially and economically diverse students. This project has yielded an extensive amount of data, which I am already beginning to analyze and disseminate through conference presentations and publications. I have also invited several doctoral students to assist with this project, providing them with firsthand research and publication opportunities.

More recently my Department Chair, Dr. Michael O'Malley, also saw fit to nominate me for a national early career award given my success and sustained commitment to research. Being nominated was an honor, but I was even more humbled when I received a congratulatory phone call indicating I had been conferred the award. Thus, I will be receiving the 2016 American Educational Research Association (AERA) Division A: Administration, Organization, and Leadership Early Career award (see Exhibit 5) on April 10th at AERA's national conference in Washington D.C. Now as a 2016 Presidential Award Excellence in Scholarly/Creative Activities nominee, I would be equally honored if my own institution recognized me for my scholarly pursuits. I provide greater insight as to why I am deserving of such an accolade in this narrative.

Since joining the faculty at Texas State in fall of 2011, I have purposefully crafted a research agenda that enables me to make a sustained and significant impact both within and

outside the field of educational leadership by disseminating research and engaging in scholarly activities that reach multiple audiences given the interdisciplinary nature of my work (see Exhibit 1). I have also pursued opportunities to consistently grow as a scholar through international endeavors and sought internal and external funding opportunities to support my research. Finally, I have worked to build a strong reputation as an independent critical scholar that provides mentorship to junior faculty and doctoral students, as well as a reputable researcher that is sought for collaborative projects.

In terms of my sustained output and significant impact, I have consistently been publishing in esteemed peer-reviewed journals, contributed chapters to edited books, presented my scholarship at national conferences, and shared selected research findings through invited lectures. Some of the journals in which I have published include top outlets in my field like the *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *Journal of School Leadership* (see Exhibit 4), and the *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, as well as more interdisciplinary and far reaching venues like *Race Ethnicity and Education* (see Exhibit 2), *Reflective Practice* (see Exhibit 3), *The High School Journal*, *Urban Review*, and the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. I have also disseminated my work and shared my insights in navigating the tenure track as a female faculty of color through invited sessions at the preeminent conferences in educational leadership, as well as other conferences for professional organizations in the broader field of education including: the University Council for Educational Administration, American Educational Research Association (AERA), Association for the Study of Higher Education, American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education, and American Educational Studies Association. I have also distributed aspects of my research in other venues including Texas State's first Hispanic-Serving Institution research symposium in spring 2013. Later in

2014, I also delivered an invited lecture on “Developing college-going cultures in Black and Latino schools” at Howard University as a part of Hispanic Heritage Month (see Exhibit 1). While the impact of my work will be recognized through my Division A Early Career Award, as previously mentioned, my efforts have also been acknowledged at Texas State. I was a College Achievement Awardee for the Presidential Excellence Award in scholarly and creative activities in 2014 (see Exhibit 1) and nominated for the same award in 2012.

Additionally, I have sought opportunities to continue refining my skills as a researcher, seeking to expand my knowledge and research internationally, while also submitting proposals for numerous fellowships and grants. At the institutional level, I have taken advantage of the Scholar/Mentor Program at Texas State (2011-2012; 2015-2016) as an opportunity to learn from and work with tenured, senior scholars. I have also applied for the Research Enhancement Program grant every year since 2011, although I have not been successful with this funding source. In 2012-2013, I was able to secure a College of Education Faculty pilot grant to support a college access program called “University Starts at Home” to the residents of the CM Allen Housing Authority in San Marcos. The program consisted of a series of workshops focused on providing college-related information to families with middle and high school students who are from historically underrepresented populations in higher education (see Exhibit 1).

Other national and international efforts to seek mentorship and funding for new projects include: participating in AERA’s Committee on Scholars of Color in Education Research-Mentoring Program in 2012, applying for the 2016-2017 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program to examine equity issues in upper secondary education in Mexico (not awarded), applying for a National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship to examine issues of well-being and college readiness for underrepresented students (not awarded), and applying

for a Global Studies Foundation Grant for Faculty Travel and Professional Development (under review) to engage in research in Mexico City that would inform my teaching, and provide an opportunity to network with University scholars with the intent of establishing an exchange program for faculty and graduate educational leadership students at Texas State.

Perhaps most important, is the fact that I have established myself as a strong, reputable critical scholar in education that seeks to mentor junior faculty and doctoral students, and work collaboratively with other scholars within and outside Texas State and internationally on educational equity and access issues. When I first joined the faculty, I made it a point to reach out to Dr. Michelle Hamilton, faculty member in the Health and Human Performance Department and the Director of Texas State's Center for P-16 Initiatives, to discuss opportunities to collaborate on research that could impact the Center. I have since worked with Dr. Hamilton and her staff to collaborate on a couple of publications; some that include other Texas State graduate students and other junior faculty in my department. I have also taken the lead on a number of collaborative projects with scholars from across the country, as in the case of my study examining how assistant professors of color navigate the road to tenure (see Exhibit 2). Other notable scholars have also invited me to collaborate on a number of research projects and publications given our similar research interests. Most recently, I was invited to co-edit a book focused on Latino Educational Leadership across the P-20 pipeline, which will be published through Information Age Publishing, with Dr. Cristobal Rodriguez at Howard University and Dr. Fernando Valle at Texas Tech University. In closing, I am humbled in being nominated for this award, but know that whatever the outcome, I will remain dedicated to producing critical activist scholarship and continue mentoring current and future scholars so that they can assist in the fight for equity and access along the P-20 educational pipeline.