



RGV FOCUS BACKBONE



Luzelma G. Canales, Ph.D.
Executive Director, RGV FOCUS

In her role as the executive director of the RGV FOCUS, a collaboration with Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), Canales provides leadership for a large-scale collective impact initiative. The RGV FOCUS collective impact initiative was launched to transform college readiness, access and success across a four-county region in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Prior to her work with RGV FOCUS, Canales served as a community college and university administrator for over 25 years. She led numerous institutional community college national reform initiatives, including *Achieving the Dream* and *Breaking Through*, and several with *Excelencia in Education*. Canales serves on local, state and national boards related to closing equity gaps in voter turnout and educational attainment. She was born and raised along the Texas-Mexico border in deep

South Texas. She and her family migrated to Washington and Oregon to work in the fields during the 1960s and 1970s. Her life experiences include participating in the integration of schools and witnessing the efforts of the United Farm Workers to bring to light concerns over working conditions of migrant farm workers. These and other experiences formed her commitment to work with organizations to identify and eliminate barriers faced by Latino students as they navigate the high school and college experience. Canales earned a bachelor's degree in accounting from Pan American University, master's in business administration from the University of Texas – Pan American, and doctorate of philosophy in human resource development from Texas A&M University.



Eugenio Longoria Sáenz
Deputy Director, RGV FOCUS

In his role as Deputy Director for RGV FOCUS, a collaboration with Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), Sáenz participates in building capacity for improved thought leadership, strategic design and alignment of organizational goals to achieve the RGV FOCUS goals.

Prior to working with RGV FOCUS, Sáenz served as Executive Director of the Eastern North Philadelphia Youth Services Coalition (ENPYSC) for 5 years, served as Director of Leader Development, Knowledge and Capacity at IDEA Public Schools for one year, and is Principal and

Founder of BILLY Labs, a design-informed, social architecture consultancy.

Sáenz holds a bachelor's degree in business administration in economics and international business from Baylor University and an independent studies master's of arts degree in education and human development from George Washington University. He is currently a doctoral candidate (ABD) at PENN State University in learning and performance systems with a research focus on role theory and social positions. Additionally, he has been the recipient of two international research fellowships – one to the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland, and the other to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Cape Town, South Africa.



Melba De Leon Garcia
Program Analyst, RGV FOCUS

In her role as the Program Analyst for RGV FOCUS Backbone, a collaboration with Educate Texas, a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT), Garcia organizes and facilitates working group meetings with RGV FOCUS partners from Starr, Hidalgo, Cameron and Willacy counties. Partners are community stakeholders, including business professionals, nonprofit organizations, public school district superintendents, and presidents and chief executive officers from the four public institutions of higher learning in the Rio Grande Valley.

Before working with RGV FOCUS, Garcia served many facets of administrative support within the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District and was an active realtor with years of banking and customer service experience.

Garcia earned her bachelor of science degree in rehabilitation counseling in 2016 from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas, and is a registered Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor Intern with the Texas Department of State Health Services. In addition, Garcia is also pursuing her teacher certification in special education. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, music and relaxing on the beach with her husband and two children.