



Women's Legacy Award

HONORING AGGIE WOMEN



Rita Hernandez '86

Rita Barrera Hernandez Ed. D '86, is a first-generation college graduate. After earning her education degree from Texas A&M University, she returned to Brownsville, Texas where she taught middle school. Her commitment to the craft and dedication to her students earned her Teacher of the Year recognition. Hernandez has a long history of service in the education field. A popular teacher, high-performing principal and successful assistant superintendent, she retired from public school education after 30 years.

She currently serves as president of a nonprofit career school committed to increasing the earning capacity of families via affordable career training. As president of Cameron County Education Initiative (CCEI) she has successfully written grants aimed at providing zero-cost career training for struggling families, women with felony convictions, and young single mothers. In her role, the team at CCEI ensures wrap around support services are available to complete training and earn living wages.

For over 20 years she has teamed up with an "army" of local Aggies who collaborate with university leaders to create a pipeline of students to Texas A&M University from Brownsville. Together, they have sponsored countless senior trips for high school students (groups as large as 300), which include university tours and athletic events. While here, she maintains contact with students often treating them to holiday dinners, movies and even locating work and internships. "Dr. Rita", as she is known to her Brownsville Aggies, is among the first people her students call when they're stressed, home-sick or need somebody to celebrate with.

Every time she returns to Aggieland, Brownsville Aggies reach out and plan a gathering, reconnecting with one another with Hernandez at the helm. She never comes empty-handed, bringing local treats to give students a taste of home. Her dedication to her students shape their academic journey and ensure that they do the same for the next group of Brownsville Aggies.

These efforts have been successful in increasing the number of students from Brownsville who chose A&M and have caught the attention of local leaders and helped her earn the Outstanding Alumni for the College of Education and Human Development in 2016.

She is married to Luis R. Hernandez, and they have three children. Luis Ricardo Hernandez II, Dominic Hernandez '14, Bianca Hernandez '18 (*she has countless "unofficial" Aggie children as well*).