We recognize and honor the contributions of Latino Business leaders to the world of technology and to our C2K mission.

Join us in celebration and in strengthening digital equity nationwide!
Join the Community Health Group family today and experience the difference that decades of expertise and genuine care can make in your healthcare journey. Take control of your well-being with a health plan that truly understands and values you. Give us a call at 1-888-244-9505 to learn more about our Medi-Cal health plan and how we can support your health goals. Together, let’s build a healthier San Diego community! The Community is What Counts.

Congratulations Norma Diaz!

www.sdbj.com OCTOBER 2, 2023

Your Local Medi-Cal Health Plan
A BRIDGE TO BETTER HEALTH
JOIN CHG!
888-244-9505
Natalise Bowman is the SVP, Head of Human Resources at Arcturus Therapeutics. Arcturus Therapeutics is a global late-stage clinical messenger RNA medicines and vaccines company focused on the discovery, development and commercialization of therapeutics for rare diseases and vaccines. Bowman and her team have launched culture, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. Prior to Arcturus, she held positions at Pfizer, ACADIA Pharmaceuticals and Alitha Technologies. She is active in the community, serving on a variety of non-profit boards. She is currently Board President at the Grossmont Symphony & Master Chorale Friends of Music. She is Chair of the San Diego Girl Scouts Board of Directors. She has been a volunteer with Girl Scouts since 2002, holding positions of ‘troop leader’, service unit manager and a service unit team member. She can be reached at natalia@acturustx.com or 619-218-8333.

Carolina Bravo-Karimi is Managing Partner of Wilson Turner Kosmo. In her role as one of Southern California’s largest women-owned law firms, she has served as an employment litigator, workplace investigator and advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion in the law; business and society. She is sought out for investigations requiring Spanish fluency and intercultural competence. She leads a team of 10 associates in conducting investigations for SDG&E. Last year, her WTK team conducted 30 investigations. For years, the University of California Board of Regents relied on her to represent the interests of the UC system in high-profile, high-stakes employment litigation matters. She is vice chair of the Fleet Science Center’s Board of Trustees and the immediate past president of the University of San Diego School of Law’s Alumni Board. She can be reached at 619-236-9600 or cbravo-karimi@wilsonturnerkosmo.com.

Adriana Brunner is the Director of Business Development for MyPoint Credit Union. Ariana “Adri” Brunner is the Director of Business Development for MyPoint Credit Union. She has more than 26 years of experience in banking, business development, marketing, PR and partnership development. During her career, she has offered more than 600 financial literacy workshops in English and Spanish and has worked closely with the small business community through education, activism and leadership. One of her biggest passions has been positively influencing Latina middle and high school students, professionals and business owners through her role at MANA of North County. She’s received several awards, including the National City Chamber of Commerce’s multiple awards. As a finalist for the EDC’s MetroConnect prize, she showcases industry influence and innovation. In November 2022, NOVO Brazil Brewing Company opened a new location in Imperial Beach, further enriching the local economy. Additional expansion plans include Mission Valley, San Diego, and San Antonio, Texas, in 2023.

T. J. Carneiro is the CEO and Owner of NOVO Brazil Brewing Company and NOVA Kombucha. He is a visionary leader who is shaping the beverage industry. In 2022, NOVA Kombucha became California’s No. 3 brand, while NOVO Brazil Brewing expanded to 12 international markets. His commitment to job creation led to over 100 positions in the South Bay region. His community engagement includes partnerships with Snapdragon Stadium and the San Diego Wave FC soccer team. His relentless pursuit of quality is evident in NOVA Kombucha’s multiple awards. As a finalist for the EDC’s MetroConnect prize, he showcases industry influence and innovation. In November 2022, NOVO Brazil Brewing Company opened a new location in Imperial Beach, further enriching the local economy. Additional expansion plans include Mission Valley, San Diego, and San Antonio, Texas, in 2023.

Monique Casellas is a Director of Development with the Rady School of Management at UC San Diego. As a philanthropic advisor, she has been a critical leader in growing the school’s cross-border relationships. Casellas encouraged the first-ever MBA student and faculty immersion from the Rady School to Baja California, where students and faculty visited companies across the border, visited the CBX and learned about its operations, attended a tour at Valle de Guadalupe’s wine country to learn about sustainability and visited Ensenada’s port to learn impressions about logistics and the importance of the Cali-Baja region. Since then, it has been a school priority to continue these critical immersion programs. As an International Advancement expert, she began her career in the development world by creating philanthropic partnerships at MIT. She can be reached at moniquecasellas@ucsd.edu.

Carol Castillon is Regional Center Director for St. Paul’s PACE. She brings more than 22 years of extensive experience and proven success in organizational development and change management to St. Paul’s Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE). Castillon led efforts to expand services to San Diego’s most frail, at-risk seniors by piloting the first mobile clinic which allowed at-risk seniors access to medical care in their home or place of residence. She also drove initiatives in expanding the clinic and its services to North County by opening up St. Paul’s PACE Encinitas. Before joining St. Paul’s PACE, she worked with the County of San Diego where she successfully led countywide initiatives including the Coordinated Care Initiative, Dual Demonstration Project and assisting to develop San Diego’s Whole Person Wellness program. She can be reached at carolcastillon@stpaulspace.org or 619-677-8556.

Congratulations to our Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer Nancy Maldanado for being selected as one of the Top 50 Latino Business Leaders of Influence!

Rady Children's
We are delighted to honor the outstanding accomplishments of our CEO, Cesar Enciso, who has earned the prestigious title of a 2023 Latino Leader of Influence. Cesar stands as a shining example of an individual from a diverse background who has triumphed over challenges to establish a flourishing enterprise at EVOTEK.

Cesar’s enduring mantra of being “comfortable being uncomfortable” is a testament to his resilience and success as a visionary founder, a charismatic leader, a devoted father, and a steadfast friend. Cesar, we wholeheartedly express our gratitude for your invaluable contributions to both our organization and the Hispanic community. Your accomplishments and support continue to open doors within our organization, the broader business community, and the philanthropic causes you champion.
Elizabeth (Lisa) Cuestas is CEO at Casa Familiar, where she has worked for 20 years. The embodiment of an emerging Latina leader, Cuestas is a Fronteriza - raised along the U.S./Mexico border. Her mother is from Ciudad Juarez and her father from Arizona. Her parents and grandparents taught her the importance of community and the notion of owning up by uplifting others. She has committed her life in service to her communities and this trajectory has led to become the CEO for Casa Familiar, a community service and development agency that ensures that residents of San Ysidro and the South Bay have a leading role in the development and sustainability of their community. She also serves as a board member for the think tank San Diego Regional Policy & Innovation Center. She can be reached at ljc@casafamiliar.org or 619-428-1115.

Cynthia Del Río is Minority Business Development Specialist at Balfour Beatty Construction. Del Río is an expert in elevating minority business development, including Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise and minority- and women-owned business and enterprise programs, within the construction industry for more than 14 years. A teammate of Balfour Beatty since 2019, she has been a relentless ally in championing diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives on project sites in San Diego. She founded Balfour Beatty’s Hispanic employee affinity group SOMOS representing Hispanic/Latino teammates where she serves as chair in California and plays an integral role in its mission of unifying cultures, promoting inclusiveness and inspiring change. She is passionate about extending diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the construction industry both in personal and professional environments. She can be reached at adelrio@balfourbeatty.com or 619-380-8437.

Norma Diaz is Chief Executive Officer at Community Health Group. Norma A. Diaz is the Chief Executive Officer of Community Health Group, the oldest nonprofit Medi-Cal health plan in San Diego County. Norma began her career in health care as a teenager through a school-work program at the San Ysidro Health Center. As a child, Norma was a proud Girl Scout; she participated in leadership trainings and programs, which created a lasting discipline in her life at an early age. When she was 16, Diaz was named the first teenage board member of the San Diego YWCA. She remains committed to giving back, serving many local organizations, including MANA de San Diego, where she enjoys the opportunities for professional networking, mentoring young women and encouraging education. She can be reached at ndiaz@chgsd.com or 619-806-7930.

Cesar Enciso is founder and CEO of EVOTEK. Enciso is a 25-plus year technology veteran with a long track record of leadership across many different facets of business. Beginning his career as an Account Manager at leading tech firms ADP, Cisco, Veritas and Symantec, he worked tirelessly to support the most complex challenges inside the Fortune 500 customers he served. Following his tenure on the software and hardware manufacturing, he worked as GM for San Diego for system integrator Trace 3, where he tripled the business in 18 months. Following Trace, he pioneered a new business for Technology by opening up businesses in Arizona, Nevada and San Diego, which achieved more than $40 million in revenue within 24 months. In 2014, Cesar founded EVOTEK, which will deliver over $500 million in its eighth year in existence.

Congratulations from Seismic

Seismic is proud to recognize the Top 50 Latino Leaders of Influence.

Headquartered in San Diego, Seismic is the global leader in enablement, helping organizations engage customers, enable teams, and ignite revenue growth. To learn more, please visit seismic.com to see how we empower customer-facing teams with the skills, content, tools, and insights to delight clients and grow their business.

www.seismic.com
CONGRATULATIONS
VICTOR ALFREDO LOPEZ

YOUngest executive director in lincoln club history leads organization in...

Membership growth
Revenue
Creating a pipeline to engage young leaders
Influence in business community

2023 latino leaders of influence honoree

"As the son of immigrant parents from Mexico, representing the Latino community has always been a priority. Born and raised in Chula Vista, it's been an honor to quarterback such a prestigious and influential institution here in San Diego."

- Victor Alfredo Lopez, Executive Director
By Juan Vargas

All women-owned businesses were still hurting after the 2008 financial crisis, with average revenues down 6.3% in 2012. But, the pain was far greater for Hispanic/Latina women-owned businesses, decreasing 14.2%. The pandemic was different. Hispanic/Latina women-owned businesses came out stronger after the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic, with average revenues for these businesses increasing 17.1% between 2019 and 2023 compared to all women-owned businesses’ 12.1% rise. Whether Hispanic/Latina women were starting, stabilizing, or growing businesses, they benefited from government stimulus money, corporate and nonprofit support, and increased focus on closing economic disparities. As we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, it is as important as ever to acknowledge this momentum, while also recognizing the gaps that still remain, and how can we continue helping this important group of entrepreneurs to keep thriving?

Creating an ecosystem of support

Hispanic/Latina women represent 18.5% of all women in the U.S. and 14.3% of all women-owned businesses. However, their businesses tend to be smaller and are less likely to be employer-igne. One reason for this is the smaller size may be the lack of access to capital. Making more credit options available to Hispanic/Latina women-owned businesses could contribute significantly more to the economy. Capital is the fuel to start and grow businesses. Programs that offer targeted grants and low-interest loans in combination with technical assistance, training, and mentorship can close the gap for Hispanic/Latina women-owned businesses, increasing their likelihood that they will become employer firms and that average revenue will increase. Supporting these programs is at the heart of the creation of Wells Fargo’s Open for Business Fund, an industry-leading effort that has donated roughly $420 million to support nonprofits that serve small businesses; the Dodgers Women’s Network; a pilot portal helping connect small business owners to potential financing options and technical assistance through CDFIs; the Capital Pathways Workbook, a free resource that helps entrepreneurs map their capital needs to business goals and objectives; and a $70 million fund in partnership with Hello Alice to improve access to credit and capital for underserved entrepreneurs.

Getting women-and minority-owned certification

Getting certified can help Hispanic/Latina women-owned businesses discover new opportunities, connect with partners, and generate business. Many outreach, local, state, federal government agencies, and corporations have supplier diversity programs. These organizations do make outreach alerting entrepreneurs when requests for proposals (RFPs) are available, and often provide matchmaking services, mentorship, training, and networking opportunities, which help increase the visibility of women- and minority-owned businesses. While there are many benefits to becoming certified, the process can be rigorous. Here are a few tips to help navigate the process.

The power in education and mentorship

Lastly, access to financial education, networks, and mentorship is key. Research indicates that Hispanic/Latina women lack the networks or social capital that can connect them to expertise and resources.

The good news is there are many free resources and tools to help women business owners learn more about how to write a business plan, tips for building your network, how to scale your business competitively, and so much more. The U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce are two other organizations that offer free programs, coaching, networking and more. Additionally, connecting with mentors is a powerful way for women business owners to share best practices and learn from each other, but it’s often hard to know where to find them or initiate those relationships. A new program between Wells Fargo and the Nasdaq Entrepreneurial Center called Connect to More™ is giving women entrepreneurs an opportunity to connect with mentor from their local Milestone Circles program where women get bi-weekly opportunities to work through specific challenges, celebrate milestones, attend workshops, and connect with small business experts and mentors.

The path forward.

As Hispanic/Latina women continue taking the lead in business ownership, we all must continue taking steps to maintain and support their momentum. Whether it is improving access to education, helping them get their businesses certified, or connecting them to financial education and mentorship, Hispanic/Latina women will continue benefiting from ongoing support to keep their doors open.

Juan Vargas is Wells Fargo’s District Manager for the South San Diego County. His district consists of 13 branch locations and over 120 employees in the South San Diego County. Juan enjoys many ways of giving back to his community including volunteering as a baseball coach for Eastlake Little League and serves on the Board for the Community Casa Familiar and San Ysidro Chamber. Juan is also a member of the Wells Fargo Employee Resource Network Hispanic & Latino Connection. Contact him to discuss your small business and banking needs at (619) 477-4764 or vargasju@wellsfargo.com.
Congratulations to:

Adriana Brunner

On being selected as one of SDBJ’s 2023 Latino Leaders of Influence!

Thanks to Adriana and her team, MyPoint has been helping Hispanic small business owners do more with their businesses and the community for over a decade.

mypointcu.com/business
**NANCY MALDONADO**
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
Rady Children’s Hospital

Nancy Maldonado, chief diversity and inclusion officer at Rady Children’s Hospital, has a proven track record as a change agent. Her focus is to design and deliver a mission-centered strategy and programming to increase diversity, ensure equity and promote inclusion across the health system. Prior to her role at Rady Children’s Hospital, Maldonado was president and CEO of the Chicano Federation of San Diego County. Maldonado designs and delivers mission-centered strategy and programming to support diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives across the health system. She is a Dean’s Excellence Scholarship Award Recipient at USD where she reported for both English and Spanish-language newscasts. In 2023, Martinez was selected to serve as the interim associate vice president for diversity, equity and inclusion officer at Rady Children’s Hospital.

**DEANNA MARTIN MACKEY**
General Manager KPBS

Deanna Martin Mackey is the first Latina general manager of KPBS and co-founder of Public Media Women in Leadership. She is credited with creating KPBS’ original digital strategy and department, developing the industry’s first converged newroom, and creating the community engagement program, One Book, One San Diego. Committed to public service, Mackey was a Girl Scout troop leader for 13 years and spent 10 years in board governance for Girl Scouts San Diego. She is vice-chair of the board of directors of Parks California. She is also a board member of the CDP, the Contributor Development Partnership, a public benefit corporation that provides collaborative fundraising solutions to more than 200 PBS and NPR member stations across the country. Mackey earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism and political science from San Diego State University. She may be reached at dmackey@kpbs.org.

**ADRIAN MARTINEZ**
Partner Procopio

Adrian Martinez is a partner at Procopio, Cory, Haasgruse & Schacht and an adjunct professor at California Western School of Law. He excels in representing clients in civil litigation and family law disputes, with an emphasis on cross-border litigation. He represents clients, domestic and foreign, in litigation arising out of business relationships, including partnerships and other fiduciary relationships. He also counsels individuals and companies in disputes involving business torts, contractual disputes, enforcement of foreign money judgments, as well as conducting discovery for cases pending abroad. He is creating a San Diego conference of leading litigators from San Diego and Mexico. Martinez was named to the Best Lawyers in America list in 2023 for Commercial Litigation. Martinez is a legal consultant for the Mexican consulate in both San Diego and Calexico. He may be reached at adrian.martinez@procopio.com or 619-535-3842.

**LISSETTE MARTINEZ**
Senior Director of Media Relations
University of San Diego

Lissette Martinez, senior director of media relations at the University of San Diego (USD), is a time Emmy Award winning, bilingual multimedia journalist and media relations expert specializing in Hispanic outreach. Martinez serves as USD’s spokesperson and has been an integral part of USD’s journey to becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution. She has spearheaded a multitude of award-winning projects that have elevated the university’s brand and profile. Prior to joining the University of San Diego, Martinez worked as an anchor, reporter, producer, writer, photographer and editor in top 20 news markets. She also helped start San Diego’s first NBC Telemundo diapoly, where she reported for both English and Spanish-language newscasts. In 2023, Martinez was selected to serve as the interim associate vice president for university marketing and communications. Martinez earned a bachelor’s degree in communications from USD.

**RICK MARTINEZ**
Commercial Banking Market Leader, San Diego
PNC Bank

Rick Martinez is Market Leader for PNC Bank’s Commercial Banking team in San Diego. Martinez has spent the last 20 years serving the financial needs of small to mid-size businesses across the region, helping business owners secure the financial capital needed to meet business objectives. Martinez has supported the growth efforts in San Diego for numerous financial institutions including Bank of Southern California, Torrey Pines Bank, BBVA USA and PNC Bank. Martinez has also served his community in numerous ways – as a volunteer coach with Los Costas Youth Organization Baseball, Encinitas National Little League, San Marcos Youth Baseball and La Costa Canyon Pop Warner. In addition, he has dedicated over 1,500 hours to local nonprofit organizations including board service, financial stewardship, and fundraising and strategic planning. He can be reached at rick.martinez@pnc.com or 858-202-5532.

**BECKY MENDOZA**
San Diego Market Manager
CalPrivate Bank

Becky Mendoza, San Diego market manager for CalPrivate Bank, effectively manages a large portfolio of clients in the legal and property management sectors. Mendoza has been a banking professional in San Diego for 25 years and is an expert in mid-size to large-size firms providing service to the local legal community. She is considered by her peers as one of the best bankers in these fields. She is altruistic, and volunteers with both time and expertise. She is a board member of Manta de San Diego and a member of the Philanthropy Leadership Council associated with CalPrivate Bank. Mendoza promotes leadership, mentorship and giving back to the community. She is recognized as a leader at the international/cross-border banking community. She may be reached at bmmendoza@calprivatebank.com or 619-719-4062.

---

**NOVA KOMBUCHA**
**MADE IN SAN DIEGO, CA**

O.B. TAPROOM - 4845 NEWPORT AVE, SAN DIEGO, CA

NOVAKOMBUCHA.COM

**LIFE’S A BOOCH**
EASY TO DRINK. 100% FUN.

---

**Rady Children’s**
**kpbs**
**Procopio**
**PNC BANK**
**CalPrivate Bank**
The University of San Diego is proud to recognize the achievements of its Latino Business Leaders of Influence honorees.

Learn more at sandiego.edu.
MAURA MIRELES
Director of Operations
Neighborhood Healthcare

Maura Mires, director of operations at Neighborhood Healthcare, led her team to streamline language interpretation services and improve patient and provider experiences. She spearheaded the operational requirements to open new facilities in San Marcos and El Cajon and collaborated with other operations teams to acquire three new sites in Riverside County from the now-defunct Borrego Health. Mires developed partnerships with San Diego County’s One Safe Place at San Marcos to help in caring for victims of domestic and family violence and developed a partnership with El Cajon’s Maness Wellness Center to provide physical exams for refugee children. She is very active in Neighborhood Healthcare’s community volunteer efforts. She includes participating in numerous youth, women, and homeless health fairs, patient appreciation days, employee appreciation events, and health fair events for the youth, women and homeless.

ROCIO MONTEJANO
Small Business Banking SVP
Bank of America

Rocio Montejano, a small business banking senior vice president at Bank of America, oversees 22 small business bankers serving the needs of San Diego companies with up to $5 million in annual revenue. Her team serves 16,000 San Diego small businesses with $408 million in credit extended. With her help, Bank of America has grown its small business lending year-over-year over the past three years to include a 16.5% increase over the last year. Montejano is an ambassador for the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO) San Diego chapter. She is co-chair of the Bank’s Hispanic Latino Business Council (HLBC) and helps lead the company’s internal employ network for Hispanic-Latino employees. Montejano earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of California Riverside. She may be reached at rocio.montejano@bofa.com or 951-741-3763.

EVA MORENO MARKS, ESQ.
Senior Associate Attorney
Genesis Family Law

A senior associate attorney at Genesis Family Law, Eva Moreno Marks is a certified family law specialist, native Spanish speaker, and recognized leader in the San Diego County legal community. Marks is a former vice president of the South Bay Bar Association and serves on the Board of Directors for the San Diego County Family Law Bar Association. She is a fierce attorney and advocate for women of color and Latino representation in the legal profession. Marks focuses primarily on resolving complex family law cases and issues, including divorce, adoption, child custody, child support, legal separation, premarital agreements, postnuptial agreements. She earned a bachelor’s degree in political science and Chicano studies from the University of California Los Angeles and a law degree from Howard University School of Law. Marks may be reached at eva@genesishuman.com or 619-422-7722.

MIGUEL MOTA
Vice President of Strategic Operations & San Diego Office Head
Bioscicom, California

Miguel Motta is vice president of strategic operations and San Diego office head of Bioscicom, California, where he actively engages in discussions with San Diego business leaders, government officials, and academic and research institutions to foster innovation in San Diego. His career spans large multinationals to small venture capital-backed companies. In many cases Motta was the only Latino on the executive teams where he served. A three-time CEO, he has led companies focused on providing alternatives to antibiotics, using biotechnology for alternative fuel production, and developing non-traditional sources of protein. He currently supports and mentors founders and first-time CEOs on their journey of building successful companies and is a mentor with the San Diego Small (S2D) mentor program. He serves as an advisor to startups and committed to elevating underrepresented high school, college students, and graduates in STEM careers.

ADRIANA OCCHOA
Partner
Procopio

Adriana Ochoa, a partner at Procopio, represents public agencies and private clients with water, wastewater, transparency, governance, operational, litigation, and other legal issues. She leads Procopio’s Healthcare, Education and Government team. She is one of only 11 team leaders at a firm with nearly 200 attorneys. She is the first and only Latina Partner at Procopio – the largest firm in San Diego. Ochoa is a Trustee for the Hans and Margaret Doe Charitable Trust, a board member of the San Diego Wellness Collaborative and chairs the San Diego La Raza Lawyers Association Scholarship Fund. Adriana recently concluded a successful run as Procopio’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee leader and remains active in the firm’s diversity efforts, during her tenure Procopio was honored by the San Diego Business Journal for DEI. She can be reached at adriana.ochoa@procopio.com or 619-525-3861.

ALEJANDRA PEREZ
Community Programs Manager
TrueCare

Alejandra Perez is a community programs manager at TrueCare. She is an innovative leader in TrueCare’s Community Engagement Department. She started her career as a patient advocate and has accumulated almost a decade of health care experience. Her background in community health has led her to work on projects in behavioral health, food insecurity, outreach and education, and youth programming. Perez builds youth programs from the ground up to address issues affecting our communities. She empowers youth to be agents of change in their communities and focuses on taking a community-specific approach to program development. Focusing on intentionality and connection, Perez has led TrueCare’s Puzzling Minds Program, a six-week behavioral health program provided to middle school students, and TrueCare’s Youth Advocacy Program, a substance use prevention program for high school students. She can be reached at alejandra.perez@trucare.org or 760-754-7547.
HARID H. PUENTES
President & CEO
SD Squared

Puentes is CEO of SD Squared, a nonprofit he co-founded with legendary biotech executive Bill Rastetter with the goal of increasing diversity in STEM careers. Puentes’ leadership guides programming, mentorship, and scholarship helping San Diego’s most talented students access the resources they need to succeed. He has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for programming, scholarships, and technology for over 100 diverse youth in San Diego to access biotech internships, tutoring, and transportation. In 2020, SD2 won the 2020 HUD Secretary’s National Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships: MUFG Union Bank Foundation in partnership with the City of San Diego provided multi-year financial support to help establish CONNECT ALL @ the Jacobs Center for Innovation and Technology. MiraCosta College’s $3 million Title V HSI grant to enhance academic and social support for Latinx students, driving systemic changes to empower this demographic. Under his leadership, the college has set ambitious goals, including increasing Latinx students’ course pass rates and enhancing student retention. Born in Mexico, Dr. Ramez immigrated to the United States in 1985 and spent several years working in agriculture before recognizing the potential of higher education. Since then, he has served in various educational roles at Cal State San Marcos, San Diego Mesa College, Palomar College, and finally landing at MiraCosta College. He can be reached at hpuentes@sd2.org or 703-400-2851.

DR. FREDDIE RAMIREZ
Interim Dean of Counseling and Student Development
MiraCosta College

Dr. Freddie Ramirez serves as the Interim Counseling and Student Development at MiraCosta College, enabling him to apply his 25-year tenure at the institution toward a diverse student body's academic and career success. Dr. Ramirez also oversees MiraCosta College’s $3 million Title V HSI grant to enhance academic and social support for Latinx students, driving systemic changes to empower this demographic. Under his leadership, the college has set ambitious goals, including increasing Latinx students’ course pass rates and enhancing student retention. Born in Mexico, Dr. Ramez immigrated to the United States in 1985 and spent several years working in agriculture before recognizing the potential of higher education. Since then, he has served in various educational roles at Cal State San Marcos, San Diego Mesa College, Palomar College, and finally landing at MiraCosta College. He can be reached at FRamirez@miraCosta.edu.

LIZ RAMIREZ
Chief Executive Officer
Chicano Federation of San Diego County

Liz Ramirez is CEO of the Chicano Federation of San Diego County, an over 50-year-old organization that is at the forefront of equity and access for these same communities. Ramirez has over a decade of nonprofit leadership experience, where she draws inspiration from her lived experiences from being raised on both sides of the border to create innovative programs, partnerships, and systemic change, for low-income and immigrant communities. In 2023, Ramirez relaunched the Federation's Leadership Training Institute, to equip participants with necessary skills, knowledge, and networks to transform their passion/individual resources into the collective power needed to become successful community organizers/movement builders. Because of her leadership, the Federation will be awarded the “2023 Outstanding Organization for Diversity & Inclusion” at the 51st annual National Philanthropy Day. She can be reached at lramirez@chicanofederation.org or 619-203-5500.

CLAUDIA REMPHEL
Government & Community Affairs Manager, Operations Manager of CSA-17 Program Manager
American Medical Response

Claudia Rempel is Government & Community Affairs Manager, Operations Manager and CSA-17 Program Manager for American Medical Response. She is a San Diego native and a graduate of University of California, Riverside. As a servant leader, she is passionate about civic engagement, nurturing community partnerships, and breaking barriers to provide an opportunity for the underserved. Her expertise and task-oriented strengths drive dedication, motivation, and a cohesive environment. She challenges complacency and continuously aims to improve systems by cultivating and encouraging creativity and innovation. Rempel serves as the Board President of the Ambulance Association of San Diego County; is a representative on the County of San Diego’s Health Services Capacity Task Force; and is Board President of MANA de San Diego. She has over 25 years of progressive administrative community college experience in Student Services and Instructional programming. She also possesses over two decades of teaching experience at the post-secondary level in both undergraduate and graduate programs. She currently serves on the boards of the San Marcos Boys and Girls Club and A Step Beyond. She can be reached at srvalacey@palomar.edu or 619-813-8248.

DR. STAR RIVERA-LACEY
Superintendent/President
Palomar Community College District

Star Rivera-Lacey, Ph.D., serves as the first Latina Superintendent/President of the Palomar Community College District. Palomar College, established 75 years ago, serves over 25,000 students and 1,600 employees. The District encompasses 2,555 square miles in North San Diego County, and operates education centers in Escondido, Rancho Bernardo, and Fallbrook. It has an annual budget of $882 million dollars and offers more than 150 degrees and certificates. Dr. Rivera-Lacey has over 25 years of progressive administrative community college experience in Student Services and Instructional programming. She also possesses over two decades of teaching experience at the post-secondary level in both undergraduate and graduate programs. She currently serves on the boards of the San Marcos Boys and Girls Club and A Step Beyond. She can be reached at srvalacey@palomar.edu or 619-813-8248.
Claudio Robertson is an Executive Director and Banker at J.P. Morgan Private Bank, and serves the dynamic and multicultural region of Southern California. His focus is on guiding entrepreneurs, business owners, family offices and nonprofit organizations in making the complex financial decisions required to grow and sustain their wealth. Robertson is proud to stand as a trusted role model and connector for local and national members of the U.S. Hispanic and Latino community. He serves as a mentor and board member at several San Diego and regional institutions, including YMCA, San Diego Museum of Art, University of San Diego, and the Latin Business Association Network (LBAN). He is proud to serve as a Co-Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in San Diego for J.P. Morgan Chase. He can be reached at claudio.robertson@jpmorgan.com or 619-843-9721.

Manuel Rodriguez serves as the Managing Market Leader at U.S. Bank. Previously, he was a Vice President and Relationship Manager for U.S. Bank’s Gaming Division with responsibilities for managing client relationships, loan structuring, and business development. With over 20 years of experience in the financial services industry, Rodriguez leads the market in company-wide efforts and manages the commercial banking business in the greater San Diego Area. He is a part of the leadership team locally who is responsible for the integration of Union Bank after its acquisition by U.S. Bank. He is also the Global Lead for the U.S. Bank Nosotros Latinas BRG employee resource/affinity group. Rodriguez was a part of the EDC Delegation of San Diego business leaders in July 2023 focused on best practices in inclusive growth and talent development for our region.

Russell Roybal is Vice President and Chief External Affairs Officer for the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy and Royal Bank of Canada. Roybal previously served as Chief Advancement Officer of San Francisco AIDS Foundation (SF AIDS). He is also the Deputy Executive Director of the National LGBTQ Task Force, and Director of Training & Capacity Building at the Gill Foundation. He has served on the boards of directors of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, the National LGBTQ Task Force, the International Imperial Court System, the Grassroots Institute for Fundraising Training, and the Harvey Milk Social Justice Awards. Roybal is a recipient of the Harvey Milk Social Justice Award and the Jose Luis Sarría Civil Rights Award. He can be reached at russell.roytal@mac.com or 619-818-7305.

Mitzi Salgado is Founder & CEO of The Cultura Media Inc., which is focused on providing access to information to bilingual Latinos that is culturally relevant, inclusive and actionable on topics in health, financial literacy and higher education. Salgado’s mission is to help close economic gaps and information asymmetry for low-income communities of color, particularly Latinas and immigrants. She identifies as a proud Transfronteriza who passionately advocates for issues directly affecting our binational region in the San Diego County area including homelessness, housing, immigration, higher education and health. She previously worked at Harvard University. She holds a master’s degree in international public policy and management from the University of Southern California. She also has a bachelor’s degree in women’s studies from UC Riverside. She can be reached at info@thecultura.org or 619-431-1859.

Sofía Salgado Robitaille is the Executive Director for the Southwestern College Foundation whose mission is to develop and deliver resources for student needs through trusted stewardship of charitable giving and meaningful community partnerships. She leads the foundation’s strategic planning, marketing and operations efforts to promote student success through scholarships and leadership programs.

Previously, Salgado Robitaille was the executive director for MANA de San Diego, a nonprofit Latina organization that empowers Latinas through education, leadership development, community service and advocacy. Before joining MANA de San Diego, she was the community affairs manager for KSWB/Channel 5 and KGET/ABC10 where she positioned and marketed the stations as leaders in the areas of local issues such as education and the diversity of the San Diego region. She can be reached at srobitaille@swccd.edu or 619-743-1604.

Congratulations Jannet Zamora on being selected as one of SDBJ’s 2023 Latino Leaders of Influence!
D\r
Mark Sanchez, Superintendent/President of Southwestern College, has more than 20 years in community college leadership, teaching and instruction and workforce development. His passion for social justice is demonstrated throughout his career. Sanchez is a native of San Diego and began his college career as a student at Southwestern College. As a college alumnus, who is now leading the college, Sanchez represents the potential all students have through education. Sanchez has been instrumental in sponsoring and building a formidable statewide coalition of support for AB-91, groundbreaking legislation that aims to provide California’s border community colleges’ in-state tuition rates for Fronteriza students. He can be reached at president@swccd.edu or 619-482-6402.

M\r
Mario X. Sierra is Assistant Director, Facilities Management Department at UC San Diego. Sierra has 35 years as an engineer in the public works industry. Prior to joining UCSD, Sierra served 31 years with the City of San Diego. During that time, he served as the Department Director for Environmental Services, General Services, Transportation & Storm Water and Information Technology. Sierra also served as an Emergency Operations Center Director and Incident Commander. Sierra has broad municipal government experience and is a seasoned manager with extensive knowledge in operations, budgets, contracts and is a skilled negotiator. Sierra earned a B.S. in Applied Mechanics & Engineering Sciences from UCSD and a Master of Public Administration from National University. He is a 2003 graduate of the Chicano Federation Leadership Training Institute. He can be reached at maserra@ucsd.edu or 619-310-1482.

S\r
Sue Silva is Founder and CEO of Avlis International Inc., a full-service agency that focuses on strategic meeting management. Avlis International is a minority/woman-owned and operated business. With more than 20 years of collective experience working in the pharmaceutical and biotech industry, Avlis has developed a broad network of relationships with thought leaders, institutions and publications across a variety of therapeutic areas. Silva holds the position of Vice President for both the National Latina Business Woman Association (NLBWA-SD) and the San Diego County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (SDCHCC). During her tenure, she has rebranded and organized the associations in hopes of giving a renewed interest to empowering the Hispanic community to grow their businesses and achieve their professional goals. She is a former board member of HUGS (Helping Ugandans Grow Stronger). She can be reached at info@avlisinc.com.

A\r
Alan Tornel, Business Development Manager at San Diego PACE, is distinguished for his expertise in cultivating diverse community partnerships. A proud native of San Ysidro and a UC San Diego alumus, he possesses a unique flair for unveiling innovative solutions and collaboration avenues. From spearheading mental health initiatives to championing health resources awareness, Tornel’s journey from Southwestern College to key leadership roles exemplifies his dedication to community service and professional excellence. He established a prominent San Diego PACE presence in North County, expanding enrollments to more than 260 within a year. This initiative not only delivered crucial care to seniors but also steered their center to profitability in less than a year. He was handpicked by the Burnham Center for Community Advancement to spearhead the Mental Health Workforce Development Symposium in collaboration with CSU San Marcos. He can be reached at alan.tornel@syhealth.org or 619-218-5955.

K\r
Krista Torquato is managing director for Bank of America’s Private Bank in San Diego serving high-net-worth individuals, families and institutional clients locally. Torquato works with private client advisors who deliver custom investment management, wealth structuring, estate planning, philanthropy, private business financing, banking, credit and trust services to San Diego’s high net worth individuals, families and institutions. She led BofA’s ESG efforts in San Diego, is Executive Sponsor for BofA’s Hispanic & Latino Business Council for San Diego, a member of the Private Bank Hispanic Executive Leadership Council and Private Bank Diversity & Inclusion Women and Leadership Committee and is on the boards of USS Midway and Make-A-Wish San Diego. Torquato received her bachelor’s degree from California State University, San Marcos. She can be reached at krista.torquato@bofa.com or 619-515-3712.

The Knauss School of Business at the University of San Diego proudly congratulates Grace Williamson, Senior Director of Student Professional Development, for being named to San Diego Business Journal’s 2023 Top 50 Latino Business Leaders of Influence. You play an integral role in shaping the next generation of Changemakers!
Mauricio Torre, Vice President of Program Operations at SBCS (formerly South Bay Community Services), has worked in San Diego’s nonprofit industry for 26 years. SBCS provides a diverse range of services including programs focused on youth development, foster youth services, career and technical education, emergency response for family violence support, food assistance, tax preparation, community engagement, parenting classes, behavioral, developmental and mental health services and counseling. The organization, Mi Escuelita Therapeutic Preschool, and oversees a comprehensive cradle-to-career program for underserved San Diego communities. Bilingual with a psychology degree, Torre is dedicated to empowering low-income, minority youth and families. Under his leadership, Villarreal collaborates with law enforcement and community organizations and partnerships expand access to crucial healthcare resources. Villarreal’s unwavering commitment and positive impact make him a true community leader. He can be reached at beatriz@mano.org or 760-492-8897.

Dr. Beatriz Villarreal, Founder of Mano a Mano Foundation, combats the fentanyl crisis, saving lives and addressing disparities in healthcare and social services in San Diego County. Through the Mano a Mano Foundation, she implements projects and initiatives to address healthcare disparities among underserved populations. She organizes free community conferences and outreach events, providing valuable information, vaccinations and health education to those lacking access to regular healthcare services. Villarreal collaborates with law enforcement agencies, community organizations and addiction treatment centers to raise awareness about fentanyl and support affected individuals and families. Under her leadership, partnerships expand access to crucial healthcare resources. Villarreal’s unwavering commitment and positive impact make her a true community leader. She can be reached at beatriz@mano.org or 760-492-8897.

Rick Virgin, Vice President for University Advancement at the University of San Diego, is an accomplished, entrepreneurial and inclusive leader who achieves transformative change through record-breaking fundraising, strategy, individual and institutional performance, and organizational effectiveness. Virgin oversees more than 80 staff across six departments, manages a $52 million budget, raised more than $200 million over the last four years, and guided the team to a record-breaking $75 million-plus in fiscal 2022. Virgin partners with alumni in more than 30 countries and directs all fundraising priorities abroad. As a second-generation Mexican-American, Virgin is devoted to creating and driving opportunities for underrepresented groups in higher education, including recruiting and mentoring leaders of color, providing support for first-generation and low-income students, recognizing and celebrating the impact and accomplishments of underrepresented groups. He is completing a Ph.D. in Education for Social Justice.

Grace Williamson serves as Senior Director, Student Professional Development at Ashford University, as well as Associate Director of Recruitment and Employment Relations roles at Princeton University, American Public University System and the United States Military Academy at West Point. Williamson built a new team of more than 10 career professionals, launched tailored programming and initiatives for her school’s top-tier student population, and transformed the student experience by providing accessible, high-quality and multidisciplinary services through the academic cycle. Williamson serves on The University Club Atop Symphony Tower, Women of the Club Career and Life Planning board.

Janet Zamora, Senior Vice President of Global Operations and COO of Vervent Philippines, has mastered the art of building high-performing teams that deliver best-in-class results over the course of her 20-year career. She leads Vervent’s global operations team which comprises 70% of the organization and more than 900 employees. She has direct reports across all six Vervent locations and has created a robust operations team that is a key component of driving Vervent’s growth and service excellence. Zamora custom-built Vervent’s Baja operations center from the ground up to offer the company a nearshore servicing option while also opening up 500-600 jobs in the Tijuana community. At Vervent, she uses her talent for identifying the true source of a problem and her passion for turning challenges into opportunities to revolutionize the way the company delivers a memorable customer experience.
CONGRATULATIONS
Becky Mendoza
on her recognition as a Latino Leader of Influence

The Bank’s Board of Directors and Executive Team extend heartfelt congratulations to Becky Mendoza, Senior Vice President, and all the distinguished Latino Leaders within the communities we are privileged to serve.

Providing high-quality care for all since 1969.

50 health centers & program sites
145,000 + lives in our care
3,000 workforce dedicated to our mission

CONGRATULATIONS
Alan Tornel
Business Development Manager.
SAN YSIDRO HEALTH

www.syhealth.org | @sanysidrohealth

SCAN TO DONATE
www.sdbj.com

OCTOBER 2, 2023

Congratulations!
San Diego Business Journal
2023 Top 50 Latino Business Leaders of Influence

MAURICIO TORRE
Mauricio Torre, Vice President of Program Operations, has worked to empower low-income and minority communities with a special focus on youth with SBCS since 1997.
Mauricio is the driving force behind SBCS’s Promise Neighborhood initiative, reshaping the agency’s approach to serve three underserved San Diego County communities with a cradle-to-career service continuum.

SDBJ’S 2023 TOP 50 LATINO BUSINESS LEADERS OF INFLUENCE!

Dr. Sanchez and Sofia on being recognized as two of the 2023 Latino Leaders of Influence.

From your Southwestern College Familia

www.swccd.edu
The San Diego Business Journal and the Community of Business proudly support Hispanic Business Leaders.