



## Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan News Connection

November 2016

### Message From The Executive Director



I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, friends, fellow commissioners, LARA staff, and all of the wonderful people who I have met throughout the State of Michigan. I want to also take this time to re-introduce myself to those who I have not had the privilege to meet yet. My name is Felipe Lopez Sustaita, I am the new Executive Director of the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan. Like many of you, I wear several hats: I am a son, brother, husband, father of four boys, friend, advocate, an immigrant from Mexico, former migrant farmworker, and a first generation college student. Balancing many obligations has always been a part of my life.

Something I would like to share with all of you is that I still have two of my brothers who work as farmworkers here in the State of Michigan. I am aware of some of the challenges that currently exist.

I began my journey in State Government on July 18, 2016. Since then, I have had the privilege of traveling 11,830 miles, 4,942 of which have been driving across the state and 6,888 flying. On a daily basis, I meet several people and have been moved by how welcoming community members have been. It is truly an honor to be serving our Hispanic/Latino community.

Changing gears, I am person who embraces transparency. This is why the HLCOM Commissioners and I decided to present this inaugural newsletter, the first of many, which will highlight, educate and inform you of all the great work the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan is doing. This will be an outlet to keep our community informed and united. I welcome feedback and suggestions.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that I am honored to serve in my role. If you would like to invite me to your community please feel free to let me know so I can arrange a trip. Feel free to e-mail me at [lopezsustaitaf@michigan.gov](mailto:lopezsustaitaf@michigan.gov).

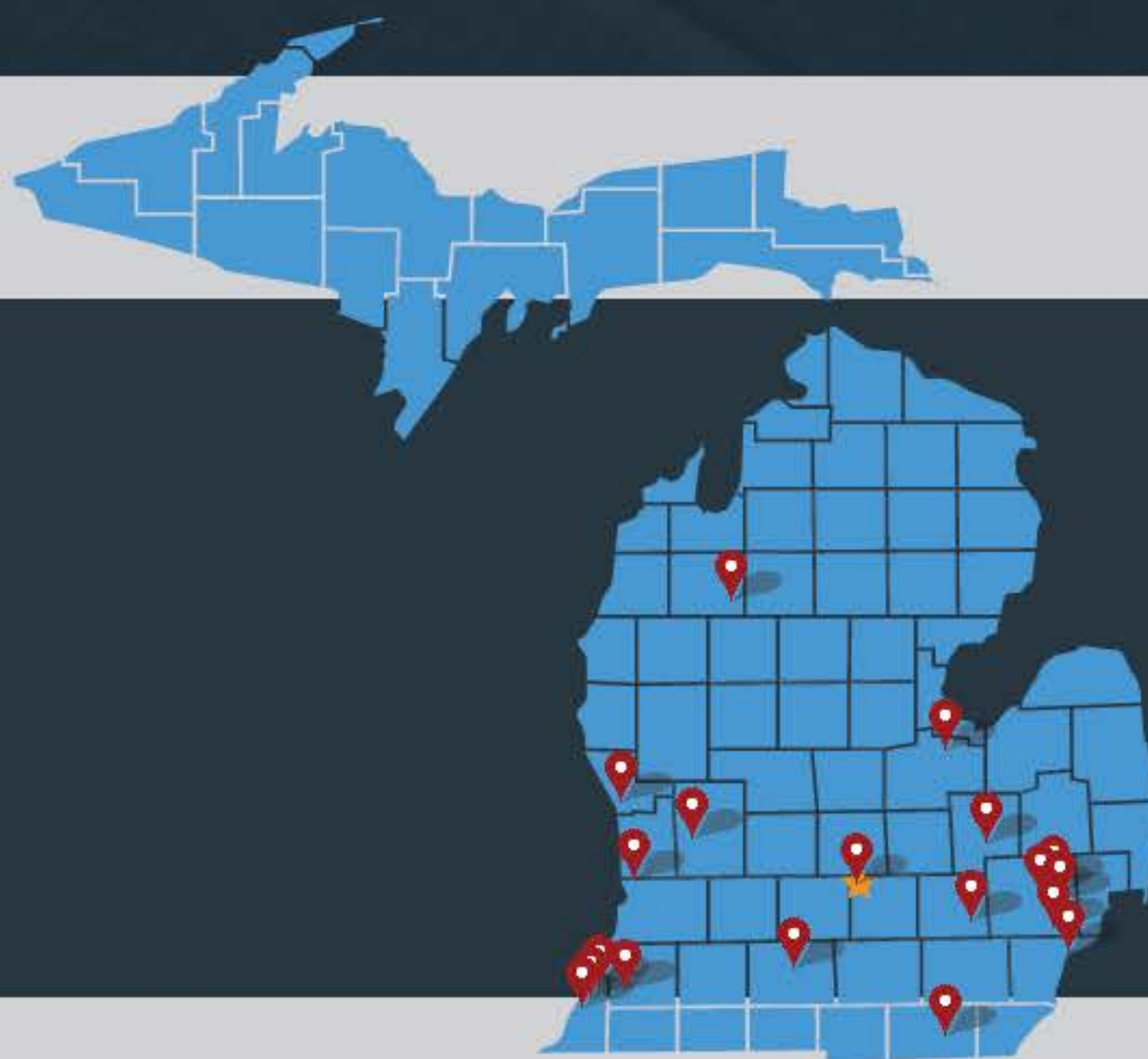
Gracias,

**Felipe Lopez Sustaita**, Ed. D., MSW

Executive Director, Hispanic Latino Commission Of Michigan  
Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs

### Cities I Have Visited So Far

- Adrian
- Auburn Hills
- Benton Harbor
- Brighton
- Cadillac
- Coloma
- Columbus, OH
- Detroit
- Flint
- Grand Rapids
- Hartford
- Holland
- Kalamazoo
- Lansing ★
- Muskegon
- Pontiac
- Saginaw
- Southfield
- Troy
- Watervliet





# Backpack Initiative

As the new Executive Director of the HLCOM the first project that we took on in August was the Back to School Backpack Drive in Lansing, Flint, and Saginaw. Growing up, I was one of the children without a backpack. My parents worked very hard to provide for me and my seven siblings. Unfortunately, school supplies were not always a priority. I know many Hispanic/Latino children still face this challenge, so I wanted to do something about it. With only three weeks before school started we began getting the word out there. Commissioner Jeremiah Hernandez quickly offered to have Best Buy of Okemos be the drop off location, Commissioner Monica Reyes also quickly jumped onboard by offering to have Saginaw Valley State University as the drop off location in Saginaw. In Flint, Community Leader Aurora Saucedo led the effort by getting Our Lady of Guadalupe Church to be the drop off location.



None of this could have happened without the strong partnerships and friendships we have begun to establish with our community members.

A special thanks to everyone who was involved in this effort. I was blown away with the generosity and unselfishness especially because of the short timeframe we had to work with. This is a list of our donors: Ignacio Andrade from Michigan State University (Office for Inclusion & Intercultural Initiatives), Meijer of Okemos, Meijer of Bath Township, Elva Revilla, of Williamston, Mi., CASE Credit Union (Lansing, MI) donated 350 backpacks plus supplies, Saginaw Medical Federal Credit Union, Saginaw Valley State University, Byron Mason, Melissa Vargas, Hispanic Technology & Community Center (Rafael Arellano), Martus Luna Memorial Association (Art Luna), Roberto Garza, HLCOM Commissioner Martha & husband Juan Gonzalez-Cortes, Kathleen & Peter Falk, Deb Bach-Stante and Family, Carlos & Nancy Cisneros, Martha & Dale Mansour, Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, Mr. Richard Baird, Lydia Sanchez, Salvation Army, University of Michigan Ann Arbor, and Dr. Roxanna D. Matos.

So far 413 backpacks have been distributed, 25+ families in Flint also received \$15 gift cards and fresh fruit. We thank everyone who played a pivotal role in this effort.

## Hispanic Heritage Month Event

On Friday, October 7, 2016 we had our **commission meeting**. The meeting took place in the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. At the meeting I provided a report of my activities as Executive Director, and everything that I covered at the meeting is on this newsletter. Also, four new commissioners recently joined the commission on September 1st. Their names are: Ivonne M. Soler (Wayne County), Kelsey V. Switzer (Oakland County), J. Antonio Lopez (Wayne County), and Esperanza Cantu (Oakland County).



On the same day, we also had our **Annual State of Michigan Hispanic Latino Celebration Dinner**. We had approximately 168 guests and representation from different cities. Our Keynote Speaker, Kalamazoo College President Dr. George Gonzalez, was outstanding. We also had great entertainment from Mr. Ismael Duran, Garage Cultural and Mrs. Liz Loayza - Herrera, an MSU Master's Student. We sent out a survey to our guests and received a lot of positive feedback.



The highlight of our event was the scholarship recipients. We awarded six scholarship, each \$600, to current college students. Their names are: Daniel Lopez from Grand Rapids Community College, Emily Villegas from Michigan State University, Cristien Luis Arzate from Western Michigan University, Adriana Salto from Grand Valley State University, Lucia Alfaro from Siena Heights University, and Ashly Dominguez Martinez from Hope College.



Special thanks to our scholarship selection committee: recent Texas Tech University graduate Mr. Joel Zuehlke of Flint, Mrs. Letisia Contreras Ruffin, Michigan State University, and Mrs. Ana Mari Woehr, Lansing Community College.

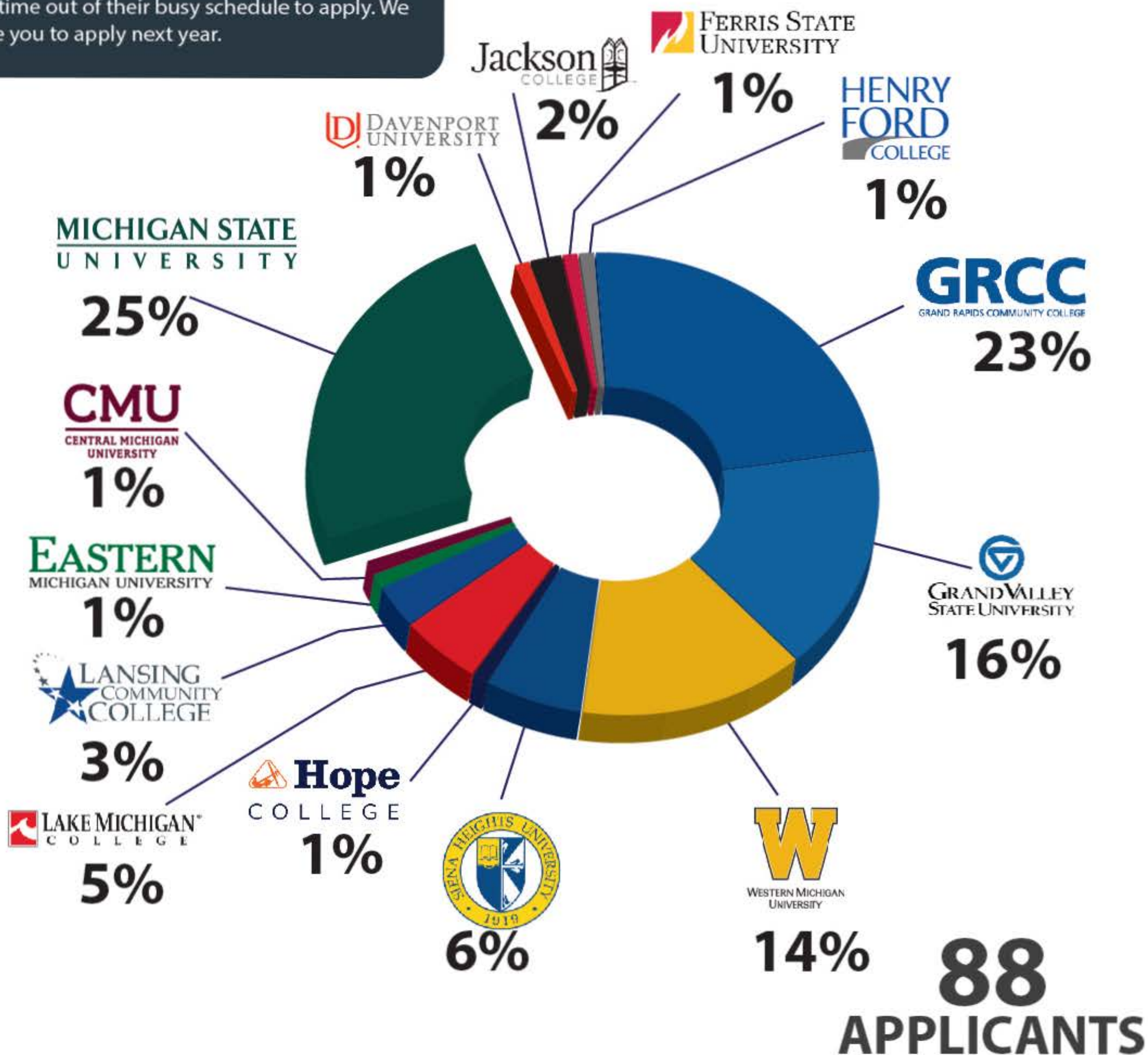


Images by Mr. Raymond Holt.



# Data on Scholarship Applications

The Hispanic Latino Commission was very impressed with the caliber of applicants for this year's scholarship. Below is data collected on the 88 applicants who applied. Special thank you to all of the college students who took time out of their busy schedule to apply. We encourage you to apply next year.



## Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan Grant Update

The Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan was re-granted \$200,000. The money is being distributed to agencies that provide Mental Health Services to the Latino Community. Due to the timing we were advised to re-grant the same three agencies as last year which are CHASS (Detroit), Cristo Rey Community Center (Lansing), and Centro Multicultural La Familia (Pontiac). I had the privilege of doing site visits to all three locations and was very impressed with the work that is occurring at each location.

We are working very hard to expand our reach so that other agencies get an opportunity to take advantage of grant money being offered. As a commission we will begin looking at creative ways to expand our reach, and I encourage agencies to please continue to ask questions about the process of applying and possible partnerships with us.



## News: New Joint Legislative/Advocacy Committee

On Wednesday, September 8th, Commissioners Juan Martinez, Martha Gonzalez and I met with members of Michigan Office for New Americans (MONA), Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission's (MAPAAC), and Commission on Middle Eastern American Affairs (CMEAA) at the Arab American & Chaldean Council in Troy, Michigan. Our meeting was called in order to try to create a Joint Legislative/Advocacy Committee with the two other ethnic commissions. We also had a follow up conference call Monday, October 25th.

The Joint Legislative/Advocacy Committee with MONA, MAPAAC and CMEAA is a partnership where we can work together on bills and issues that affect all three communities. At this point we are in our preliminary stages but will continue to inform our community in the future.

## New Event Coming Soon: First Annual Hispanic Latino State Wide College Graduation

The Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan is proud to announce that we will be launching our **First Annual Hispanic Latino State Wide College Graduation**. We are inviting all of the colleges, community colleges and universities in the State of Michigan to participate. We invite all of the Hispanic/Latino graduates to join us as we celebrate. More details will be coming out soon. Please follow us on Facebook for more information.

*Image by Emilie A. Kamieniecki,  
Siena Heights University Student*

## Special Thanks

Special thanks to the Latino community of Flint. Dr. Roxanna Duntley-Matos, State President of OLASW and Mrs. Aurora Saucedo, Community Leader who will be honoring me at their Organization of Latino Social Workers Student Scholarship Banquet on November 19th, 2016 from 5:00-8:00 pm in Flint. Scholarships will be awarded to students, if you're interested in attending or donating please contact Dr. Duntley-Matos at [duntleymatosr@gmail.com](mailto:duntleymatosr@gmail.com).

Special thanks to Sharese Shannon Mathis, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Siena Heights University, Mr. Rudy Flores, Migrant Program Specialist, Department of Human Services, and Ms. Miriam Ramos for the wonderful work they are doing in Adrian, MI. We value our partnerships with them. I would also like to thank The Sunnyside Center for Peace and Justice, Siena Heights University, Adrian Public Schools and Southeast Michigan Migrant Resource Council for inviting me to be the keynote speaker at their First Annual La Raza Student Leadership Conference for local high school students.

Thank you to Mr. Joel Zuehlke for editing this newsletter and Mrs. Lilleana Cavanaugh, MBA, CPM, Executive Director of the Ohio Latino Affairs Commission for her mentorship.



## Conferences & Presentations I Have Attended

National Council of La Raza 2016 Annual Conference Act, Participate, Vote, (Orlando, FL)

Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies 45th Anniversary Gala Celebration (Wayne State University)

2016 Conference for Michigan's Farmworkers, Service Providers, and Growers (Lansing, MI)

2016 Fatherhood Forum "SPARTANS WILL" Be Great Dads (East Lansing, MI)

9th Annual MI Response to Hate Conference (East Lansing, MI)

21st Leadership Symposium "A new Day for Latinos in Community College" (Costa Mesa, California)

LLEAD Statewide Conference "Think Globally, Acting Locally" (Lansing, MI)

Agenda Latina 2016 "Where Ohio Latino Grassroots & Serving Organizations Come Together" (Columbus, Ohio)

Lectured at Saginaw Valley State University (Diversity Class)

Guest Speaker at Western Michigan University with the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) (Kalamazoo, MI)

Guest Speaker at Michigan State University with the College Assistant Migrant Program (CAMP) and High School Completion Program (HEP) (East Lansing, MI)

Keynote Speaker at Siena Heights University First Annual La Raza Student Leadership Conference



# Commission Members



**Noel Garcia, Jr.**  
Ingham County



**Jesse Venegas**  
Oakland County



**Sonya Hernandez**  
Muskegon County



**Jeremiah Hernandez**  
Ingham County



**Anthony Rubio**  
Wexford County



**Gilberto Guevara**  
Saginaw County



**Juan Martinez**  
Ingham County



**Monica Reyes**  
Saginaw County



**J. Antonio Lopez**  
Wayne County



**Kelsey V. Switzer**  
Oakland County



**Martha Gonzalez-Cortes**  
Kent County



**Carlos Sanchez**  
Kent County



**Esperanza Cantu**  
Oakland County



**Ivonne M. Soler**  
Wayne County

