Eastern’s Walter Diaz recognized by Higher Edge

WILLIMANTIC — A new award at Eastern Connecticut State University recognizes champions of college access. Walter Diaz is the 2016 recipient of the inaugural Higher Edge College Access Champion Award.

Higher Edge is a nonprofit organization based in New London that promotes college access and success through one-on-one advising sessions with students and through support to low-income and first-generation students.

The organization helps students navigate the challenges of applying to colleges and create their own path to daily life or career.

Higher Edge now has a satellite office on the ECSU campus, as more Higher Edge students attend ECSU than any other institution.

Diaz is the dean of students at ECSU, the state’s public liberal arts university with more than 5,000 students from 25 states and 23 countries.

Diaz was honored with the award of Higher Edge’s five-year anniversary celebration in November.

During the ceremony, Diaz received a plaque, which calls him an “esteemed educator, tireless advocate and steadfast ally.”

The plaque reads: “Your unwavering passion, mentorship and wisdom all combine to make magic happen for all those whose path you cross. From the entering freshman to the senior level administrator, you leave no one behind, and are always thinking about ways to support others. Thank you for believing in our students and our mission, and for modeling leadership that has catalyzed meaningful, educational change throughout our state.”

Diaz has spent almost three decades in higher education. He began his career in 1987 as a project coordinator at the University of Connecticut before becoming the associate director of career services and cooperative education there in 1989.

In 1990, he was the director of career services and cooperative education at the State University of New York’s Polytechnic Institute.

In 1996, he became the director of career services at Dartmouth College.

Then, in 1998, he returned to Connecticut as the associate director of business and technology services for Tunxis Community College in Farmington, and then began his career at ECSU in 1999.

There, he has been the associate director of career services, the director of the center for internships and career development, and the interim director of housing and residential life.

Diaz has been the dean of students since 2010.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Central Connecticut State University, a master’s degree in higher education administration from the University of Connecticut and a doctorate in higher education administration from Johnson and Wales University.

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