

Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Remarks
November 29, 2006

Thank you very much for inviting me to this evening's event. I must tell you, since my appointment this past May as President of Eastern Connecticut State University, I have been overwhelmed by the generosity and warmth that I have received at Eastern, in the Windham community, across Connecticut, and within the Latino family. In Willimantic, whose sizable Puerto Rican population has longstanding roots in the community, I have been heartened by the support and goodwill shown to me. And from the Connecticut Association of Latinos in Higher Education to the Hispanic Network to the Connecticut Puerto Rican Forum's gala last June, the leaders of Connecticut's Latino community have welcomed me with open arms. Thank you.

People ask me why I came to Eastern Connecticut State University. I think it is very important for each us, regardless of where we are in our career, to find jobs that fit us. I am referring not only to the job itself, but to the people we will work with, and the values that they live by. I am pleased to tell you that I have found a place where I fit. The people at Eastern are truly dedicated to our students and to each other. I share their values. I fit. It's a great opportunity for me to advocate for what I believe in — the public liberal

arts. I could talk all evening about the liberal arts, but let me simply say this about Eastern: Our university's goal is to prepare our students to think for themselves so that they can be productive members of this great American democracy. I encourage you all to find out more about Eastern.

The other thing I want to share is a message that I want to continue to bring to our Latino community. My father brought my family to America from the mountain town of San Sebastian when I was a young girl. He was constantly telling me that education — a college education — was the key to a better life. He was right. Yet while almost 28 percent of Americans have a college degree, only 12 percent of the Hispanics in this country have a college degree. No other ethnic group is lower. Hispanics accounted for 50 percent of the population growth in this country in the past five years. I call on everyone in this room to work together so that as our community continues to become more a part of this country's social fabric, we ensure that our children can share in the American dream. To do so, we must provide them with a college education. The prosperity of our people and the future of this nation are at stake.

Again, thank you for inviting me this evening.