Book traces 11 pathways to college presidency

David Leon was conducting a leadership conference in Los Angeles when it occurred to him that he had the genesis of a good book.

“I was conversing with several Latino college and university presidents about their respective pathways to administration,” recalls Leon, an emeritus professor of ethnic studies at Sacramento State. “Their experiences were so fascinating that I asked if they would be willing to recount them for me in autobiographical form.”

Eleven of them agreed to do so, including Sacramento State President Alexander Gonzalez, who said he had been thinking about providing a guidepost of sorts that might benefit others. Gonzalez’ pathway to two presidencies is recounted in Latino College Presidents: In Their Own Words, co-edited by Leon and Ruben O. Martinez.

Part of a “Diversity in Higher Education” series, the book is designed to serve as an inspirational roadmap. It focuses on three basic themes: education experience, parental role and how you became a president.

The Gonzalez chapter emphasizes the importance of familial support in the pursuit of higher education. Gonzalez notes that neither his father nor his mother went to college, but they nonetheless came to see its value.

As the first in his family to earn a college degree, Gonzalez has emphasized the importance of learning throughout his 33 years in the California State University system. Whether speaking to high school students or creating programs to encourage first-generation college students, his message has been that you can succeed if you stay focused on a goal.

“Students must be secure in the fact that we are there to help them succeed,” he says. “That means providing them with support both in and outside the classroom.”

That support system has been integral to Sac State’s mission since Gonzalez became president in 2003. He underscores that point during each Commencement, asking those students who are the first in their family to earn a college degree to stand and be recognized.
For further information about ordering a copy, visit http://books.emeraldinsight.com. For media assistance, contact Sacramento State Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Alan Miller

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