

# Monika Cantu, MBA

## PhD Fellow and Research Assistant

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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## EDUCATION

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### Ph.D. Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

*Emphasis in Higher Education*

University of Texas- San Antonio | San Antonio, TX

**Expected: May 2026**

### Master of Business Administration

*Emphasis in Finance*

The University of Texas- Permian Basin | Odessa, TX

**Graduated: May 2023**

GPA 3.8

### Bachelor of Arts in Communication

*Emphasis in Journalism and Media*

The University of Texas-Permian Basin | Odessa, TX

Certification: Spanish Language and Culture

Magna Cum Laude

**Graduated: May 2021**

### Associate of Science

*Laredo College | Laredo, TX*

Award-winning Hispanic-Serving Institution

Magna Cum Laude

**Graduated: May 2019**

GPA 3.8

## QUALIFICATIONS

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### Languages:

Fluent in English & Spanish (Reading | Speaking | Writing)

### Technical:

Microsoft Office, Microsoft Outlook, Digital-Graphic Design

### General:

Effective Communication, Time Management, Integrity & Accountability, Teamwork, Adaptability

## PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

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### Library of Congress Program Assistant

*Talent Recruitment – Outreach Division*

**June 2024 – Present**

- Administered on projects to document and improve business processes by creating standard operating procedures, researching best practices for recruitment and outreach, updating data in Confluence, and supporting TR programs
- Facilitate responsibilities such as coordinating communications, tracking Talent Recruitment outreach, planning Library of Congress events, creating recruitment materials, maintaining databases, developing social media content, and curating LinkedIn posts
- Establish additional tasks involve creating outreach analysis reports and updating program information in Confluence

### Graduate Research Assistant in Higher Education

*The University of Texas at San Antonio | San Antonio, TX*

**Aug 2023 - Present**

- Design a framework to enhance the success of Latino STEM students within UTSA, designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

- Assess existing institutional policies, practices, and systemic structures to create an environment conducive to the success of Latino students in STEM disciplines at UTSA, emphasizing diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Engage in a collaborative effort with the National Science Foundation (NSF) to implement a transformative project focused on undergraduate STEM education within the institution

### **English Language Proficiency Bilingual [English & Spanish] Tutor**

**Jan 2023 – Present**

*Odessa College / Odessa, TX*

- Direct personalized instruction to a diverse student body, enhancing their reading, writing, and oral communication abilities
- Assemble an interactive online learning environment to foster language proficiency and instill a lasting enthusiasm for English
- Create routine assessments and progress evaluations, providing positive feedback to support students' language advancement

### **Graduate Research Assistant in Bilingual Education**

**Aug 2021 – May 2023**

*UT Permian Basin Department of Education / Odessa, TX*

- Researched information regarding the Pillars of reading, vocabulary, phonics, and fluency to help English Language Learners with academic pursuits
- Analyzed methods to improve listening, speaking, and writing skills to support culturally responsive approaches
- Examined literature reviews for faculty mentoring and how teachers deal with the trauma the students had in the classroom due to COVID-19

### **Tennis Coach**

**Aug 2020 – May 2023**

*Midland Country Club / Midland, TX*

- Coordinated youth tennis lessons by planning and organizing sessions that catered to the developmental needs and skill levels of participants, ensuring a comprehensive learning experience
- Implemented effective behavior management strategies during sessions to foster a positive and disciplined environment, promoting group order and ensuring a productive learning atmosphere for both youth and adult participants
- Provided mentorship and motivation to athletes, fostering a positive and supportive team environment conducive to learning and growth

### **Executive Administrative Assistant**

**Jan 2020 - May 2021**

*UT Permian Basin Success Center / Odessa, TX*

- Published reports using spreadsheets, word processing, database management, and other applications for a 50-100 people department
- Greeted visitors and callers and managed their inquiries or directed them to appropriate persons according to their needs
- Managed and maintained executives' calendars, scheduling appointments, meetings, and travel arrangements efficiently

### **English Language Tutor**

**Aug 2018 - May 2019**

*Laredo College- Learning Enrichment Center / Laredo, TX*

- Provided feedback to students using positive reinforcement techniques and encouraged confidence in students by teaching study skills, note-taking skills, and test-taking strategies
- Assessed students in improving grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension through interactive and engaging teaching methods
- Fostered a supportive and encouraging learning environment that motivated students to enhance their English language proficiency and confidence

## **SCHOLARLY ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS**

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### Symposium

**Mariachi: A Form of Identity and Cultural Pride for Bilingual Students.**

**March 2024**

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

- In a research symposium a poster presentation showed the inclusion of Mariachi music, from UTPB students, in the curriculum or school environment helps students feel welcomed and included by recognizing and celebrating their cultural identity, backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions

#### Conference Presentation

##### **It's a Vibe: Student Experiences with STEM Inclusivity at a Hispanic-Serving Institution**

**Nov 2024**

*Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE) Conference in Minneapolis*

- Framing STEM inclusivity as students' feelings of belonging and potential can create deficit perspectives, especially for underrepresented students (McGee, 2020)
- This study emphasizes organizational actions in fostering STEM belonging. Using an asset-based approach (Wofard & Gutzwa, 2022), this challenge deficit narratives at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) to understand students' perceptions of their institution's support for STEM inclusivity

##### **Ballet Folklorico: Supporting Bilingualism and Multiculturalism through the Performing Arts**

**Feb 2023**

*National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) conference in Portland, Oregon*

- The purpose of this study was to analyze the importance of ballet Folklorico amongst bilingual students and how ballet Folklorico influences the sense of pride and cultural identity among these students
- Ballet Folklorico is considered a Mexican emblem of dance and art. When people talk about Ballet Folklorico, there is usually a conversation about music, dance, clothing, and style

##### **Mariachi: A Form of Identity and Cultural Pride for Bilingual Students.**

**Feb 2022**

*National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) conference in New York City*

- The purpose showed how cultural identity plays a key role in helping minority students feel welcomed and included when their backgrounds, beliefs, and traditions are incorporated into the curriculum or the school environment

#### **RESEARCH PROJECTS**

##### **(In)Trepid Theorists: Reflections on Cohort Community Capital in the First Year of Doctoral Studies**

**July 2024**

*The University of Texas at San Antonio - International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL)*

- As a cohort, the reflections as first-year doctoral students with the community were shared. Precisely, for contribution to community cultural wealth, "me-search," and funds of knowledge, allowing others to learn from our experiences
- Additionally, this highlighted how each person inputs to their current field and their aspirations upon completing the PhD journey

##### **Approaches to Improve the Academic Environment in the Student-Teaching Experience**

**Aug 2022**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- The analysis is related to the performance of student teaching in the teacher residency program. The purpose of the study is to help teacher candidates gain experience in the classroom before they earn their teacher certification
- The emphasis was to learn the description of the participant's background and learning environment in the classroom while accentuating their teaching strategies, refinement, and reinforcement areas

##### **Increase Minorities (Hispanics & Female Students) Representation in the STEM field**

**Aug 2022**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- The purpose of this project is to increase the presence and enrollment of Latino, Hispanic, and female students in higher education, more specifically in science, technology, engineering, and math
- According to the Pew Research Center, 25% of college students are from minorities or low socioeconomic status backgrounds. Minority students tend to have a higher risk of dropping out of classes and receiving fewer resources for academic success

##### **Helping Counselors Create Ethical and Affirming Spaces for English Language Learners**

**Jan 2022 - May 2022**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- The objective was to help counselors to develop moral and acknowledge spaces for English Language Learners since ELLs must be aware that there are going to be students who were born in the U.S. but with diverse cultural backgrounds and/or students who moved from another country
- Many students will face problems throughout their education, and advisors must be aware of them to see what they can do to help

##### **Multicultural Books as Windows and Mirrors**

**Jan 2022 - May 2022**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- The world looks different depending on who and where you are, and students need to practice understanding multiple points of view
- The study of texts that reflect their own identities, experiences, and motivations (mirrors) and provide insight into the identities, experiences, and motivations of others (windows) can move students toward more nuanced perceptions of the world around them

### **The Success and Support of Bilingual Students with Visual Impairments: A Case Study**

**Jan 2022 - May 2022**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- Cooperation between vision teachers, special education teachers, and ESL teachers is essential for students with limited proficiency in English and visual impairments to become fully literate and communicatively competent

### **AWARDS**

#### **Innovation and Career Advancement 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual:**

**April 2024**

*The University of Texas at San Antonio - Corporate Civic and Social Engagement (C.A.S.E) Challenge*

- In this competition, numerous groups registered, but only 20 were selected, and my team was among them
- C.A.S.E. "Equitable Tech Access" aims to improve digital literacy and close the digital gap in underserved communities through affordable internet, digital skills training, device provision, and healthcare and credit literacy. It seeks sustainable partnerships with local organizations, schools, and government bodies
- In less than 48 hours a solution needed to be developed, create a presentation, and produce a 3-minute video. Our project was selected and ranked among the top three

#### **2024 TACUSPA Texas Higher Education Law Conference Scholarship recipient**

**Feb 2024**

*The University of North Texas*

- Attending the UNT 2024 Texas Higher Education Law Conference provided me with invaluable opportunities for enhancing my understanding of legal issues and policy frameworks relevant to higher education
- This award is a state-wide recognition for the high quality of my work and potential contributions to the higher education field
- Link: <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ik=5d1d16bd21&view=pt&search=all&permmsgid=msg-f:1791066276577808935&simpl=msg-f:1791066276577808%E2%80%A6>

#### **Professor & Grad Student Spotlight Importance of Mariachi**

**Nov 2022**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin - Odessa American*

- Based on Hispanic Heritage Month, Mariachi is the most universally recognized emblem of Mexican identity around the world. Since there is a conversation about cultural identity, music, celebrations, festivities, dances, and folklore involved when talking about Mariachi
- Link: <https://www.oaoa.com/local-news/professor-grad-student-spotlight-importance-of-mariachi/>

### **MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS**

#### **Cohort Leader -Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS)**

**Aug 2023 – Present**

*The University of Texas at San Antonio*

- Collaborated, as a PhD leader from my cohort, with leaders from diverse cohorts in our program.
- Customized various issues encountered throughout the semester and over the years, seeking solutions to prevent these problems from recurring

#### **The National Society of Leadership and Success -Vice-President**

**May 2021 – May 2023**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- Assisted students in setting career objectives, developing leadership abilities, and putting their ambitions into motion
- Fabricated access to critical tools for success in the future and for making a difference in the world through our program, which offers a life-altering experience

#### **Tennis Team Captain**

**Aug 2019 -Oct 2020**

*The University of Texas Permian Basin*

- Communicated, as the tennis captain, with my teammates in both English and Spanish as needed
- Motivated a diverse group of over 40 men and women, working with different cultures and using my communication skills to support them in any way possible

**Public Relations Officer International College Honor Society****Aug 2018 - May 2019***Laredo College*

- Acknowledged, Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), college students' academic achievements and provides members with opportunities to develop as intellectuals and leaders

**President Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)****Jan 2018 - May 2019***Laredo College*

- Committed to expand employment opportunities for Latinos, Hispanics, and Chicanos in higher education as well as improving education.
- Focused on the main goal, which is to provide Latinx/Hispanic/Chicanx -related topics for discussion in state, regional, and local forums, as well as to actively build networks with people and organizations working to change laws and policies that hurt our constituents
- Encouraged educational advocacy, cultural recognition, and advancement because TACHE is the epicenter of Latino success in Texas. Opportunities for academics, connection, mentoring, and networking for our members and community

**CERTIFICATIONS & LICENSES**

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**Spanish Language and Culture Certification****May 2021***The University of Texas-Permian Basin***Special Licenses:**

- SciPhD Training **Feb 2024**
  - *The University of Texas at San Antonio*
- Communication: Poster Presentation **April 2024**
  - *The University of Texas at San Antonio*
- Communication: Poster Design **April 2024**
  - *The University of Texas at San Antonio*