

**Opening Session of the 2019 Virtual Best Practices Showcase  
Ana G. Méndez University, Gurabo Campus  
February 7, 2019  
Gurabo, PR**

**PROPOSED AGENDA**

**1:00 – 1:30 pm**      **Registration**

**1:30 - 3:00 pm**      **Opening Virtual Best Practices Showcase –Argentina Hills Amphitheater of the  
Museum at Universidad Ana G. Méndez, Gurabo Campus**

1:30 – 1-45 pm      Welcome remarks and introductions

*By Yubelkys Montalvo, HETS Executive Director, David Méndez Ph.D, Chancellor  
AGMU Gurabo, and Carlos Vargas-Aburto, Ph.D., HETS Chairman*

1:40 – 2-50 pm      Opening Panel: **Leveraging Partnerships to Support Student Access, Learning,  
and Success.** By



**Dr. Deborah Below** is the vice president for enrollment management and student success at Southeast Missouri State University. Formerly, she served as Dean of Students and as Director of Admissions at Southeast, and as Director of Admissions and Financial Aid at Jefferson College. She currently serves as a peer reviewer for the Higher Learning Commission. She led Southeast’s team participating in the Missouri Completion Academy, sponsored by Complete College America and the Missouri Department of Higher Education in 2013. In 2015, she served as co-chair of the President’s Task Force on Diversity Education at Southeast and is presently involved with strategic planning for comprehensive internationalization. Dr. Below is leading several efforts at Southeast to improve student completion rates including academic advising and support initiatives, the Transfer Mentor Program, and SupportNET. She is a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University where she majored in Mass Communication. She earned her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Missouri-St. Louis.



**Dr. Alberto Dávila** is Dean of the Harrison College of Business and Computing and Professor of Economics at Southeast Missouri State University. His research interests include the economics of the U.S.-Mexico border, the economics of immigration, and Hispanic labor markets. In addition to numerous journal articles and book chapters, Dr. Davila’s publications include two books [Population, Migration, and Socioeconomic Outcomes among Island and Mainland Puerto Ricans: La Crisis Boricua (Lexington Books, 2017, with Marie T. Mora and Havidán Rodríguez); and the award-winning Hispanic Entrepreneurs in the 2000s: An Economic Profile and Policy Implications (Stanford University Press, 2013, with Mora)] and two coedited volumes. His recent recognitions include the Academic Achievement Award from the American Society of Hispanic Economists, of which he is a former President and founding member. Dr. Dávila earned his Ph.D. in Economics from Iowa State University.



**Dr. Debbie Lee- DiStefano**, is a professor of Spanish in the department of Communication Studies and Modern Languages at Southeast Missouri State University. Her area of research focuses on people of Asian descent in the Americas, having published three monographs as well as several articles, and organized three symposiums about the topic. She is an avid promoter of study abroad, having taken students to several countries in Spanish America, Spain, and Taiwan, as well as establishing semester exchanges with the University of the Americas in Quito, Ecuador and the University of León in León, Spain. She most recently started a minor in Spanish for the Health Professions, focusing on Spanish language acquisition and cultural competence/humility. She earned the title Scholar because of her participation in the Missouri Course Redesign Initiative, a state-wide initiative that promoted the use of technology in the classroom; started a Spanish-English conversation partner program between Southeast Missouri State and UDLA; and has expanded her area's online and hybrid offerings, teaching language and Latina literature. She has presented to her peers on campus regarding the need to view the student holistically as a means of increasing student access, focusing on both domestic and international students.



**Ms. Rhonda Weller-Stilson**, Prior to becoming the Dean of the Holland College of Arts and Media, Ms. Rhonda Weller-Stilson served as the director of the Holland School of Visual and Performing Arts. Other past Southeast duties include Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance and Professor of Theatre in Costume and Scenic Design. Before joining Southeast 17 years ago, Ms. Weller-Stilson taught at the following institutions: The Alabama School of Mathematics and Science, University of South Alabama and Texas Woman's University. She has been a freelance designer and shop supervisor in both costumes and scenery, and has worked with such theatres as Fort Worth Shakespeare in the Park, Oklahoma Shakespearean Festival, Orlando Shakespeare Festival, Hip Pocket Theatre, Missouri Summer Repertory Theatre, and New Orleans' Le Petit Vieux Carre. She is a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University, where she majored in art and theatre. After completing her bachelor's degree, she received a Master of Arts in Theatre from the University of Missouri-Columbia. Ms. Weller-Stilson finished her graduate work at Tulane University with a Master of Fine Arts in Costume and Scenery Design.

2:45 – 3:00 pm      Concluding Remarks

By Carlos Vargas-Aburto, Ph.D., HETS Chairman

3:00 pm              Event evaluation (Please scan QR code below to access the online questionnaire)



Note: You can also access the online survey on this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZQJXK7F>