

# Profiles of Young Scholars

October 2001

Organizational Performance and Policy Decisions in the U.S. and Mexico





## About the AIHEPS Project

The Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies (AIHEPS), a collaboration between New York University and the Centro de Investigacion y Estudios Avanzados (CINVESTAV) in Mexico City, was funded in September 1999 by The Ford Foundation to conduct policy research in Mexico and the United States over a three-year period with two primary objectives: (1) to improve comparative understanding of how changes in higher education policies (rules of the game) alter the nature of higher education services produced as well as the conditions under which they are provided; and (2) to serve as a vehicle for training a small cadre of younger policy scholars in both nations. The project is also aimed at building capacity at New York University and CINVESTAV for conducting further policy studies, and making the information available to appropriate policy audiences.

The following questions reflect some of the lines of inquiry the project has pursued:

- Higher education systems operate in very different policy environments as measured by such attributes as constitutional status, federal/state influence, political culture, and executive powers. Are there aspects of the policy environment that seem to be associated with particular performance patterns? Have states attempted to alter their policy environments? Are there particular combinations within policy environments that seem either to facilitate or constrain the capacity of a state to adapt to changes in the external environment?
- Starting from quite different points, states appear to be changing their system designs, their arrangements for collaboration, communication and accountability, and their fiscal policies to incorporate greater emphasis on market mechanisms. How have these changes influenced performance as measured by the indicators conceptualized by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in the U.S. and comparable indicators in Mexican settings? Can aspects of performance be traced to particular configurations of these “rules of the game?”
- Federal governments may play the defining role in a national system of higher education (as in Mexico), or the role of change agent, consumer advocate, and research contractor (as in the U.S.). How are federal roles changing? To what extent are federal roles complementary to those enacted by states? Are there discernible differences in system performance patterns that can reasonably be related to differences in the “rules of the game” as these are defined and implemented at the federal level?

The AIHEPS project has produced the following products, all of which are or soon will be available in Spanish and English on our web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/iesp/aiheps/>. Links to these products are also available through the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (National Center) and through several sites that are regularly visited by the Mexican audience for these products. Products are written according to a mutually agreed upon framework that facilitates comparative analysis.

- Case reports for the states of Guanajuato, Jalisco, New Jersey, and New Mexico.
- Federal reports for the U.S. and Mexico.
- This conceptual overview describing the model for understanding linkages between policy and performance as developed to this stage of the project as well as graphic and textual representations of the remaining work.
- A summary report of the younger scholars who have been involved with the project and their contributions.

The following products are planned for the third year of the project and will be available on the web site.

- A synthesis report for the U.S. that incorporates insights from the federal report, and the two state reports. The intent here is to suggest propositions about the linkages between policy and performance that can be inferred from the data collected in the U.S. studies. This report will provide a “jumping off” point for the discussion involving policy leaders to be held in Jersey City, New Jersey, on June 21, 2002.
- A similar synthesis report for Mexico that serves as the “jumping off” point for the policy discussion to be held in Guanajuato in April 2002 (tentative).
- A policy paper reporting the conclusions from the U.S. meeting written in a format designed for wide distribution to a policy audience. The National Center will assist in the development and distribution of this paper.
- A policy paper reporting the conclusions from the Mexico meeting designed for wide distribution in that nation.
- A synthesis report that incorporates the results of the cross-national analysis of data from the two countries by the project co-directors.
- A revised report of the grounded model for understanding how policy can constructively contribute to the attainment of public priorities.

A proposal is pending to refine the model, add Canada to the national profiles, and increase from four to twelve the number of state and provincial profiles constructed around the model. Profiles will individually and collectively expand our understanding of

the linkages between policy environments, rules of the game, and higher education performance in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. The addition of Canada will focus attention on the variation in federal involvement in higher education systems and provide a contrast between a system that is entirely “public” and systems that are mixed between public and private institutions. It will also make possible some comparison of the policies within different higher education systems for improving access and opportunity, including provisions for indigenous/aboriginal peoples.



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This report is a compilation of profiles of young scholars who have contributed to the AIHEPS Project. Each profile consists of the professional background of each scholar, the particular work they contributed to the Project and a reflection on their experience working on the Project, in their own words. From these profiles it is evident that not only have the young scholars contributed tremendously to the Project, the Project did meet its stated objective.

# AMANDA AZCONA

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## University of Puebla, Mexico

### Background

Amanda Azcona received her undergraduate degree in Linguistics from the University of Puebla, Mexico. She completed the course program for the Master's in Higher Education and is currently working as an assistant for institutional research at the Planning Department of the same university. Her master's thesis is being developed in collaboration with the Project.

Her experience previous to the AIHEPS Project was: 1) Unidad Regional Tehuacan Project, a study about the educative regulation to justify the opening of a Academic Union of the BUAP in the county of Tehuacan, Puebla and programming their curriculum offerings. Her work consisted of calculating the demands of scholarship and making an analysis of the existing education offerings in that state. 2) *Seguimiento de Egresados de la BUAP Project*: her work consisted in reviewing and modifying the tools to obtain data from the graduates. 3) She produced a study *Projecting the Offerings and Demands of Higher Education for 2010 in seven Mexican states: Oaxaca, Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz, Puebla, Tlaxcala and Mexico City*. Her work consisted in the elaboration of curriculum offerings in each one of the states, and the elaboration of the projections to 2010, completing the previous information with socioeconomic and demographic data (age groups that correspond to High School and University)

In the AIHEPS Project her work consisted in the transcriptions of interviews and the analysis of codified interviews to make comparisons in education policies in the different subsystems. She is focusing her attention in Technological Universities (a higher education subsystem- short education programs) because her masters' thesis will consist of an analysis of the outcomes of the linkages between planning and government in the technological universities of Guanajuato, Mexico.

### Reflection on Experience

Being a part of the Mexican team in the AIHEPS Project has taught me how to work with a research team and how the individual work that each member does to help in elaborate global analysis of documents. I have also learned that what is really fulfilling is participating in a research project where discussions arise from the work meetings where the findings are presented.

Working on the AIHEPS Project, in a professional way, has allowed me to get to know all the education policies that have been implemented in my country during the nineties, to get to know more about the education situation of my country, to learn the different attitudes of different actors toward their education policies, and learning, in a tangible way, about their victories and errors. Personally, it has allowed me to work with a research team in Higher Education.

# TOM CARTON

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## **New York University, New York**

### Background

Tom Carton is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Administration, Leadership, and Technology in New York University's Steinhardt School of Education. He holds a BA from Rider University and an MPA from the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. Before coming to NYU, Tom worked as a legislative aide with the New Jersey legislature and as an advisor to a small not-for-profit educational organization. His areas of interest include policy theory, state-level policy analysis, and higher education performance.

### Work on AIHEPS

Tom serves as a graduate assistant for the AIHEPS Project. He gathered the state documents for New Jersey, interviewed policy makers and members of the New Jersey Commission on Higher Education, and transcribed, coded, and analyzed the information gathered. He also observed senate sessions and select committee meetings of the New Jersey Legislature and provided support to the senior Project staff.

### Reflection on Experience

The research Project is an invaluable asset to my doctoral study, as the convergence of theory and practice provide a unique lens through which to view inquiry. The structure of the Alliance allows me, as a younger scholar, to interact with seasoned scholars who act as compassionate guides through a complex process. Senior Project staff regularly assist me in developing skills as an observant, dispassionate investigator. And, the opportunity to interview policy actors across institutional sectors as well as from within the political arena provides encouragement to continue researching the interface between higher education and government. ❁

# WIETSE DE VRIES

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## **Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, Mexico**

### Background

Wietse was not exactly new in the field of policy studies when he entered AIHEPS. Since the beginning of the 1990s he started collaborating with a small group of researchers interested in the theme of higher education policy studies, both in Mexico and with colleagues from Latin America. Parallel to this work as an associate, he finished his master's and doctorate. After that, he came to know the practical side of public policies as director of planning at the BUAP.

### Reflection on Experience

The AIHEPS Project has meant important new experiences. First, it introduced new ways of looking at policies and their elaboration. It has become clear to me that when we look at Mexican policies, or even at policies within Latin America, we take a lot for granted. That is, we look at policies that have surged over the years, paying scant attention to possible initiatives that never developed. During our work on comparisons between the US and Mexico we found out on several occasions that policies at work in one country were never thought of in the other case or were not considered even possible. In that way, we have become to learn more about policy contexts, made up by structural and cultural elements. It will be very interesting to see to what point these differences in policy context produce different outcomes.

A second point considers on work on comparative methodology and new ways of looking at policies from a comparative perspective. This has not an easy part, but it surely has been very interesting (and continues to be so). Along the way, we have been working on the theoretical framework; something one starts with under other circumstances. However, in previous projects where we compared policies in Latin America, we used to make broad and general comparisons, without having a sound methodology to do so. One of the major problems of doing comparisons of policies without this framework is that the case reports tend to be just that: case reports without real comparisons. The most interesting part of the work with AIHEPS is that we have at least started to develop such a framework, with the possibility to apply the same framework to other countries.

The work on reports is not only useful to academe, but also to policy makers. By looking at policies in a different comparative perspective, and by working on a new theoretical framework to compare policies and outcomes, we may provide useful information to those who develop and implement policies (at least for me as a policy implementer it is very interesting). ❁

## **ALEJANDRO GAMBOA**

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**University of Puebla, Mexico**

### Background

Alejandro's undergraduate studies were in sociology at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. He has experience as an assistant researcher in the Sub secretary of Higher Education office and researched innovation reforms in federal high schools specifically. He is now enrolled in a Master's program of education research at the CINVESTAV.

### Work with AIHEPS

As a master's student and a member of the AIHEPS Project, Alejandro learned methodological issues, from making a list of codes to codifying interviews, interviewing the key actors in our research, and learning basic computer programs such as "Nudist" (N5). In relation to this, he learned the design and implementation of public policies in

higher education, obtaining a better understanding about political priorities in higher education among the different governmental levels. In a parallel way he has garnered the theoretical-methodological elements to construct a good thesis.

#### Reflection on Experience

My experiences on the Project are learning more about the higher education system, design and implementation of higher education policies, developing and finishing my master's thesis that is related to the Project, and finally, consolidating my information from this Project into a doctoral program. When I finish my master's degree, I wish to continue to do education research, and education policy especially. In the frame of the AIHEPS Project, I am developing my master's thesis named: "The Implementation of Public Policies in Technological Education: Quality and Pertinence," in the states of Jalisco and Guanajuato. ❁

## **GRAZIELLA VILLARREAL GARZA**

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**New York University, New York**

#### Background:

Graziella worked as an assistant principal in a private school in Mexico for 3 years and taught a University a class named "Vocational Orientation." Last year she worked as a tutor in a program called SFA (Success For All) helping bilingual students with reading and writing. She is currently enrolled in the Educational Administration master's degree program at New York University.

#### Work with AIHEPS

Graziella's work with AIHEPS has consisted specifically in the translation of documents from English to Spanish and vice versa.

#### Reflection on Experience

I have been able to relate my work to my actual classes, such as Politics in Education, and Educational Reforms among others. Also, I have improved my knowledge in both Higher Educational Systems in Mexico and US. I have learned how the process of politics, about the outcomes of improving policies in education, and about the key actors of policymaking and how these actors affect higher education.

I think that this work will fulfill one of my goals: getting involved in Higher Education when I return to Mexico (probably in 5 or 6 years). I was considering enrolling in a doctoral program in Higher Education, and this Project has convinced me to do so. I think my involvement in AIHEPS will be an excellent experience for my professional formation, and this will open many opportunities toward my future. ❁

# **ALICIA D. HURLEY**

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New York University, New York

## Background

Alicia Hurley is a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Administration with an emphasis in policy at New York University. She currently holds the position of Senior Policy Analyst for New York University's Government Relations Office. Ms. Hurley has an extensive background in higher education policy and financial aid. She worked in the financial aid offices of both the University of Colorado at Boulder and New York University, and served as a policy intern for the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance in Washington, DC. Her research interests include federal policy and higher education including student aid policy, science policy and tax policy.

## Work with AIHEPS

Her focus on the AIHEPS Project was to gather the federal documentation and interviews. She was able to conduct many of the interviews in conjunction with trips that she would take to Washington DC for work and was able to gain relatively easy access to the policy officials and congressional staff who were interviewed. What she found most interesting about the process of gathering data was to be able to approach her colleagues in a more academic manner and get their thoughts and insights on the federal policy landscape of the 1990s. Typically, she deals with the day to day issues and rarely has time to reflect as to what it all means; however, the interviewing provided that opportunity.

## Reflection on Experience

What I have gained most from the Project is an appreciation for team research. Working with a group of researchers, led by accomplished principals, is an invaluable experience. As a student, you get to work as an equal member at a table where ideas are flowing freely and through working together you start to see how shared products can shape and form to become one comprehensive product. In addition, working with our colleagues in Mexico and learning more about not just their country's economic, political and academic structures but also their culture and beliefs, has been terrific. It is a wonderful group that is assembled and I learn numerous things each time we are gathered.

My work with the Project has piqued my interests in international higher education policy. The Project with Mexico was just a first step, and I would say that I could see next steps for me (beyond finishing my PhD which has been moving along rapidly due to my involvement with the Project) would be to continue to explore and compare US and other country's systems. ❁

# MARIO MARTINEZ

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**New Mexico State University, New Mexico**

## Background

Mario Martinez is currently an Assistant Professor in Educational Management and Development at New Mexico State University. He has published in the areas of higher education finance and governance, performance funding, and state higher education performance. Mario's recent publication activity in state higher education performance and applying state higher education designs to case studies will soon appear in the Review of Higher Education and the Journal of Higher Education. Mario was also a member of a national advisory panel for the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education's national higher education report card project.

## Work with AIHEPS

Mario's involvement in the AIHEPS Project has been that of a younger scholar. Mario has functioned as the New Mexico coordinator. In this capacity, he has taken the lead in data collection in New Mexico as well as coordinating, arranging and conducting interviews. Mario has also been charged with the development of the New Mexico case study. The biggest value of the AIHEPS Project has been his involvement with and exposure to senior scholars within the Project and respected higher education figures that the Project has drawn upon for its team meetings. His hope is to continue working on the ideas that have developed out of the AIHEPS Project. He feels possible avenues are continued work with the Project, or he hopes to pursue information related to states that can be looked at in new and meaningful ways given the results of the AIHEPS research. His ultimate hope is to take emerging information and ideas and frame them in ways that are useful for the formation of higher education policy.

## Reflection on Experience

The chance to be involved in conceptual analysis that has implications for states and institutions across countries can only happen with the support of a Project like AIHEPS where the experience of senior professionals is combined with the younger professionals to create something meaningful. ✿

# VICTOR M. PACHECO

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**New Mexico State University, New Mexico**

## Background

Victor is a doctoral candidate in Education Management Development at New Mexico State University. He is interested in policy and governance systems. He currently serves as Assistant Vice President for Finance and Administration at the University of Texas at

El Paso. He has previously served as Accountant, Assistant Controller, and Director of Business Services at New Mexico State University's Division of Business and Finance.

#### Work on AIHEPS

His efforts on the AIHEPS Project thus far have been to 1) assist in gathering and summarizing data from various state, federal, and other publications/reports/websites 2) assist and participate in conducting and documenting the New Mexico interviews 3) input and compile data through the NUDIST program, 4) provide feedback on developing the NM Case Study.

#### Reflection on Experience

The information and concepts being developed in the AIHEPS Project have assisted me tremendously in developing ideas for my dissertation.

## **ANNE PRISCO**

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### **New York University, New York**

#### Background

Anne Prisco is an assistant research scientist with the AIHEPS Project at NYU. She recently completed her Ph.D. at Columbia University. Her dissertation topic is an empirical study of the trends in wage inequality and patterns of educational attainment in Italy, a country with a very small percentage of post-compulsory graduates, where intergenerational educational and occupational immobility persists. Anne has served as a financial aid administrator and enrollment management consultant to a myriad of post-secondary institutions, most recently with Pace University and Northeastern University. Her areas of interest include comparative educational policy, the economics of education, and higher education administration.

#### Work with AIHEPS

Since March, 2000 she has worked with the AIHEPS team to develop the conceptual framework and protocol, strategized both long- and short-term priorities and projects, developed interview procedures, identified key individuals to interview, managed the NJ itinerary, and conducted numerous interviews in NJ and DC.

#### Reflection on Experience

As an economist with experience in higher education administration, I particularly benefited from the research I conducted and the reports I drafted on federal policy and its linkages to institutional performance and student outcomes. I also enjoyed the interviewing experience and gained insights I do not think could ever have been discovered in a text or article. My work with the Project has enhanced my understanding of the fact that “policy matters”, and that the synergistic effect of federal/state/institutional policy making sometimes creates unintended consequences.

While I plan to remain involved in the Project, I have accepted a position at Lehman College of the City University of New York as Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management. In this role I will have the opportunity to see policy in action as I facilitate the process of both recruiting and retaining students in an environment where testing is increasing and performance outcomes will be tied to funding. I plan to continue a research agenda and contribute to the field of higher education policy and administration.



## **ROSALBA RAMIREZ**

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Center for Advanced Studies (CINVESTAV), Mexico

### Background

Rosalba Ramírez has an undergraduate degree in sociology from the National University of Mexico and a Master's degree in education from the Educational Research Department of the Center for Advanced Studies (CINVESTAV). She has specialized in the analysis of higher education policy in Mexico. She has written about the National University of Mexico's admission policy (in the 70s-80s); sociology's institutionalization process within the school that offered the first academic program in Mexico (FCPS-UNAM). She has collaborated with Rollin Kent in various studies, such as private higher education in the 1990s, disciplinary and organizational change, policy toward social sciences graduate programs, diagnosis of postgraduate training programs in public policy in Mexico. She is currently a research assistant at CINVESTAV and is an associate researcher of the Project.

### Work with AIHEPS

In the state of Guanajuato I have interviewed executives of the state SEP, a state representative in the congress and the principals of the public institutions in the state, including technological universities, federal technological institutes and Guanajuato University. I have been responsible for making the information systematic and elaborating on indicators. I prepared diverse materials and documents for the discussions at the meetings of the Mexican team and the complete team of AIHEPS

### Reflection on Experience

I have been learning since the first stages of the Project and the focus has been on education policies and the performance of institutions. I have learned the potential that national and international comparative research has from the inside perspective of research through the case studies, and the teamwork. Comparative research makes possible important discoveries in the similarities and differences in the way different levels of government and institutions respond, regulate and articulate their actions in the higher education arena.

In the field work I have learned the richness that is given when you get close to the real

life of institutions on a daily basis, identifying the difficulties that they encounter responding to different internal and external demands, and their ability to construct capacity (or not) to complete their work.

I will move to the next phase of the Project, explore the possibility of studying one of the themes that is of personal interest: a) the difficulties in the intergovernmental coordination in an environment of a growing decentralization, b) the way in which private institutes work and their particular forms of regulation in their design of state educational systems. ❁

## MARCIA M. ROE

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University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts

### Background

Marcia Roe is a lecturer in the Department of Educational Policy, Research and Administration (EPRA) at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. She recently completed a Ph.D. in higher education administration from New York University; her research training is concentrated in qualitative methodology. Before beginning her faculty career in fall 2000, she spent 15 years as a higher education administrator in public and private colleges and universities in New Jersey, New York and Virginia.

### Work with AIHEPS

Marcia joined the AIHEPS Project in February 2001, after completing her Ph.D. and while working as a clinical assistant professor at New York University in the Department of Administration, Leadership and Technology. To date, her role has included assisting in data collection by transcribing interviews of institutional leaders and legislators in New Jersey, attending meetings of the New York based team, and contributing to team discussions concerning the data collection process and analyses. Together with one of the Project's doctoral students, she co-authored a paper for submission to the national meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

### Reflection on Experience

On a practical level, this Project has helped broaden my understanding and appreciation of how qualitative methods may be used in policy study. I have observed the obstacles and strategies associated with conducting a qualitative study in the public arena, and the complexities and challenges of thinking through a comparative case study, especially across countries. I have also learned the ways that qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other to offer a more complete picture of the higher education policy scene.

On a substantive level, my knowledge of higher education policy before my involvement with this Project was limited primarily to the institutional perspective. The Project has given me a deeper understanding of the relative involvement and influence of various

external stakeholders in the higher education policy arena – governor, state and local legislators, administrative office/agencies – in addition to institutional leaders. This knowledge has already enriched my teaching and course design, both at New York University and at the University of Massachusetts.

As the Project’s work progresses, I look forward to learning how best to communicate research findings to stakeholders outside of academe, in ways that may effectively inform future policy decisions. I am interested in the intended and unintended consequences of state policy decisions, and the ways in which institutions and systems negotiate policy change. Finally, the University of Massachusetts’ recently-established Center for Education Policy, based in the EPRA department, has already established a strong relationship with the state as a resource for studying state education policy and reform initiatives. As the Center continues its involvement in state policy research, I anticipate that my experience with the AIHEPS Project will enhance my future contributions to this Center. ❁

## **CHRISTINE GÖTZ SHAKESPEARE**

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**New York University, New York**

### Background

Christine is a first year doctoral student in the higher education program at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Education. She joins the AIHEPS (Alliance for International Higher Education Policy Studies) team as a graduate assistant.

Christine worked for 5 years at the Texas Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service, where she took on the responsibility of building a volunteerism infrastructure for the state Texas that basically involved networking and connecting the private, public and nonprofit sectors both through communication and through conferences. This work culminated with the creation of the Texas Campus Compact, a state office of the national Campus Compact a group of presidents of colleges and universities in Texas who come together to demonstrate their commitment to building civic engagement in the students of their respective campuses.

Other professional experiences have brought her into the realm of governmental relations at the University of Texas System, Office of Admissions at Hofstra University and eligibility work in Richmond, Virginia both for the City of Richmond and for neighboring Henrico County.

### Work with AIHEPS

Christine assists with the research dissemination, through publications and the AIHEPS website. She is also preparing for the June 2002 meeting with oversight of the meeting logistics.

#### Reflection on Experience

Though new to research, to the field of higher education policy, and to being a doctoral student, I am thrilled to be a part of this research project. I have already gleaned a lot of information, especially from my peers. I joined the Project in September and though I have not participated in the research and gathering of data per se, I have been able to follow the discussions about conceptual framework, drawing conclusions, presenting the information in a digestible format, and disseminating the information electronically and at the meeting in June 2002. I look forward to the possibility of continuing to work on this Project beyond this year and to learning about conducting the type of research that this team has worked on for the last few years.