



LUIS G. PEDRAJA, Ph.D.

As a child, Dr. Pedraja emigrated from Cuba and grew up in a low-income Miami neighborhood. He became the first in his family to attend college; and he later earned a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. Focusing on Latino perspectives, Dr. Pedraja published books and articles exploring how understanding language and culture can promote intercultural dialogue and tolerance. In addition, he has published on higher education issues and best practices, including governance, assessment, strategic planning, and faculty and program development. He taught philosophy, ethics, and religious studies at the University of Puget Sound and Southern Methodist University, where he served as a division chair and faculty senator. After later becoming a dean and provost, Dr. Pedraja continued mentoring Latino graduate students and served as President of *La Comunidad* of Hispanic Scholars in his discipline. Dr. Pedraja advocates passionately for increased higher education access for all people, especially marginalized people who have been underserved historically by the American higher education system; and he has been quoted on this topic by media outlets including the *Associated Press*, *Huffington Post*, *International Business Times*, and Univision.

Currently, Dr. Pedraja serves as Interim Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs for California's 35,000-student Peralta Community College District, where he leads faculty, staff, and administrators to develop innovative programs and ensure student success. From 2011-2016, Dr. Pedraja was Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Antioch University Los Angeles, a non-profit institution serving adult students with bachelor degree completion and professional graduate programs. Dr. Pedraja partnered with the Los Angeles Community College District and led Antioch's creation of competency-based, hybrid, and online degree programs in applied studies, business, technology and criminal justice; those programs allow students to apply all community college and workforce development credits toward bachelor degrees. Dr. Pedraja also led the establishment of on-site bachelor degree completion programs at community colleges and an early college program at L.A. high schools. These innovative programs provide clear pathways to college for K-12 students in underserved communities, and help adult students achieve new professional goals and career advancement.

From 2004-2011, Dr. Pedraja served as Vice President for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. He advanced universal access to quality higher education by overseeing accreditation of community colleges and universities from New York to Washington, D.C., and in Puerto Rico. Dr. Pedraja also led the first program to grant American accreditation to foreign universities. Since then, universities in South America, Asia, and Europe have retained him for guidance on achieving American higher education standards. At Middle States, Dr. Pedraja also developed higher education policy and advocated strategic solutions to a range of challenges including financial, governance, and political crises. For instance, Dr. Pedraja was instrumental in resolving student protests at the University of Puerto Rico that had debilitated the entire university system for months. At the invitation of the Higher Learning Commission, Dr. Pedraja also successfully led a 2014 evaluation of Arizona's Pima Community College District, which had been under probation for violations of multiple higher education standards.

Outside academic life, Dr. Pedraja has volunteered extensively with the American Red Cross Disaster Services and local emergency management. He has also served on non-profit boards and co-founded two non-profit organizations, one focused on animal rescue and the other on supporting cancer patients' families. Dr. Pedraja lives in California with his wife and daughter.