



Rising Star: Dr. Jaime Chahin receives honor, grant for one of his worthy programs

Every spring for the first 11 years of his life, Jaime Chahin had to leave his Eagle Pass, Texas, home a month before school let out to travel to places like Oregon, Montana, Washington and Idaho — places where his parents could earn a living picking potatoes, hops and cherries and hoeing sugar beets. It was in those fields and orchards during those long, hot summers that Chahin learned the value of opportunity and education.

“My frame of reference was working with the sun on your back for nine or 10 hours a day and getting paid \$25 an acre,” he says. “It made me real hungry.”

That hunger spurred Chahin to charge through his secondary education with single-minded determination. After graduating from Eagle Pass High School in 1971, he earned his bachelor’s degree in sociology and political science in just 33 months, immediately landed a full scholarship to pursue his master’s from the University of Michigan, then completed his doctorate in education administration in 1977 before his 25th birthday.

Today, as the dean of the College of Applied Arts at Texas State, Chahin hasn’t forgotten his roots. He has made it his mission to introduce educational opportunity into places it often isn’t found.

Among his many efforts are receiving funding to endow the [Tomás Rivera Children’s Book Award](#) to promote literacy; establishing Caminos, a summer camp held at Texas State that helps disadvantaged ninth-graders he calls “youth of promise” prepare for high school; helping to create the Rockefeller Brothers Fund’s (RBF) national Fellowships for Aspiring Teachers of Color program; producing [“The Forgotten Americans”](#) a PBS documentary on colonias on the U.S. Mexico border and engaging students with cameras to document their social condition; and establishing the Center for Migrant Education at Texas State.

The Center for Migrant Education

Chahin established the center in 2000 with a small grant to provide training to teachers of migrant students within the state of Texas. Its responsibility grew rapidly. In 2003, the center's staff received its first five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) in the amount of \$2.8 million. "That began the first effort to provide training and in-service to migrant education staff in the school districts throughout the nation," Chahin says.

In 2008, the center received another five-year, \$3.1 million grant from the DOE, giving Chahin good reason to take pride in the part the center and its staff has played in bringing educational opportunities to migrant students.

"We received this grant in a national competition during difficult financial times in this country," he says. "To continue funding for the next five years means the center staff has done exemplary work to provide the training and in-service that is needed to support the migrant education programs in America."

Those programs include providing instructional resources and technical assistance to educators who work with migrant students. The center facilitates training for every state in the nation that has a migrant education program. It also brings bilingual teachers from Mexico into the school districts where they are needed to provide critical summer instruction to migrant students.

"A migrant student might leave Texas or Mexico in late April to go to Wisconsin and come back in September or October," Chahin explains. "So they miss [school] the month of May and potentially the month of September. The Center for Migrant Education makes sure they transfer transcripts and have instructional support so they can continue their education and they don't lose out when they come back to their home base."

Under another DOE grant, the Center for Migrant Education also coordinates the CAMP program for migrant students attending Texas State. "It pays tuition, room and board, fees and a stipend for 50 migrant students a year," Chahin says. "It's for the whole freshman year, so it adds up to about \$13,000 per student."

#### Fellowships for Aspiring Teachers of Color

In 2008, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund honored Chahin for his years of service to its Fellowships for Aspiring Teachers of Color program, which he helped establish. Each year the program selects 25 college juniors from across the United States receive fellowships of \$22,000 to attend graduate school.

RBF recognized Chahin at its annual summer workshop in New York, where he gives a presentation each year to the RBF Fellows and advises them about applying for graduate school and finding matching funds for their fellowships.

Back home at Texas State, Chahin personally coaches the university's nominees for the RBF Fellowship. "I spend six weeks with our students who are chosen," he says. "I tell them, 'You have to show that you know the applied part, that you know about the theory, and that you have the passion to want to be a master teacher.'"

Most recently, Chahin coached education majors [Audrey Estupinan and Albert Walker](#), who became the 18th and 19th Texas State students to receive RBF Fellowships since the program's inception.

### The Road Ahead: Los Caminitos

Chahin's newest project, Los Caminitos, is a spin-off of Caminos, the six-week summer camp he created to provide disadvantaged ninth-graders with the opportunity to earn high school credits and gain the confidence to take a college-bound curriculum.

Los Caminitos targets much younger students — 4-year-olds. Inspired by a book he read about the impact that early exposure to language has on children's ability to learn and succeed academically, Chahin is working to bring together colleagues from Texas State's Department of Family and Consumer Sciences to launch the program at Bonham, a San Marcos pre-kindergarten.

"I have to sell them on the idea," he says. "They're the experts in early childhood education. I don't know anything about that. The job of a dean is to facilitate the engagement of other scholars and identify potential funding resources."

Chahin has an idea for that. As a National Kellogg Fellow, an honor he received in 1993, he plans to seek grant funding from the Kellogg Foundation for Los Caminitos.

If Los Caminitos becomes reality, it will be yet another worthy project Chahin's passion for education has brought to students and another notable addition to his curriculum vita, but more important, to the public good.

"If someone asks me where my passion for all these programs come from," Chahin says. "I say, 'I lived it.'"

Courtesy of the Texas State University Webpage.