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Contact: Veronica Rivera, Executive Director, (202) 466-0808 or vrivera@alasedu.org

Six ALAS Members Selected by White House as Champions of Change

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS) is pleased to announce the selection of six of its members, including three board members, as Champions of Change by the White House for making positive changes in their communities.

Selected from across the nation, the honorees have “engaged and supported the Latino community through education” and were selected because of their “tremendous work and leadership.” The ALAS honorees are:

Susana Cordova, Denver, Colorado

ALAS Board Member Susana Cordova is Chief Schools Officer of Denver Public Schools (DPS). She is a life-long Denver resident and has worked at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She has also held several leadership positions in the DPS central office. Susana believes in the power of our schools to transform our communities. She has worked with principals, content specialists and classroom teachers to support rigorous instruction and strives for inclusionary practices to meet the needs of all learners. Among other things, Susana brought the English Language Acquisition program to DPS for students learning English as a second language.

Dr. Daniel King, Mission, Texas

ALAS Board Member Dr. Daniel King is the Superintendent of the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District, which serves more than 32,000 students in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Dr. King has implemented a comprehensive approach to drop-out prevention and recovery, as well as a systemic scale-up of dual enrollment and Early College High Schools. The results have been staggering: Over the past few years, the district's four-year graduation rate increased from 62.4 percent to 90.1 percent. Dr. King looks forward to continuing to increase educational attainment for students in his district, the vast majority of whom are Latino.

Dr. Gonzalo La Cava, Atlanta, Georgia

Dr. Gonzalo La Cava is the Area Superintendent for Fulton County Schools' Central Learning Community, a grouping of schools surrounding the city of Atlanta. More than 18,000 students attend 23 schools in this learning community. Dr. La Cava works with each school's leadership to achieve unprecedented academic results for all students and to guide its leaders in day-to-day operations and management. Prior to this role, Dr. La Cava served Fulton County Schools as its Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services and its Executive Director of Services for Exceptional Children. Dr. La Cava participated in the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy (SLA).

Pedro A. Rivera, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

ALAS Board Secretary Pedro A. Rivera is Superintendent of the Lancaster School District in Pennsylvania. His district serves a diverse student body of 11,500 students, 84 percent of whom are economically disadvantaged and about 10 percent of whom experience homelessness over the course of the school

year. Pedro is a first-generation college graduate and the first Latino superintendent in the district. As superintendent, he emphasizes the importance of providing a high-quality education for all students and highlights his personal journey as an example for others to follow. Under his leadership, the school district has developed and implemented a new curriculum, an aggressive professional development plan, and innovative teacher observation tools.

Pat Sánchez, Denver, Colorado

Pat Sánchez is Superintendent of Adams County School District 14 in Colorado. Pat has more than 23 years of administrative experience and has chosen to serve disadvantaged communities by working in urban, predominantly Latino schools. In Adams 14, roughly 80 percent of students qualify for free or reduced price school meals, and over 85 percent of students are children of color. In 2013, the district made unprecedented academic progress, as Adams 14 Schools experienced the largest single-year increase in Transitional Colorado Assessment Program (TCAP) scores since 2007. His mantra – “Failure is Not an Option” – guides his leadership and will continue to inspire him to work harder on behalf of the students he engages. Pat also participated in the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy.

Anibal Soler, Jr., Rochester, New York

Anibal Soler, Jr. is Principal of East High School, the largest urban high school in Rochester, New York, serving a population of 1,700 students. In 2000, Anibal began his career in urban education as an art teacher. Less than a decade later, he became Principal of East High School, a school that was then-labeled as persistently dangerous by the New York State Education Department. At East High School, Anibal has instilled a focus on increasing academic outcomes for students. He continues to lead the school’s transformational efforts by developing a partnership with the University of Rochester’s Warner School of Education. Anibal has also participated in the ALAS Superintendents Leadership Academy.

“ALAS has long worked toward creating a level playing field for all students, with a focus on Latino students and English Language Learners,” said Veronica Rivera, ALAS executive director. “The fact that so many of ALAS’ members have been recognized as part of the Champions of Change program demonstrates that the success of these students is critical to the overall success of our communities.”

Finalists for the Champions of Change program included another ALAS board member and two SLA participants. They are Valeria Silva, ALAS Board Treasurer and Superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools; Dr. David Mauricio, SLA participant and Community Superintendent of Buffalo Public Schools; and Liliana Salazar, SLA participant and District Director for Exceptional Student Education at Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The Champions of Change program was created as an opportunity for the White House to feature individuals doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities. The event will be live-streamed on the White House website at www.whitehouse.gov/live at 10:15 AM Eastern.

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About the Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)

The ALAS mission is to provide leadership at the national level that assures every school in America effectively serves the educational needs of all students, with an emphasis on Latino youth, by building capacity, promoting best practices, and transforming educational institutions. ALAS was established in 2003 in response to a lack of national advocacy and representation of Latino students.