

Biography

Maria Vazquez, PhD

Maria Vazquez, PhD, is a dedicated leader in higher education with a deep commitment to service. She currently serves as the Vice President for Student Affairs at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, Nebraska, where her role reflects her lifelong dedication to supporting and empowering students.

Born in Mexico City, MX and raised in South Omaha, Maria began her educational journey at Metropolitan Community College, earning an Associate of Arts degree. She continued her studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, obtaining both her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work, followed by a PhD in Educational Administration from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in 2017.

Maria's career includes roles in public service and education. She served as a staff assistant to U.S. Senator Ben Nelson, acting as a statewide community liaison for Latino and general populations. She then became the first Latina to join former Omaha Mayor Mike Fahey's cabinet as the Director of the Greater Omaha Workforce Development.

Following her public service, Maria returned to MCC, where she has held several key positions, including Dean at the South Omaha Campus and Associate Vice President. As Dean, she oversaw Campus and Student Services, managed Student Conduct and Discipline, and led community outreach initiatives. In her role as Associate Vice President, she was instrumental in fostering a service-oriented culture and enhancing the student experience.

In her current position as Vice President for Student Affairs, Maria is dedicated to ensuring access to higher education for all students, improving systems, and removing barriers to student success.

Recognizing the need for inclusive community support, Maria was a founding member of the Intercultural Senior Center which was established to provide a welcoming place for newcomers and immigrant seniors that often feel isolated. Maria has served on a variety of boards and partnered with wide ranging groups, including Canopy South, the Salvation Army, the Heartland Workers Center, the Kroc Center, the Latino Center of the Midlands, the Faser Stryker Diversity Scholarship, Grief's Journey, Fontenelle Forest, and Girls Inc. She was also a founding member the Heartland Latino Leadership Conference and the United Latino Endowment.

Her contributions have been widely recognized. In 2021, Maria received the Impact Award from the University of Nebraska Lincoln for her significant community impact. She was honored with the Martin Luther King Community Award by Douglas County in 2019, and in 2017, she was recognized by the Women's Center for Advancement in Tribute to Women. Maria was named Latina of the Year by the Barrientos Scholarship Foundation in 2014 and received the University of Nebraska Omaha Alumni Award for Excellence in Public Service in 2010. Additionally, she was among the Omaha Jaycee Ten Outstanding Young Omahans in 1998.

Maria has participated in leadership development programs, including the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce Leadership Omaha class and the United Way Heartland Blueprint board

training. She also mentors young professionals and has served as a mentor through Partnership 4 Kids and TeamMates.

Maria Vazquez remains steadfast in her mission to unite people through educational access, align with workforce opportunities, and continually enhance the student experience.