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# Faculty Reflections on Implementing Servingness into Research and Teaching: How Professional Development Around Servingness Fosters Latinx Student Success

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## ABSTRACT

As Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) continue to expand across the United States, there is an even greater need for faculty at HSIs to engage with the construct of servingness to advance Latinx student success. Yet, there is very little research that points to professional development for faculty to understand what servingness means and how to implement it into faculty roles of research, teaching, and service. To address this gap, this paper provides a model for faculty professional development around and with servingness. Following, this paper centers the voices of six faculty from diverse fields and disciplines who in their first year at an HSI participated in a professional development series focused on servingness, and who, then explicitly connected their research and teaching with servingness. As such, this paper provides practical steps to design professional development for faculty around servingness. It also highlights the significance of professional development for faculty implementation of servingness in research and teaching.

## KEYWORDS

Hispanic-serving institution; servingness; faculty; professional development

## Introduction

As members of the largest minoritized group and the fastest growing population in the United States, Latinx students are entering higher education at increasing rates (MC Staff, 2022, National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Sixty-six percent of all Latinx undergraduate students are enrolled in Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) (Excelencia in Education, 2022). HSI, a federal construct established in 1992 due to Latinx advocacy efforts, refers to not-for-profit, 2- or 4-year degree-granting institutions that enroll a minimum of 25% Latinx undergraduate students (U.S. Department of Education, 2023; Valdez, 2015). Historically, HSIs are underfunded and lack the institutional capacity to meet the needs of the primarily low-income, predominantly first-generation, underrepresented students that they serve (Santiago et al., 2016). Moreover, the federal government has yet to specify the meaning, structures, and outcomes that constitute “serving” in HSIs (Santiago et al., 2016), not to mention how to implement servingness in the context of the HSI. Consequently, this paper provides insights into how to foster and implement servingness among faculty at HSIs to promote student success, psychosocial development, and persistence.

Specifically, the first objective of this paper is to briefly outline a model for professional development around servingness that was created and implemented for new faculty at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP), a top-tier (*R-1*), open-access HSI located at the U.S.-Mexico border. The model was developed by the first author as part of her role as a Provost Fellow with the intent to orient new UTEP faculty to the construct of servingness and what it can mean in the context of faculty research,

teaching, and service. The first author worked closely with the Director for faculty professional development, also an author on this paper, to design and implement the professional development series based on the model. To frame the outline of the model, we begin with a short review of literature on the need for faculty development around servingness.

The second and primary objective of this paper is to highlight the *voices* of six faculty who attended two or more of the four professional development sessions during the 2023–2024 academic year, which was also their first year as new faculty at the UTEP. This section of the paper offers insights into the various ways in which new faculty from different fields of study took up the construct of servingness and began to incorporate it into their research, teaching, and service.

The paper concludes with a synthesis of faculty reflections on the role of the series regarding faculty development around servingness, including limitations, and finally, implications.

## **Need for faculty development around servingness**

Due to the growing expansion of HSIs across the nation and the lack of a federally designated mission or structure for servingness, there is growing interest in identifying what it means to serve Latinx students at HSIs. Garcia et al. (2019) multidimensional conceptual framework of servingness offers the most widely recognized conceptualization of servingness in the pursuit of Latinx student success at HSIs. According to this framework, indicators of servingness can be found at the level of the individual (i.e., academic and non-academic outcomes) and the organization (i.e., mission and engagement with the Latinx community). Additionally, external indicators may be impacted by external bodies (e.g., state and local legislations), as well as historical forces (e.g., white supremacy).

Most research on servingness focuses on indicators of servingness at the individual student level, as reflected in student outcomes (Garcia et al., 2019). Equally important are the processes and indicators that lead to these outcomes, such as organizational culture and leadership structures (Franco & Hernández, 2018). To this point, Garcia (2023) urges that if HSIs “do not figure out how to conceptualize and enact servingness in practice, they will ultimately fail their Latinx and low-income students” (p. 2). Yet, there is a scarcity of research on how university members, including administrators, faculty, and staff, understand and enact servingness at the various levels of the HSI. For instance, in their mixed methods study, Preuss et al. (2020) found that faculty, staff, and administrators from HSIs across four states cumulatively reported 10% or fewer trainings pertinent to preparation for first-generation, low-income, and Latinx students. Moreover, less than 6% of faculty, staff, and administrators reported having any professional development addressing HSI-related topics (Preuss et al., 2020).

Because faculty development can provide an array of possibilities for minoritized students to access mentors, role models, and diverse perspectives to challenge and develop their cultural and professional identities (Contreras, 2017; Crisp et al., 2015), this paper provides a model of faculty professional development (PD) focused on the significance of servingness to research, teaching, and service for Latinx student success at an HSI.

## **Servingness series: a model of servingness for new faculty at an HSI**

The overarching goal of the PD model featured in this paper was to introduce new faculty to the construct of servingness to build a culture of servingness at UTEP. The decision to focus on new faculty was to intentionally orient new faculty to the significance of servingness to HSIs across the nation, to UTEP’s mission and role as a leading HSI, and more specifically, to the primary roles of faculty-research, teaching, and service. The model for faculty PD involved a series of four total sessions aimed at fostering an understanding of servingness as a meaningful construct to inform research, teaching, and service that supports Latinx student achievement and growth. Thus, sessions also asked new faculty to identify and expand servingness in their faculty roles in ways that made sense to them and to their field as well as to UTEP and the surrounding community. The objectives, intended outcomes, and programming for each of the four sessions is outlined in the following table.



Session Objective	Programming	Outcome	
<b>Session One: Servingness Retreat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To introduce new faculty to the construct of servingness and its relationship to the HSI and student success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage new faculty in discussions of servingness based on their prior educational and professional experiences.</li> <li>Invite new faculty to make and identify explicit research, teaching, and service connections with servingness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New faculty will gain a conceptual understanding of servingness.</li> <li>New faculty will share ideas and gain insights about the multiple ways in which servingness is conceptualized.</li> <li>New faculty will develop an awareness about how their specific contributions to research, teaching, and service reflect servingness.</li> </ul>
<b>Session Two: Servingness Mixer</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build a culture of servingness at UTEP through new faculty networking.</li> <li>To reflect on faculty implementation of servingness in research, teaching or service.</li> </ul>		
<b>Session Three: Servingness Panel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To feature examples of connections between servingness and faculty research, teaching, and service to foster student success.</li> <li>To highlight senior faculty champions of servingness to mentor and support new faculty success through servingness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconvene new faculty to share insights and experiences on servingness at UTEP since the first session.</li> <li>Provide mentoring from a senior faculty on connecting servingness with community-based research.</li> <li>Present examples to new faculty on how to connect their research, teaching, and service with servingness through panel presentations from three senior faculty.</li> <li>Engage new faculty in round table discussion and mentoring with each of the panelists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New faculty will begin to articulate examples of connecting servingness with research, teaching and service.</li> <li>Faculty will gain knowledge on developing relationships with community partners.</li> <li>New faculty will gain insights on how to connect servingness and research, teaching and service from senior faculty.</li> <li>New faculty will receive mentoring from senior faculty around servingness for faculty and student success.</li> </ul>
<b>Session Four: Servingness Storyboard</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To collectively reflect on servingness and implementation in research, teaching, or service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To storyboard themes across faculty experiences.</li> <li>Create outline and timeline for co-authored manuscript.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New faculty will identify indicators of servingness in their research, teaching, and service.</li> <li>New faculty will decide on themes, structure, and timeline for completion of co-authored manuscript.</li> </ul>

Also, important to note is that inherent to the design of the professional development series was the idea that faculty who participated in the inaugural year would be invited to participate as facilitators in the future. The first author further reasoned that with time, enough faculty would have participated in the series to form a campus-wide community of practice focused on servingness to advance Latinx student academic and non-academic outcomes.

The following section highlights the *voices* of faculty who participated in two or more of the professional development sessions. Faculty reflections were in response to three prompts: 1) provide a brief biography and positionality statement, 2) describe two separate illustrations of how participation in the PD series has influenced two of the following – your research, teaching, or service, and 3) reflect on what this means for you as a new faculty member at an HSI. The three prompts were developed by new faculty who participated in the fourth PD session.

## Faculty voices

### **Robyn Pinilla, PhD**

My name is Robyn Pinilla, and I am an assistant professor of early childhood education. I research early childhood mathematics teaching practices and teach courses in our undergraduate elementary teacher certification and master's early childhood programs. Before participating in the servingness series, I thought I knew how to serve and understood my role at an HSI. I served students, families, and other educators as a special education teacher and assistant principal in a diverse, urban city. I am

a member of a Hispanic family. At the same time, I completed my Ph.D. at a private, predominately white institution and am a white, non-Hispanic woman. The schools where I taught were in a different city than UTEP, and my family members comprise only one Hispanic family.

When I arrived at UTEP, I sought school partnerships to extend my research agenda. While I modeled my research to be grounded in the schools, my inherently etic perspective on my new physical space obscured my vision of what it meant to research *with* teachers from a space of servingness. This starkly juxtaposed my beliefs as a primarily qualitative education researcher; I consider that my research must be situated in my local context to be meaningful. The servingness series supported my solidifying that stance and helped me bridge that gap from researching *on* to researching *with*.

At the first two servingness events, we discussed the benefits of investigating issues that matter to our students and community, and I took up these tenets of servingness in my research in two ways. First, I engaged with other College of Education faculty and Center for Community Engagement staff to understand undergraduate pre-service teachers' experiences in a community-engaged learning course on play and learning in the early years. Pre-service teachers observed local early childhood classrooms and reflected through planned journal prompts, surveys, and a portfolio assessment. These data helped us better understand preservice teachers' experiences in the borderland and their preparation needs, about which a colleague and I shared early findings at a state-level research conference. Second, I leveraged pre-service teachers' ideas to support my research on mathematics teaching practices. I co-designed and provided professional development to in-service teachers, as informed by the course on playful learning, but with a focus on mathematics education. The research has extended to a cross-university collaboration on teachers' mathematics identities in different contexts, including our HSI in the borderland.

Importantly, the research was informed by and in service of my teaching. In classes, I wanted to foster a space where my students' ideas and experiences were honored. In all class sessions, students engaged in roundtable conversations, reflective activities, and collaborative work to develop their visions of teaching practice. Those experiences provided space for my students to show up authentically, but there was still a heavy reliance on their reading texts and producing works written in English for assessment purposes. While I *knew* that grading students' grammar was not productive in their development of pedagogical practices, I continued applying rubrics provided to me when I took on the course, in which a portion of every grade was reliant on their mastery of English academic writing. Despite my pedagogical training, I was unfairly applying standards that did not support my students' learning and growth. Then, in the third servingness session, Dr. de la Piedra (one of the panelists, and a professor in bilingual education) called upon us to embrace our students' assets of being bilingual and biliterate by promoting their translanguaging. Now, for assignments that call for reflection, I have committed to allowing submissions in various formats (e.g., written, video) in the language of students' choice. I, too, can translanguag.

The servingness series provided a space for me to grow with other new faculty toward a deeper understanding of what it means to serve. It was critical to my understanding the concept and developing the ability to *begin* embodying servingness in my research and teaching.

### **Camila Leite Madeira, PhD**

My name is Camila Leite Madeira, and in 2023 I joined the Department of Civil Engineering at UTEP as an assistant professor. I grew up in the State of São Paulo, Brazil, and attended public school in the city of Campinas, where I was one of the few female students to complete an associate degree in Mechanics. After receiving a bachelor's degree in Environmental Engineering in Brazil, I moved to the United States in 2014 to pursue a master's and a PhD degree in Environmental Engineering at the University of Arizona, also an HSI. I returned to Brazil for my postdoctoral training and, in 2023, decided to move back to the United States to pursue my dream of leading a research team focused on developing sustainable technologies for water and

wastewater treatment. Being a Latina woman in engineering and a first-generation college graduate, I was excited to join an institution where I could serve as a role model for underrepresented minorities.

Serving UTEP students has been a priority to me as an instructor and a research advisor. In my first semester teaching “Water and Wastewater Engineering” to undergraduate students, I had planned to implement several learner-centered practices and create a safe and inclusive environment for my students, who I knew were mostly first-generation and Latinx. Although I understood how these practices could impact student learning and success in my discipline, my perspective was not broad enough to visualize how my role as an instructor could impact students’ lives beyond the classroom. After attending the PD sessions about servingness and reflecting on my role in supporting Latinx student achievement and promoting social mobility, I realized that my interactions with students through my teaching can have a long-term impact on their confidence, intrinsic motivation, and interest in making a positive change in their communities.

By using a survey on the first day of classes, I learned that most students did not know where their potable water comes from, or how they could, as future civil engineers, help the population of El Paso have a sustainable future and a safe water supply. In addition, many students were not aware of communities in the Borderland that do not have access to a water distribution system. Thus, I realized that one of the learning goals of my discipline should be focused on using engineering design to create water treatment processes to provide safe water to underserved communities. During the semester, I organized several field trips to water and wastewater treatment plants in El Paso. Some of these plants use state-of-the-art technology and receive visitors from all over the world. We also discussed in class the relationship between water quality and public health and how activism shaped our current federal water legislation. I expect that these practices will motivate our future Latinx engineers to lead positive changes in their communities and provide equitable access to water resources in our cities and reverse the misconception that public services in El Paso are not as effective as in other cities.

The comprehension of how I can serve Hispanic students has also motivated me to connect with Latinx graduate students, postdocs, and faculty members from other HSIs to discuss the challenges faced by our community in academia. Our group organized a writing retreat where we started working on a proposal to increase the participation of members of underrepresented minorities in academia. We tried to identify barriers that impede Latinx student retention and proposed initiatives to help them overcome these challenges and consider academia as a career path. One of the products of this retreat was the creation of a virtual workshop called “Unwritten curricula no more/no más/não mais” which focused on the improvement of proposal writing skills to increase the participation of early career Latinx in academia. The discussions about the role of faculty in supporting Hispanic students during the PD sessions were essential to broaden my perspective, exercise empathy, and learn more about the community I am part of now. Hearing about how other faculty members implemented servingness in their teaching, service, and research made me more passionate about my job.

### ***Lori Houghtalen, PhD***

My name is Lori Houghtalen. I earned my BS in Industrial Engineering at the University of Tennessee, and my MS and PhD in Industrial Engineering from Georgia Tech. I have held faculty positions at a small private institution and mid-sized regional private institution prior to joining the faculty in the College of Engineering at UTEP in the spring of 2023. I have always been interested in effective teaching practices in engineering, particularly the importance of fostering a hospitable classroom environment and encouraging a sense of belonging. In my past positions as a faculty member, as well as when I was a student, I, as a white non-Hispanic cisgender female, was in the dominant cultural and racial group in my environment. Participating in the series on servingness has helped me appreciate the complexity of my new environment; it has been impactful to build community with other new faculty as I discern opportunities for impact and authentic serving.

The servingness series has influenced how I approach teaching; here I will share two examples. First, I have a newfound understanding of the importance of adopting a peer leader model. Prior to joining this institution, I saw utilizing a peer leader or a TA as a luxury; a model that primarily benefited the instructor and the peer leader, who was receiving experience, mentorship, and sometimes pay. In my first semester here, I came to recognize that the most important role of the peer leader is building relationships with and fostering a sense of belonging for the students. In addition, by having a peer leader who has successfully made it into the upper-level engineering courses, students can visualize a path to success for themselves; my path likely does not resonate with them, at least not in the early interactions of an introductory engineering course.

A second way in which my teaching has been impacted is to be more open-minded about how students communicate about their work. Because of my intentionality to foster a hospitable classroom environment, I knew to encourage students to feel comfortable using Spanish or translanguaging with classmates and peer leaders before, after, and during class when working in small groups. The servingness series helped me recognize an opportunity to extend that instinct into the more formal elements of the course requirements. One of the major course projects in the introductory course requires students to reflect (in writing and orally) on their past, present, and future and how their personal and professional goals are connected. During my first semester, through lack of specification, the assignment instructions inferred the standard practice that all project deliverables are to be submitted in English. Early in the spring semester, I attended the third servingness workshop, in which one of the panelists encouraged us to provide opportunities for students to communicate using their full range of language capabilities. The next time I teach the course I will alter the assignment expectations and instructions to clearly communicate that students have a choice in the language(s) they use for each part of the project.

The servingness series has also helped me frame my research agenda in consideration of servingness. In starting my role at UTEP, I was beginning to pursue research in engineering education, a growing and broad discipline. Participating in the servingness workshops has helped me to narrow and maintain my focus on those contexts in which I can connect my research efforts more closely to the students I am teaching and mentoring. This will also help me create meaningful opportunities for students to engage in research that can impact their own educational and professional journey. For example, I am starting a research project in which we are investigating the integration of cultural and technical identities, and the relationship between this integration and the transition from student to early career engineer.

In summary, by participating in the servingness workshop, I have gained confidence that I can contribute meaningfully to my institution's mission of servingness. I seek to embrace servingness as a posture, a way of inhabiting my role.

### ***Robert Pankow, PhD***

My name is Robert Pankow, and I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UTEP. Prior to joining UTEP, I received my PhD in Chemistry from the University of Southern California, and I was an Intelligence Community Postdoctoral Fellow at Northwestern University. My research interests include the design and synthesis of self-healing materials, stimuli-responsive polymers, mechanochemistry, and organic electronics. I was drawn to UTEP through the institution's commitment to providing research and academic excellence to the Paso del Norte Region, serving the needs of the community, and the opportunity to contribute to the growing materials chemistry program.

In academic research, there are many scientific products emanating from a research group, such as publications, patents, and research proposals for securing internal or external funding; however, the research and discoveries that fuel these products are provided directly from the students working in the lab. Therefore, I firmly believe that the foundation of any research group must be the scientific development and proper mentoring of its students. At a minimum, this would include providing

research opportunities to catalyze scientific and professional development and fostering an environment that builds, motivates, and progressively challenges students to maintain retention in STEM. To accomplish this, I first had to learn what the needs of my students are outside of the lab and how I can accommodate these needs to maintain their motivation and work ethic. During the third servingness session, a faculty panel discussion included a presentation (from Dr. Moya, a panelist and a professor in Social Work) describing the key issues that students at UTEP face, which includes access to food, transportation, and housing, and how to identify these issues. To accommodate these challenges, I communicate with my students to prioritize their needs outside of the lab during instances of unforeseen public transportation issues, carpooling, or times of crisis with housing, and I offer assistance and guidance when I can. Also, I ensure a supply of snacks is available during our group meetings and in the student office so that students have something to eat.

Next, I identified how to adapt my coursework to better accommodate my students. In Fall 2023, I taught a seminar course where students give presentations on scientific literature to refine their literature searching and oral presentation skills. However, I found students had difficulty with interpreting the scientific language used and conveying the impact of the articles in their presentation. This issue primarily circulated around differences in language and not the scientific intellect or capabilities of the student. To accommodate the students facing this issue, I maintained an open-door policy where I could meet with the students to discuss the scientific articles they chose and assist them with building their presentations. This provided them with the skills for extracting key information from journal articles and the confidence to present before their peers.

Coming from a primarily research-intensive background, I wanted to better align the focus of my research and educational programs with the needs of the students at UTEP to ensure they have tools to succeed in their degree program, maintain retention in STEM, and provide opportunities for the next steps in their careers. As a faculty member, I find myself in a primary position to accommodate these needs through various modes of servingness; however, at the start of my independent career understanding, adopting, and implementing modes of servingness into my research and educational programs was shrouded in ambiguity. By attending the workshops and events scheduled as part of the servingness series, I was able to develop an improved understanding of how to adapt my approaches for training students in research, developing students' scientific intuition and curiosity, and fostering a positive learning environment in the classroom.

### ***Lizette Villanueva, PhD***

My name is Lizette Villanueva and I am an assistant professor in the College of Nursing. I am a first-generation Mexican-American, first-generation college student, and am currently part of the less than 1% of Latinx females attaining a doctorate degree. I have been in education for more than seventeen years and have taught at all levels. I have encountered multiple students with a diverse background in life, knowledge, and expertise. I reflect the students and community I teach.

Reflecting on how the servingness series has helped me in my teaching and research, it is difficult for me to narrow down my experiences and summarize how I have used these strategies with my students, college, and university. To begin, I must first acknowledge that I am part of the community. I was born and raised in the community where I teach. As an adult returning to the U.S.-Mexico border, I acknowledge I am discovering the beauty of the community where I was born and acknowledge the many opportunities UTEP has contributed to all who live in our binational, bicultural, bilingual community. With that said, servingness is one of my core values when it comes to teaching, research, and my profession. The servingness framework has helped to validate my teaching pedagogy and philosophy. Providing a safe space where my bilingual, binational and bicultural students feel valued and where all their experiences are welcomed. Being able to provide a culture of caring in the classroom where students native language is not only welcomed but encouraged. Building a community of engagement where students learn from each other's experiences; sharing their lived experiences with each other and modeling how valuable it is when applied to the curriculum. The

servingness framework helps my students to understand they are genuinely and holistically valued. I have had the opportunity for students to speak to me regarding how my servingness pedagogy and philosophy have enabled them to not only be successful in the classroom but also feel a sense of belonging. One student wrote me an e-mail saying: "It gives me such happiness to feel seen and accepted, especially by people I look up to." Examples like this confirm and validate my servingness to the students I teach and the community where I live.

Living in this binational, bicultural, bilingual community on the U.S.-Mexico border, servingness has also been at the center of my research focus as faculty at UTEP. As a new faculty member, the primary reason for coming to UTEP was based on not only being designated an R1 hSI but the action of the mission, vision and culture of such designation seen in the community. The servingness framework has also confirmed my reason for working with social determinants of health specifically on the U.S.-Mexico border. The servingness strategies confirm my research focus on population health, specifically in underserved Latinx communities, and how language intersects with health disparities and social determinants of health. Understanding language development and practices, the servingness series supports my advocacy for upstream healthcare by investing in and fostering collaboration, creativity, and empowerment for the community. My advocacy extends into building individual and community health knowledge through a wide range of activities such as outreach, education, cultural competency, social support, and improving access to excellent quality healthcare through a race-conscious lens. The servingness strategies learned in the servingness series has contributed to my staying focused on affirming the race, ethnicity, language and cultural experiences of not only my students but also my community. The servingness series has truly validated that servingness continues to inform my pedagogy, philosophy and research.

### ***Jaeyoung Cho, PhD***

My name is Jaeyoung Cho, and I am an assistant professor of the aerospace and mechanical engineering department. I received my BS (2014) and PhD (2020) in mechanical engineering at Seoul National University (Seoul, South Korea), conducting a combustion experiment with alternative fuels. During my postdoctoral appointment at Argonne National Laboratory (Lemont, Illinois) and National Renewable Energy Laboratory (Golden, Colorado), I studied computational chemistry and deep learning techniques to predict the combustion characteristics of renewable fuels. My recent research interests are discovering novel fuels/materials for propulsion systems with high performance and low environmental impact.

I'm a first-generation immigrant from South Korea and a first-generation college student, which makes me more passionate about joining UTEP and serving students in similar circumstances. I was pleased to be invited to the servingness series as I always seek advice on effectively serving the community. At the first and second meetings, I had a chance to learn how other faculty leverage their research to support the community, including fascinating ideas such as a sociological study on the impact of immigration policy on border cities. However, the discussion made me feel that my research expertise – combustion, propulsion, and alternative fuel – may not be ideally suited to impact the community immediately. This challenge of connecting the research to the community might be universal among many faculty whose expertise is not necessarily tied to specific ethnic groups. Still, the open discussion in the servingness series continued to inspire me with plenty of advice from faculty with diverse perspectives. Notably, one faculty hinted that I could make my research more impactful to the community through collaborative studies. This advice resonated with me and drove me to seek collaboration outside my department. Fortunately, I met a faculty from the Kinesiology Department, who is interested in diagnosing osteoarthritis through the walking pattern. I immediately noticed that the connections of joints in the human body are similar to those of atoms in molecules. This similarity inspired us to collaborate and develop a deep learning model that diagnoses osteoarthritis based on walking patterns recorded from a 3-D motion capture system. This research aims to reduce the medical cost of arthritis diagnostics with particular emphasis on serving the Hispanic community,

which has been reported to experience higher levels of physical activity restriction due to arthritis (Barbour et al., 2013). This interdisciplinary research exemplifies how seemingly irrelevant expertise can be leveraged to serve the community directly.

I also have to say that the servingness series gave me tremendous inspiration in teaching the students in my class. In the third servingness session, there was a panel of three UTEP faculty, who shared their experience supporting the students. One of the presentations was about the translational culture, which refers to the tendency of students from the border city to speak mixed languages from their family (primarily Spanish in the Paso Del Norte region) and school (English). This presentation reminded me of my undergraduate experience at Seoul National University in Korea, where many physics classes were taught in English. Back then, I had troubles understanding physical concepts – such as enthalpy, entropy, and the Carnot cycle – as I spoke exclusively Korean with entry-level knowledge in English. My strategy to overcome this language barrier was to use two versions of teaching materials: one in the original English language and the other in the Korean language I made with a translator. I studied the Korean version first, which helped me understand the physical concepts better, and then moved on to the English version to get used to the international (English) terminology. This experience led me to come up with the idea of preparing a Spanish version of my teaching materials for Aerospace Propulsion in the 2024 Spring semester and providing it as supplementary material for Spanish-speaking students. This course involves many conceptual ideas that have made many students struggle with following the course, which must be even worse if they are not confident in English. Consequently, I could see a remarkable improvement in learning outcomes, with ~18% higher average exam scores compared to last semester (2023 Fall). This successful result gives me a clue on how to facilitate the learning experience of Hispanic students in the border city.

Being a faculty at an HSI has made me realize that the experience I had earlier as an international and first-generation college student, which I once viewed as an obstacle, is an asset as a faculty member. These experiences give me unique insights, allowing me to see things from a student's perspective. Another beauty of being at an HSI is that it continuously motivates me to seek impactful teaching and research methods for our community. This reminds me of the true purpose of engineering, something I had forgotten for a while. All these were made possible during my intensive first year as a faculty member, thanks to the open discussion in the servingness series, where I was given tremendous advice and guidance.

## Conclusions and future directions

To conclude, we offer a synthesis to highlight some of the ways in which new faculty who participated in the PD servingness series are connecting servingness with their research, teaching, and service. Robyn Pinilla transitioned her research to focus on local issues and embraced bilingualism and translanguaging in her teaching. Camila Leite Madeira incorporated real-world applications of engineering to inspire Latinx students and engaged in initiatives to address challenges faced by underrepresented minorities in academia. Lori Houghtalen adopted peer leader models and encouraged the use of Spanish in formal course assignments to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity among students. Robert Pankow adapted his teaching methods to better support students' needs inside and outside of the classroom, ensuring they have the tools to succeed in STEM fields. Lizette Villanueva emphasized creating a safe and inclusive environment that values students' native languages and cultural experiences while focusing her research on social determinants of health in underserved Latinx communities. Jaeyoung Cho integrated research on combustion and propulsion with community impact through interdisciplinary collaborations and enhanced his teaching by creating bilingual materials to support Latinx students at UTEP.

These faculty experiences and engagement with servingness underscore the importance of understanding and addressing the unique needs of Latinx students, fostering inclusive environments, and leveraging interdisciplinary collaborations. The servingness PD series provided an organizational structure to support them in creating meaningful opportunities for students, honoring students'

cultural and linguistic assets to make impactful contributions to their communities. Through their dedication, they have demonstrated that servingness is not just a construct but a practice that enhances the educational and professional journeys of their students, ultimately contributing to the mission of the HSI.

At a broader level, enactment of servingness in the academy is both dynamic and complex, reflecting nuanced interactions between the individual, the institution, and the broader context(s) in which the individual and institution are situated. Research demonstrates that early support can result in educators adopting more student-centered forms of learning in their classrooms, espousing a more collaborative view on teaching and learning, and developing a better understanding of how they “fit” into the overarching mission of the institution (e.g., Cox, 2013). The rich descriptions contained in the *voices* that comprise this article speak to these benefits and enumerate upon the ways in which each narrator’s identity is interwoven with and shaped by servingness in the context of their teaching, research, and service.

While there are many merits to focusing on new faculty (as outlined previously), advancing servingness in meaningful ways across campus necessitates that we adopt a more expansive lens that entails attending to *all* individuals at our institution as well as elevating the value of servingness as reflected in university-wide metrics for success (e.g., tenure and promotion dossiers, yearly goals for staff evaluation, internal programming and grants). One natural step toward these outcomes is scaling and sustaining the series outlined in this article – the first of its kind at UTEP. For instance, the series could be expanded to include The Graduate School, yielding programming on servingness for graduate students/teaching assistants. Similarly, establishing connections with UTEP’s Center for Community Engagement would ostensibly allow for servingness to be enacted in more intentional ways beyond the boundaries of our campus alone. Regardless, effecting change through provision of structured opportunities for individuals to immerse themselves in what it means to embody servingness is a critical first step.

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