



In Memoriam: Martha Aliaga, Advocate for Education and Equity

On October 15, 2011, the education community lost one of its dear advocates, Martha Aliaga. As director of education for the American Statistical Association (ASA) for the last eight years, Aliaga created the Educational Ambassador Program (to help statistics education reach students “in every corner of the world”), Meeting within a Meeting (held at the annual Joint Statistics Meetings, these are sustained workshops tailored for K-12 mathematics and science teachers), STEW (STatistics Education Web, a peer-reviewed repository of K-12 lesson plans), and a K-12 statistics education webinar program. She also introduced Census@School in the United States and co-authored influential reports (*Guidelines for Assessment and Instruction in Statistics Education College Report* and *Using Statistics Effectively in Mathematics Education Research*) and textbooks (*Interactive Statistics*). Aliaga was an elected council member of the International Statistical Institute, a Fellow of the American Statistical Association, and served as president of the Caucus for Women in Statistics in 2002. Just this May, Aliaga co-presented (with Larry Lesser) at the United States Conference on Teaching Statistics a well-received invited breakout session on diversity – arguably the first time that topic had been so prominently featured at a statistics education conference in this country. Aliaga is dearly missed, but her example of teaching for both excellence and equity continues to inspire. Contributions to ASA towards a scholarship fund in her name may be sent to:

The American Statistical Association, 732 North Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314.

The above material is adapted from various notices (mainly those in the November 2011 issues of Amstat News and Journal of Statistics Education). The rest of this Memoriam offers further perspective on what Aliaga has meant to the work of TODOS, as relayed by TODOS founding president Miriam Leiva:

Martha Aliaga was a leader and charter member in TODOS as well as a leader in the international statistics community. Born and educated in Argentina where she completed an undergraduate degree in mathematics, she earned her Ph.D. in statistics at the University of Michigan where she taught for several years as an Associate Professor and won teaching excellence awards. She was very proud of her heritage and was drawn to TODOS because of a shared commitment to underserved and underachieving students. In her candidate application for the TODOS Board election in 2005, she wrote:

I would like to see TODOS play a role in reducing the achievement gap in the performance of Hispanic students. The ASCD [Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development] position adopted in March 2004 says that all underserved population-high-poverty students, students with special learning needs, students of different cultural backgrounds, non native speakers and urban and rural students must have access to challenging coursework, high-quality teachers and additional resources. We need to influence the training of classroom teachers in pedagogical approaches that can be used to present mathematics and data analysis to school students as disciplined source of enlightenment. We can encourage mathematicians and statisticians to go into schools to discuss their work and their contribution to mathematics. I am very delighted ... to work with the president of TODOS and the rest of TODOS' members. I want to work to help our TODOS students to build outstanding careers. I know that we can! I know that we MUST! And I am very enthusiastic about the prospects of doing so.

Dr. Aliaga served on the TODOS Board of Directors from 2006-08 and was instrumental in the development of our Constitution and By-Laws. She reached out to members one-on-one through our listserv as vividly shown by this 2003 email response to a TODOS member who was struggling to find the most effective way to teach mathematics at a women's prison to ESL Latina inmates:

I think now it is more useful to learn statistics than algebra if this a terminal course. Put away the book, then take a newspaper and help them learn how to interpret the data published (pie charts, bar charts, etc). Teach them how to answer their own social issues looking for data on the web, and analyze the data. Teach them how to write a questionnaire to ask the other women in the prison so they can collect real data to present to the prison officers to receive better living standards, school for their children, etc. Make mathematics meaningful to them.