

Human and Civil Rights Award Winner

Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award

Presented to a nominee whose activities have made a significant impact in helping poor students and eliminate poverty.



Dr. Paul Hernandez
Member, Michigan

Before he earned a Ph.D. in Sociology, before his Bachelors Degree from a university, before his Associate Degree from a community college, Paul Hernandez was an “at-risk” K-12 student—at risk of dropping out.

In his own words: “Administrators and teachers often spoke of me as a thing rather than a person. They struggled to connect with me and my homeboys or to help us see a world beyond the Los Angeles ghettos we called home. Rather than trying alternative methods to connect with students like us, our schools funneled most resources toward college-track students. They went on visits to universities, museums, and corporate headquarters, while we were sentenced to meaningless repetition tasks. Eventually, I dropped out.”

But Paul Hernandez never forgot those early years or the things that seemed unjust. Now he directs his academic work toward engaging students like him and his friends, providing them with the opportunities and experiences that support educational success. In so doing, he collaborates closely with educators of today’s at-risk students.

Dr. Hernandez is an Associate Professor at Central Michigan University. His research focuses on the sociology of education and social inequality. He works with schools to implement a unique pedagogical approach of his own design that helps teachers and administrators improve passing rates and build meaningful relationships with students at risk of dropping out.

A hands-on academic, Dr. Hernandez encourages educators around the country to correspond with him at herna3p@cmich.edu regarding any questions about College 101: Introducing At-Risk students to Higher Education or his alternative pedagogy.

He has been the recipient of numerous higher education awards in Michigan, including the Equity in Education Award, the Honors Professor of the Year Award, and the Community Leader and Service Award. His article on College 101 was published in *The NEA Higher Education Journal: Thought & Action* in 2011. He has also written for the *Michigan Sociological Review*.

Dr. Hernandez is also in demand as a speaker at community and school events. He has addressed the Save Our Children Coalition, the César Chávez Academy, and numerous middle and high schools attended by poor and minority students.

