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Yolanda C. Padilla Honored as Recipient of 2019 University of Michigan School of Social Work Distinguished Alumni Award

Ann Arbor, MI – **Yolanda C. Padilla, PhD**, Clara Pope Willoughby Centennial Professor in Child Welfare at the University of Texas/Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work and Director of the Council on Social Work Education’s Center for Diversity and Social & Economic Justice was honored Friday, October 4, 2019 with a **Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Michigan School of Social Work**. This Award recognizes U-M School of Social Work (SSW) alumni whose achievements exemplify the values of the School of Social Work and who have made an exceptional impact on the profession, the community and/or social work education.

The daughter of Mexican immigrants, Padilla was born in Adrian, Michigan and grew up in Brownsville, Texas, on the US-Mexico border. She received a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, a Bachelor of Social Work, and a Master of Science in social work from the University of Texas at Austin. After obtaining her master’s, she practiced in organizations providing services to low-income families, including the Community Action Agency in South Texas and Caritas of Austin. She pursued a **joint PhD in Social Work and Sociology at The University of Michigan**, where she was a Social Science Research Council Fellow in Research on the Urban Underclass, and she trained in the Research and Training Program on Poverty and Public Policy directed by Professor Sheldon Danziger.

“Getting my PhD at the University of Michigan meant so much to me,” says Dr. Padilla. “**The Joint PhD Program in Social Work and Social Science is what distinguishes the U-M School of Social Work, what makes it an unmatched intellectual environment.** Having the two disciplinary perspectives—social work and sociology—has been very inspiring for me. They each bring a unique dimension and together exponentially increase our understanding of social problems. It has had a profound influence on my work bringing new narratives to diversity and social justice education at the Council on Social Work Education.”

In her 25-year tenure at the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Padilla’s research has focused on advancing a greater understanding of poverty and inequality in a way that has informed social welfare policy. She investigates racial and ethnic disparities in health and well-being, particularly among Latino populations, including factors associated with socioeconomic disadvantage and the consequences of poverty for children and families. She developed and taught the first social work courses in poverty and gay studies at UT Austin and designed a popular interdisciplinary course for undergraduates titled How to Change the World, in which students read contemporary literature to explore social issues.

Dr. Padilla has received over \$1.5 million in funding for her research from sources that include the National Institutes of Health (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) and state and private sources. In 2002, she received the Outstanding Research Award from the Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR) for a study on factors influencing the earnings potential of Mexican immigrants and in 2014 she was inducted into the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

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