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Lozano chosen to meet with President Obama about immigration reform

Contact: Jennifer Berghom, Public Affairs Representative

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Dr. Karen Lozano received an unexpected telephone call the night of June 21.

It was from a staff member at the White House asking her to fly to Washington, D.C. to participate in a roundtable discussion with President Barack Obama about immigration reform.

The Julia Beecherl Endowed Professor of mechanical engineering at The University of Texas-Pan American thought it was a joke.

"I said, 'Are you calling from *the* White House, or a white house,'" Lozano said.

The phone call was, in fact, legitimate, and that following Monday, Lozano was among a group of several leaders in industry, all immigrants to the United States, who met with Obama and his staff.

Lozano called the White House experience surreal.

"I'm still pinching myself," she said.

All of the participants shared their stories of success and answered questions from the president, Lozano said. Each story had the same theme: hard work.

"Everybody shared how they were studying and flipping burgers, how they were studying and mopping floors," she said.

Lozano said when she moved to the United States from Mexico to attend graduate school at Rice University in Houston, she and her husband lived on \$1,000 a month and slept on blankets on the floor of where they lived.

"My only luxury was an ice cream cone - two for \$1," she said. "Every Saturday my husband and I would go to McDonald's for the two for \$1 (cones). For five years we did that."

Lozano has been teaching and researching at The University of Texas-Pan American since 2000. A native of Monterrey, the capital of the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, she earned her master's and doctoral degrees in mechanical engineering from Rice.

Her research at UTPA led to the invention of Forcespinning™ technology, a more efficient and affordable way to create nanofibers. That invention resulted in the creation of [UT Pan American's first multi-million-dollar start-up company](#), FibeRio Technology Corp., of which she is chief technology officer.

Lozano said she feels proud to have been selected to meet with the president and share her message that hard work leads to success.

"If you work hard and sacrifice, you eventually will earn, and it's our role now, independently of what happens, to educate the youth that hard work will pay off," she said. "What we need to do, all of us, we need to make sure that we educate the people to work hard."

Recently, she met with a group of female middle school students who were visiting the campus and told them of her meeting with the president. As she shared with Obama, Lozano told the girls that hard work is the only way to succeed.

"When people give you something for free, they take away (from you) the incentive to do it," she said. "You can study whatever you want. If you work hard, you will make it."



Dr. Karen Lozano, the Julia Beecherl Endowed Professor of mechanical engineering at The University of Texas-Pan American, was among a group of business leaders who met with President Barack Obama recently to discuss immigration reform.

