

NTID's Davila To Speak at Nation's Largest Latino Commencement Ceremony

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Dr. Robert Davila, CEO of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), will speak May 17 at the nation's largest Latino Commencement Celebration and receive an award recognizing his outstanding contributions to the Latino community at California State University at Fresno.

More than 550 Latino graduates and 15,000 guests are expected to attend the ceremony at Bulldog Stadium.

"A significant number of these students are the first of their families to graduate from college," said Dr. Luz Gonzalez, associate dean of the College of Social Sciences, who will present the award to Davila. "They proudly invite everyone they know to this beautiful and colorful celebration."

Davila joins the list of other outstanding Latinos who have been honored at this ceremony, including the Hon. Cruz Bustamante, lieutenant governor of California, and actor Edward James Olmos.

"Dr. Davila was unanimously chosen this year because of his rich cultural and educational experiences," Gonzalez said. "He overcame tremendous obstacles to earn the right to wield influence in powerful government and educational circles. What makes his story so inspiring is his experience as a "double minority"-- being Latino and deaf."

Davila, retiring from RIT/NTID this year, has dedicated his 50-year career to disability advocacy. In his seven years at NTID, he has led the drive to more than double the college's endowment and obtain other vital support from private sources. He also has significantly strengthened the college's reputation as an international leader in postsecondary education for deaf students.

Davila will become the first person to sit in the Jerry C. Lee Chair of Studies in Technology and the Adult Learner at National University in California, and will continue to serve on the National Council on Disability, a 15-member group appointed by President Bush to advise him and Congress on matters affecting the education, rehabilitation, employment, and independence of the country's 52 million people with disabilities.

Davila has a bachelor's degree in education from Gallaudet University, a master's degree in special education from Hunter College, and a doctorate in educational technology from Syracuse University.