

# HOUSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

## FACE TO FACE WITH...

**Laura Murillo**  
**President and CEO**  
**Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce**

When Laura Murillo was named president and CEO of the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in March 2007, she was the third woman and the youngest person ever to fill those positions. Since then, corporate sponsorships for the organization have tripled, membership has increased and events have reached record-breaking attendance levels. The youngest of nine children of immigrant parents, Murillo previously was senior executive director at Memorial Hermann Hospital in the Texas Medical Center, where she was responsible for the administrative and operations departments. She also has worked for the University of Houston as director of the Urban Experience Program. She holds a doctorate in education from the University of Houston. Murillo was interviewed by Casey Wooten.



**Q** How did your past experiences working at the University of Houston and Memorial Hermann prepare you for your work at HHCC?

**A** Much of what I do at the Chamber is an extension of the role I held previously. I worked at the University of Houston for 15 years and developed long-standing relationships with administrators, faculty and students. Today, I maintain strong communication with the University of Houston and have recently been asked to serve on their alumni board. As a result of my relationship with UH, the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Student/Emerging Leaders Committee has been successful through involvement with the Hispanic Business Student Association and the Bauer College of Business. Following my tenure at UH, I was recruited by Memorial Hermann in the Texas Medical Center. My experience at TMC afforded me the opportunity to learn about the health care industry in what is regarded as a world-renowned, industry-leading organization. I had the opportunity to serve on the executive council where I worked closely with physicians, executives, patients, donors and vendors, and met many people within the TMC who are strong supporters of the HHCC.

**Q** What are some of the biggest issues facing Houston's Hispanic business community?

**A** The demographics of Hispanics in Houston have changed, making Latinos Houston's new majority. The designation of the new majority comes with high expectations and many opportunities. The HHCC

is prepared to serve as the leading regional advocate for the economic and civic interests of the Hispanic business community.

**Q** What is the HHCC doing to address the challenges?

**A** The Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce is preparing the business community through educational seminars, programs and services and through mentoring programs. The Chamber also has implemented a student membership program and a student/emerging leaders seminar in which college and university students are exposed to business and community leaders through leadership development workshops and attendance at monthly networking functions. HHCC also plans to promote and support Houston as a gateway to Latin America and the Caribbean through business expansion and public policy initiatives.

**Q** How has the HHCC expanded its duties in the past few years to accommodate growth?

**A** HHCC has grown quite a bit in the last year. Business memberships and individual memberships have increased by 40 percent and corporate sponsorships have tripled. The staff has increased from four full-time professionals to 12 and the office has moved to a downtown location to better meet the needs of the members. The focus of the Chamber's efforts has shifted to more programs and services that help prepare members to succeed in business. ■