

BIOGRAPHY
President Elsa M. Núñez
Eastern Connecticut State University



In August 2013, Dr. Elsa M. Núñez started her eighth year as president of Eastern Connecticut State University. She came to Eastern in 2006 with more than 20 years of previous experience as a senior administrator at such institutions as the University of Maine System and City University of New York.

Over the course of her tenure, Dr. Núñez has firmly established Eastern's role as Connecticut's only public liberal arts university. Academic enhancements have ranged from providing additional support for faculty and undergraduate research and travel to the development of new majors (e.g. Women's and Gender Studies). In addition, the creation of an Exemplary Program Review process ties supplemental resource allocation to academic departments that demonstrate the capacity to achieve regional and national recognition. Access and student success have been supported under Dr. Núñez's leadership through the creation of a one-stop Academic Services Center that provides a full range of academic support services (advising, tutoring, discipline-specific supplemental instruction) to more than 2,000 students annually, and the development of data models that allow the University to predict academic progress and improve retention.

As a result, Eastern has achieved a number of noteworthy benchmarks, including the recent recording of the highest four-year graduation rate in the history of the University; the highest six-year graduation rate among Connecticut's four state universities; improved retention rates; and having 200 full-time faculty on staff for the first time in fall 2013. In 2009–10, the University also underwent a successful reaccreditation process under the auspices of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Dr. Núñez's commitment to access is evidenced by data that shows Eastern has the highest percentage of minority faculty among all colleges and universities in Connecticut. This and other factors have enhanced the retention rates of underrepresented student populations, and have also resulted in Eastern achieving the largest gain in the six-year graduation rate of Latino students from 2004-10, with that measure tripling from 20 percent to 58 percent according to a report by The Education Trust in Washington, D.C. in fall 2012.

Under Dr. Núñez's leadership, Eastern Connecticut State University has received several major national recognitions, including being ranked three years in a row by U.S. News and World Report as one of the top 35 public regional universities in the North as a Tier One institution; being recognized for the fifth year in a row by the Chronicle of Higher Education as a "Great College to Work For"; being named to President Obama's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll; and being included in The Princeton Review's list of Best Colleges in the Northeast.

During her administration, Dr. Núñez has forged closer ties with the local and statewide communities, led a campus-wide strategic planning process, and shepherded the opening of an expanded and remodeled Student Center; a 174,000-square foot state-of-the-art Science

Building; the new Center for Community Engagement; and other campus improvements. Construction on a new 118,000-square foot Fine Arts Center will be completed in 2015.

Prior to joining the Eastern community, Dr. Núñez served as Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs in the University of Maine System from 2003 to 2006. Before her appointment in Maine, Dr. Núñez served as Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Lesley University. From 1993 to 1997 she was University Dean for Academic Affairs and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at the City University of New York. Dr. Núñez also served as Associate Dean of Faculty at the College of Staten Island of The City University of New York from 1986 to 1992.

Dr. Núñez also has held positions as a tenured faculty member at Ramapo State College, the College of Staten Island of the City University of New York, and Lehman College of the City University of New York. She is the author of “Pursuing Diversity” (1992) and has published numerous articles in the areas of language acquisition, diversity, academic attainment in higher education, cultural differences in education and retention.

Dr. Núñez received her B.A. from Montclair State College, an M.A. from Fairleigh Dickinson University and an Ed.D. in Language Education from Rutgers University.

In addition to serving on the board of the Association of American Colleges and Universities, Dr. Núñez also serves on the boards of such organizations as the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the Connecticut Association for Human Services, Leadership Greater Hartford, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Dr. Núñez is married to Dr. Richard Freeland, former president of Northeastern University and current Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Massachusetts. They have two children, Maria, an anesthesiologist in Miami, Florida, and Antony, director of academic advisement at Naugatuck Valley Community College in Connecticut.