

The Daily Cardinal

COMPLETE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN - MADISON COVERAGE SINCE 1892

Newly-tenured management professor strives to mentor students

January 27, 2015 11:30 pm



Maria Triana is one of only 40 female Hispanic-American management professors in the U.S.

Being one of only 40 female Hispanic-American management professors in the country is a prestigious accomplishment, but what newly-tenured Wisconsin School of Business professor Maria Triana values even more about her position lies in her ability to act as a leader and mentor for all kinds of students.

Upon earning tenure in the summer of 2014, Triana readily embraced the role of advisor for students studying strategic human resource management, keeping in mind the importance of faculty diversity at UW-Madison.

Triana explained that one way to address diversity is to think about faculty demographics, emphasizing that if instructors resemble minorities they may encourage a diverse student population to succeed.

“If [faculty] do [reflect minorities], then the philosophy is they suddenly have a role model, they have someone that demonstrates to them that they can finish school, that they can go on and get an advanced degree,” she said.

Triana was tenured in the summer of 2014 and said the biggest impact for her was not that she represented a small demographic but that she embraced a bigger service position at the university. This obligation allows time to advise and mentor students studying strategic human resource management.

Triana has always been interested in organization and what makes people tick. While working in Silicon Valley she noticed employee behavioral patterns and responses.

This observation led to Triana’s interest in management and organizational behavior and helped push her to receive her doctorate in management at Texas Agricultural and Mechanical University in 2008, making her the first person in her family to earn a Ph.D.

But she did not do it alone. Triana said information she received from the PhD Project, an organization dedicated to recruiting minority professionals to doctoral business programs, largely motivated her to get a Ph.D. in management.

Triana described her tenure as relief after years of hard work.

“You work for something for a long time, and in the end you feel like... very satisfied and relieved that all that work paid off,” Triana said.

Originally a part of the PhD Project as a student, Triana said she has volunteered for the organization for seven years and represents UW-Madison at the annual PhD Project conference in Chicago, recruiting prospective minority Ph.D. students.

She said her volunteer efforts are a way to appreciate the people who motivated her in the past.

“It’s been rewarding and it’s an opportunity to give back,” Triana said.