

## Raising the bar: Robert Saldivar

HHSS grad becomes professor in business



Courtesy photo

Robert Saldivar, a Harlingen High School South graduate, is now an assistant professor of marketing at Ramapo College of New Jersey in Mahwah. He is one of only 29 Hispanic business professors nationwide, says The PhD Project.

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By **TRAVIS M. WHITEHEAD** Staff Writer

Robert Saldivar knows his business.

His business is teaching business at the university level, and the 2000 graduate of Harlingen High School South is one of a handful of Hispanic business professors in the country. In fact, there are only 29 Hispanic business professors nationwide, says The PhD Project, an organization that fosters minority students through the process of getting a Ph.D. in business. Minority students include not only Hispanics but also African Americans and Native Americans.

Saldivar said he's enjoying his work as a business professor and the impact he's having on students. "I've seen some of the students that have taken notice that there is a

Hispanic professor in the classroom,” said Saldivar, 32, who is an assistant professor of marketing at Ramapo College of New Jersey in Mahwah.

Saldivar first studied at the University of Texas at Brownsville where a mentor made a big difference in his life.

“He kind of encouraged me to keep with it, kind of encouraged me that it was a really good career,” Saldivar said. He then entered the doctorate program at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg. The faculty there was also very supportive. In the midst of this, he learned about The PhD Project.

“They kind of help us out in putting us in contact with older students that are further along in their studies and then minority faculty that are already in positions around the college,” Saldivar said. “They just give us some insight on what to look for, what to expect, and kind of encourage us so you can keep with it.”

The PhD Project also paid for him and other business students to go to a business conference each summer during his studies.

“They would organize some kind of a mini-conference before this major conference,” he said. “And that’s when they would give us some insights from other students and faculty.”

After successfully defending his dissertation, he taught at UTPA for about 1 1/2 years. He also taught at UTB last year before accepting his current position in New Jersey. “I’ve always wanted to live in the New York area, and this is kind of in the Greater New York area,” he said. “So I just wanted to try something a little bit different. And when the opportunity arose, I kind of jumped on it.”

He said that, although the area is quite different from the Rio Grande Valley, in other ways it’s similar.

“There are a lot of first generation college students,” he said. “We have a lot of Hispanics up here so I’ve seen a lot of them take notice as well.”