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**Inspirational film about six students' journey from poverty to Ivy League
to be shown in conjunction with family policy conference**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – *Edcouch-Elsa* – a documentary film that shows how a dedicated teacher's challenge to his students opened the doors from a South Texas border town to Ivy League colleges – will be shown at Vanderbilt University Sunday, Oct. 20, at 5:30 p.m. and again at 7:30 p.m. in the Law School's Flynn Auditorium.

The showings are free and open to the public. Filmmaker Marcel Rodriguez and students featured in the movie will be on hand to participate in a discussion and to answer questions following the 5:30 p.m. screening. A dessert reception will also follow the 5:30 p.m. screening and discussion. To reserve a seat for the film and the reception, call 322-5638.

The film follows four Edcouch-Elsa High School students who overcame the odds of being educated in the second-poorest school district in Texas to attend some of the country's most prestigious universities.

Edcouch-Elsa's students are primarily Mexican-American and many of their parents are laborers and farmhands in the citrus fields in the Rio Grande Valley in deep South Texas. Nearly every family lives below the federal poverty level in one of the numerous colonias, unincorporated settlements without electricity and water, on the area's back roads.

In 1991, Frank Guajardo, a second-year teacher at Edcouch-Elsa broke the ice with his 11th grade advanced English class during the first week of school by asking them about their college aspirations, according to news reports. A few had plans to attend local universities. Some had no college aspirations.

(more)

Guajardo had reviewed the students' first assignments and knew they had talent. He challenged the students to apply to exclusive schools such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Columbia.

The students' incredulous responses prompted Guajardo, who had also grown up in the local colonias and attended the University of Texas at Austin, to promise that if the students raised the money he would take a group to visit those schools.

By May 1992, the students raised enough money through bake sales, car washes and a grant proposal written by a student to make that first trip. Several years and trips later, more than 50 students have been placed at Ivy League universities.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is sponsoring the *Edcouch-Elsa* screenings and reception in conjunction with Family Re-Union 11, an annual conference on major policy issues affecting families. Family Re-Union is moderated by former Vice President Al Gore and Tipper Gore. This year's topic is families and youth. The one-day conference begins Monday, Oct. 21, at Langford Auditorium. For more information, visit www.familyreunion.org.

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