

2010 Commencement Speaker

Dr. Martha J. Kanter, Under Secretary of Education

Dr. Martha J. Kanter was nominated by President Barack Obama on April 29, 2009, to be the under secretary of education and was confirmed by the Senate on June 19, 2009. In this position, she reports to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and oversees policies, programs, and activities related to postsecondary education, vocational and adult education, and federal student aid. From 2003 to 2009, Dr. Kanter served as chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, one of the largest community college districts in the nation, serving more than 45,000 students with a total budget of approximately \$400 million.

She is the first community college leader to serve in the under secretary position. In 1977, after serving as an alternative high school teacher at Lexington High School in Massachusetts, the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns (N.Y.) and later at the Searing School in New York City, she established the first program for students with learning disabilities at San Jose City College (Calif.). She then served as a director, dean and subsequently as vice chancellor for policy and research for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office in Sacramento, returning to San Jose City College as vice president of instruction and student services in 1990. In 1993, she was named president of De Anza College and served in this position until becoming chancellor.

Dr. Kanter has served as a board member or officer in a wide variety of national, state, and local organizations, including the League for Innovation in the Community College, the Community College League of California, Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, Inc., Peninsula Open Space Trust, the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley, the Mexican Heritage Corporation, the Rotary Club of Palo Alto, and the California Association of Postsecondary Educators of the Disabled.

Dr. Kanter has been recognized for her work numerous times in California, including being named Woman of the Year by the 24th Assembly District, Woman of Achievement by San Jose Mercury News and the Women's Fund, and Woman of the Year for Santa Clara County by the American Association of University Women. In 2003, she received the Excellence in Education award from the National Organization for Women's California Chapter. In 2006, she was honored for diversity and community leadership by the Santa Clara County Commission on the Status of Women, and in 2007, the American Leadership Forum-Silicon Valley honored her with the John W. Gardner Leadership Award. Last year, Dr. Kanter received the Citizen of the Year award from the Cupertino Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Kanter holds a doctorate in organization and leadership from the University of San Francisco. Her dissertation addressed demographic, institutional, and assessment factors affecting access to higher education for underrepresented students in California's community colleges. In 1994, she opened the first Advanced Technology Center in California's community college system and promoted local and state policies to advance Foothill-De Anza's legacy of excellence and opportunity for California's expanding and increasingly diverse student population. She received her master's degree in education with a concentration in clinical psychology and public practice from Harvard University, and a bachelor's degree in sociology from Brandeis University.