The Need
There have been a number of growing concerns about the state of American higher education:

1. Call: The call to increase the proportion of American adults receiving degrees reflected in President Obama’s declared goal to make the U.S. number 1 in degree attainment by 2020 and the Lumina Foundation’s similar Big Goal.
2. Cost: The rising costs of education, exacerbated in recent years by the impact of the recession on families and on state budgets and creating a risk of a higher education “bubble” that will result in higher education’s pricing itself out of a middle class market.
3. College- and career-readiness: The increasing need for remediation for entering college students and the apparent lack of career readiness among graduates.
4. Technology: The role of technology to increase efficiency and educational quality and lower cost.
5. Demography: The increasingly diverse student population, driven by dramatic demographic change, especially among Hispanics.
6. Disconnect: A persisting ivory tower mentality, seen as resistant to re-thinking tenure, defining educational outcomes, streamlining higher education delivery, considering business models of education, etc.

The first five factors suggest the need to re-engineer higher education with a view to improving quality and efficiencies (resulting in lower costs to students and taxpayers) while also increasing access and success for the current and next generation of new and increasingly diverse students. A key unresolved question is how fundamental a change is needed: can these issues be adequately addressed by more of the same or is a new model of higher education required (hence “re-engineering”)? The last issue, which speaks to the perceived disconnect between academe and the publics it serves, raises the further question of whether fundamental change is possible.

A Panel Response: The Challenge of Re-Engineering Higher Education Today
Panelists:

- Francisco G. Cigarroa, M.D.: Chancellor, The University of Texas System, nationally renowned pediatric and transplant surgeon, former president of the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, Texas, and member, President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics. Expertise: Hispanic higher education at professional school and major state system level, state-level policy issues in a key state with large and growing Hispanic population.
- Congressman Rubén Hinojosa (D-TX): U.S. Representative of the 15th District of Texas. Expertise: Serves as the Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Training. In 2007, as incoming Chairman of the Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, he helped guide into law the historic College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, which represents the single largest increase in student financial aid since the GI Bill.

- Elizabeth R. Gutierrez, Ph.D.: Director of State Policy, Lumina Foundation for Education. Expertise: Lumina has articulated and organized its work around the Big Goal; it has supported community college development, data-driven change models, and increased attention on MSIs.

- Eduardo M. Ochoa, Ph.D.: Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. Expertise: Key federal official on postsecondary education with strong background both as educator and academic administrator, including substantial experience in HSIs.

- Moderator – Lena T. Rodriguez, Ph.D.: Chief Marketing and Development Officer of the Urban Entrepreneur Partnership Inc (UEP), a program of the Kauffman Foundation. Expertise: Serves as university accreditation officer for Western Association of Colleges and Universities; former executive director of special projects and communications for president of San Diego State University.