

## Eduardo González-Viaña – Award for Scholarship



Since moving to America from his native country of Perú, Spanish professor Eduardo González-Viaña has had one mission: to build a bridge among communities, especially with Latinos in the Willamette Valley. His work as both an educator and writer focuses on immigrant life in America.

While living in Perú, he earned a doctorate in Spanish languages and a law degree, both from the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, Perú, and a journalism degree from the Colegio de Periodistas del Perú. He came to WOU in 1993, after working at the University of California, Berkely, for a short time. “I read some interesting information about WOU; I knew it was a small university in a small community,” González-Viaña says. “I felt I would be able to work as a professor and a writer with enough inspiration.”

Within a year of moving to Monmouth, he came up with the idea for the Building a Bridge outreach program. He matches WOU students who can speak Spanish with local Latino families who speak little to no English. These students tutor families in literacy, basic English, driving laws, American history and other skills. “I feel like I am accomplishing a mission. I’m always trying to establish a link among the different communities,” he says.

To date, this program has helped almost 900 area families he has found through outlets such as churches and Spanish radio stations. “For many, this is their first true learning experience with somebody of a different culture,” he says. “Usually, half of my students end up

becoming friends with their families, even after the class is over.”

Humanities Division Chair Carol Harding says the program “helps our students broaden their horizons, especially when they come from a more Anglo community and don’t have any understanding of some of the difficulties those in the Latino community face.”

In addition to the Building a Bridge program, González-Viaña spends much of his time writing, mostly short stories and novels. He was 15 when his first was published. Since then he has published more than 20 books and nearly 400 articles. His most recent publication was an English translated version of his *New York Times* bestseller *Los Suenos de America*. This collection of short stories comprises fictionalized testimonials from participants in his Building a Bridge program and people he has met while traveling America.

He also writes a weekly column titled “Correo de Salem,” which is published in approximately 30 newspapers in the Americas. For his writings, he has been awarded Perú’s National Prize for Literature, the International Juan Rulfo Award, and the prestigious Latino Literature Prize by the Latin American Writers Institute of New York.

He will be on sabbatical during the upcoming school year and has been invited to speak at universities in Perú, Columbia, Norway and Sweden. González-Viaña is glad he made the decision to come to WOU. “Oregon is a beautiful place. I feel like I’m in the scenario of films of the far west that I saw in my childhood.” He says he’s still waiting to speak to Roy Rogers.