

Philanthropic Leadership Award Portland State University Foundation

Marisa A. Zapata, Ph.D.

MARISA A. ZAPATA is an associate professor of land-use planning in the Toulan School of Urban Studies & Planning and director of Portland State University's Homelessness Research & Action Collaborative (HRAC), an interdisciplinary research center dedicated to reducing and preventing homelessness with an emphasis on communities of color. As an educator, scholar, and planner, Professor Zapata is committed to achieving spatially based social justice by preparing planners and policy makers to act in the face of uncertain and inequitable futures. She believes how we use land reflects our social and cultural values. She is especially concerned about equitable planning in highly diverse communities, and sees homelessness as a consequence of failing to put marginalized voices at the center of current planning and forecasts of the future.

Professor Zapata received her Ph.D. in Regional Planning from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, her M.U.P. in Urban Planning from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and B.A. in anthropology from Rice University. She was recently named one of Portland's unelected leaders by Portland Mercury for her role in using research to help understand homelessness.

Professor Zapata worked tirelessly to outline the need and promise of the HRAC to potential funders, from individual donors to foundations to government agencies. Her leadership, in concert with support from the PSU Foundation and senior PSU leadership, helped the center secure a \$900,000 gift in late 2018. This gift has been used to elevate the work of the new center and transform how our community understands and engages with the issue of homelessness. The gift has been used to sponsor nearly a dozen graduate students to engage in research on homelessness they later presented to the public; to support a faculty grant program for multidisciplinary research across departments at PSU; and to fund the creation of the region's first comprehensive, annualized count of homelessness and housing insecurity.

The Portland State University Foundation Faculty Philanthropic Leadership Award is given annually to a faculty member in recognition of their role as a direct partner in obtaining a significant philanthropic gift.