



Maria Cristina Villalobos (b.1971)

Maria Cristina Villalobos obtained her PhD from Rice University in 2000 and is the Myles and Sylvia Aaronson Endowed Professor at UT Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV), close to her hometown of Donna, Texas. A first-generation college graduate, Villalobos conducts research in optimization and modeling and is noted for her efforts to increase the numbers of underrepresented stu-

dents in STEM, particularly by founding the UTRGV Center of Excellence in STEM Education in 2011. Among her many accolades are the 2019 Richard A. Tapia Achievement Award for Scientific Scholarship, Civic Sciences, and Diversifying Computing and a 2020 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics, and Engineering Mentoring from the White House OSTP.

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