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For Immediate Release**GSU, El Valor student awarded scholarship**

University Park, October 21, 2003—Illinois Conference of Women Legislators has awarded a \$2,500 scholarship to Governors State University student Griselda Mata. Mata is a student in Governors State's Communication Disorders program, but she attends classes at El Valor's Reyes Children and Family Center, in Chicago, through a partnership program run by the university and El Valor.

"We're very pleased to offer these scholarships," said Connie Bedolli, executive director of the Conference of Women Legislators (COWL). "Our organization is committed to helping Illinois women, children and families."

According to Bedolli, COWL fulfills that commitment, in part, through supporting higher education wherever possible. "We have a sincere desire to see Illinois families live better lives, and we know that education is the key to making that happen," she said.

Certainly, the scholarships will help make it happen for Mata.

"The scholarship will take a lot of stress off of me," said Mata. A single mother with a disabled five-year-old daughter, Mata tirelessly works to see that her daughter, Amanda, gets all the help she needs developmentally.

That means working with therapists throughout the week—music therapists, speech therapists, and recreational therapists. Mata volunteers at Amanda's school as well, helping not only her daughter, but other disabled children.

"They inspire me," said Mata. "When I feel like things are too hard, I look to see how hard they work."

With the scholarship money, Mata will be able to take more courses in the program. "I've been taking two classes [per trimester], but now I should be able to take three."

Mata plans to work with her daughter and other children with communication disorders when she graduates from the Governors State, El Valor program.

Leticia Ramirez, director of program policy for El Valor said, "We're very pleased about the COWL scholarship. The money will be helping a student who could have difficulty without it."

First District State Representative Susana Mendoza, chair of the Conference of Women Legislators, first informed El Valor about the availability of the scholarships, and El Valor encouraged its Governors State students to apply.

Mata was thrilled when she hear the news, "I felt like I won the lottery!"

Representative Mendoza said, "Griselda exemplifies the kind of women that the Conference of Women Legislators supports. They seek an education to empower themselves. They are strong. They have focus. And with an education they can serve and act as role models for others."

Governors State University and El Valor established their partnership offering the Communication Disorders program in January of this year in response to a critical shortage in Spanish-speaking, bilingual practitioners in communication disorders. El Valor is a community-based, non-profit organization serving Chicago's urban and Hispanic populations.