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The Black, Asian & Latino Law Students Association Alumni Group (BALLSA) held their 13th Annual Alumni Dinner on March 30, marking the first time since 2019 that they've held the event in person.

The theme of this year's dinner was Honoring Cardozo's Path Makers: Celebrating those who have forged a path forward in the legal world for themselves and future Cardozo BALLSA generations. The evening's honoree was Juan Otero '94, who personifies the awards theme as a path maker. Otero is Senior Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Comcast NBCUniversal, where he oversees operational management of the company's DE&I efforts across the corporate enterprise. Previously he served as Director, Economic Development and Commerce for the National Governors Association, and as Deputy Director at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

BALLSA dedicates itself to creating more equitable spaces at Cardozo and in the legal and business professions. As part of that commitment, BALLSA raises critical funds for underrepresented students at Cardozo, which provides financial resources and increased opportunity. Money raised by the BALLSA Dinner helps fund the David Martinidez Scholarship for Underrepresented Students, which provides support to many groups, including the Gates Scholars, underrepresented students based on race, ethnicity, gender identity or other criteria, such as first-generation students. The Martinidez Scholarship was named in honor of Cardozo's

Associate Dean of Admissions, whose dedication to diversity and inclusion throughout his tenure greatly helped Cardozo and generations of students achieve their goals.

BALLSA Alumni Group Co-Chairs Alexandra Nieto '19 and Amanda Sewanan '20 received thunderous applause upon announcing that the group successfully reached its goal of raising \$50,000 for the David Martinidez Scholarship.

“We want to thank all of you for supporting the scholarship and for being here with us tonight,” said Nieto. “It’s so great to see you here, and we look forward to seeing you again in the future!”

During his acceptance speech, Otero spoke about his family, such as his father, who worked extra shifts as a cab driver to help him get through law school, and the family he found through BALLSA.

“I can say that in addition to a first-class education, in addition to all of the texts and teachers, what I found was this amazing community and something that’s so very special about this place,” Otero said. “As I look at my BALLSA and Cardozo family here, it touches my heart to see you all here. It truly moves me.”

