

Lisandra Garay-Vega: Before You Get on the Road ^[1]

Submitted by [Wilson Gonzalez-Espada](#) ^[2] on 20 October 2015 - 1:31pm



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By: UMass Amherst Alumni Association Press

Learning from past events is not always easy, but crucial when it comes to public safety.

Lisandra Garay-Vega '04 MS, '08 PhD, a project manager at the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), investigates significant accidents along our nation's highways, on behalf of the agency, to determine probable cause and issue safety recommendations to help prevent recurrences.

"We are always trying to reduce the number of accidents," says Garay-Vega. "Our investigations are comprehensive and focus on those things that will help us advance transportation safety nationwide."

Garay-Vega manages highway investigation reports from crash scene to Board presentation for the NTSB, an independent Federal agency that investigates significant accidents in all modes of transportation.

She travels to the crash scene, ensures that factual information and safety issues are adequately developed, and coordinates the development of safety recommendations.

"Human factors, such as driver interaction with the environment or with the vehicle, play a significant role in many accidents," says Garay-Vega. "**Disconnecting from deadly distractions while driving** is just one of the topics in the NTSB's Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements [3]. These are advocacy priorities to increase awareness, reduce accidents and save lives."

Garay-Vega, a recipient of the College of Engineering 2015 Outstanding Alumni Awards [4], earned her master's and doctorate degrees in civil engineering, with an emphasis in transportation safety and human factors, from UMass Amherst. She earned her bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez.

Fluent in Spanish, she actively seeks opportunities to communicate transportation safety messages to the Hispanic community.

Prior to joining NTSB in 2014, Garay-Vega worked for the U.S. Department of Transportation for ten years as a principal investigator and technical project manager. At Volpe, the National Transportation Systems Center, she examined drivers' acceptance and the safety benefits of in-vehicle crash avoidance technologies. She also led an interdisciplinary team conducting research on the detectability of vehicle sounds as it relates to the safety of blind pedestrians.

Garay-Vega's team received the Excellence in Government Award for Creativity and Innovation from the Greater Boston Federal Executive Board. She then served as a senior engineer at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration where she led interdisciplinary teams working on vehicle crash avoidance research and rulemaking activities. She also managed multiple research contracts and was responsible for the technical quality of the design, execution, and interpretation of research findings.

On October 16, Garay-Vega will join Dean Tim Anderson and fellow Outstanding Alumni Award recipients for a **panel discussion on leadership**. Panelists will field questions from the audience and share professional and personal experiences at UMass and beyond that helped shape and

inform their careers.

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