

Multicultural Issues

- Richard Tapia, throughout his career, received a lot of support from his family. His parents, especially his mother, taught him and his siblings many important things in life – good work habits, to believe in themselves, take pride in who you are, respect others, and sensitivity to others' needs. Tapia learned from his mother that you can do anything you want to do, but you have to stay determined and not give up.
- As a child, Tapia was teased and insulted by his classmates because of his Mexican heritage.
- Tapia, as a student, did not receive a lot of support from school counselors. They had low expectations for the students and did not give the best advice on how to obtain a good education. Due to this lack of advice, Tapia attended Harbor Junior College in Wilmington, California instead of a four-year university.
- While at Harbor Junior College, his professors noticed his mathematical talents and encouraged him to apply to UCLA.
- The first years he was in graduate school, Tapia had to support himself, so he did not have a lot of money. There was a time when he did not even have a phone.
- When hired at Rice University in Houston, Texas, Tapia was told by some, perhaps because of his Mexican heritage, that he would never make tenure.

- Still today, Tapia faces discrimination. When in Mexico, people call him a “gringo,” implying that he is not really Mexican. When in the United States he is teased for being Mexican.