Professor Olivas was quoted in an article published in today's Houston Chronicle regarding the increase of Asian immigrants in Texas.

The following article was published in the Houston Chronicle on Thursday, May 26, 2011:

Census shows ever-changing face of Texas
Count finds state relatively young, with many India newcomers surging
By JEANNIE KEVER
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Texas remains a strikingly youthful state, offering the potential of a large future workforce powered by a surging Latino population and a continued tide of Asian immigration, but also presenting challenges for the future.

The number of Asian Indians almost doubled over the past decade, surpassing the Vietnamese population to become the largest group of Asians in the state.

New Texas data from the 2010 Census will be released today, offering a few surprises and also confirming what demographers have predicted for years.

Texas is the second-youngest state in the nation, something that offers advantages and caveats for the future. Only Utah has a lower median age.

But even Texans are growing older, a phenomenon most starkly illustrated in the Panhandle, the Hill Country and West Texas.

The state's median age — meaning half of residents are older, and half younger — is 33.6, substantially lower than the national median of 37.2.

It is even lower in Harris County, at 32.2, and drops to 28.3 in several counties along the Mexican border.

In Llano County, just northwest of Austin, the median age is 55.

"It's really a two-part state," said Rice University demographer Steve Murdock, a former director of the U.S. Census Bureau.

More than half of Texas counties have higher median ages than the national figure, he noted. The major urban areas are younger, thanks to their Latino populations.

The youth boom is a good thing, at least potentially.

"We are seen as a state of youth and vigor," said Jeff Moseley, president and CEO of the Greater Houston Partnership. "We have families with young children, young singles. People are voting with their feet."
Unlike parts of the Midwest and New England, Texas will have plenty of people to replace aging baby boomers.

But there is a downside.

The huge number of young children - there were almost 2 million children younger than 5, more than any other age group - indicates more demand for education, from preschool through college.

Plans to cut state public education funding by $4 billion over the next two years raise more questions.

"We're in trouble," said Luis Salinas, a sociologist at the University of Houston. "People are not (more likely) to stay in school if their classrooms are bigger. They're not going to finish college faster if there are fewer classes and less financial aid. We're going to have the numbers, but those numbers aren't going to be employable."

Coming for opportunity

That isn't a new issue, although the state's declining revenues add urgency to the chorus.

Nor is the increasing diversity a surprise. But the latest Census data, which provides more information on the age, race and ethnic subgroups of Texans, offer additional details to help state leaders prepare for the future.

"When people say Texas is diverse, historically they meant we had some African-Americans and a large Hispanic population," Murdock said. "But increasingly, we have a large Asian population, a large Hispanic population, a large African-American population. We are diverse in nearly all ways."

The Asian population, while just 3.8 percent of the state total, has almost doubled, to 964,596 people.

The number of Asian Indians has surpassed that of Vietnamese, who have comprised the largest share of Asians in Texas since the end of the Vietnam war.

"You have a wave of people who come for economic opportunity, and then they draw other people," said Mini Timmaraju, an attorney and president of the Indo American Political Action Committee of Greater Houston.

People of Vietnamese descent are still the majority Asian population in Harris County, as well as Tarrant County. But resettlement programs for Vietnamese refugees are largely completed.

A natural fit

Today's Asian immigrants, including those from India and China, generally come for education or work, or both.
"As long as there are employment visas, Asians will come here for those jobs," said Michael Olivas, an immigration expert at the University of Houston Law Center.

Mustafa Tameez, co-chair of the South Asian Chamber of Commerce, said immigration from South Asia began increasing in the 1990s.

"Many of them, they come for the tech industries, or engineering," he said. "A lot of the energy professions require a high degree of education, so it's a natural fit for South Asians."

Others are entrepreneurs.

"They're running a mom-and-pop operation," said Hasu Patel, vice president of the Small and Independent Motel Owners Association. "They do work very hard, and if they have to work for 24 hours a day, they do that."

Patel, 56, arrived in 1981, lured by a brother who was already here. After working at a small motel, he began buying property and now has a variety of business interests.

Murdock said the Asian Indian population is growing nationally, not just in Texas.

But Timmaraju said Texas, and especially the Houston area, benefits from the welcome mat designed by earlier arrivals, from Hindu temples to theaters showing Bollywood movies.

"Folks really love that," she said. "I have friends who come here for wedding shopping, because the boutiques are better here (than other U.S. cities). All those things make people want to stay."

An uncertain future

Census forms allow Asians to choose from six nationalities: Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese, or "Other Asian," so people from Pakistan, Bangladesh and other countries aren't counted separately. Similarly, Latinos can self-identify as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or "other."

Even those limited choices can illustrate change.

Immigrants from Central and South America swept into Texas in the 1990s, and by the 2000 Census, just 76 percent of Latinos in the state identified themselves as being of Mexican origin.

That was up to 84 percent by the 2010 Census.

Murdock noted that similar shifts took place in most of Texas' big cities, although it was barely perceptible in Houston, from 72.2 percent in 2000 to 73.3 percent last year.

Future changes remain to be seen, but Karl Eschbach, a former state demographer who is now at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, said it's clear the population will continue to grow, as will the demand for services.
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"It's a circle - a younger population has a higher birth rate," he said. "Population growth helps drive economic growth. On the other hand, that puts a burden on the state to educate the younger population and that younger work force.

"That is going to create a very serious challenge for the state."

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