Calexico, California - Beginning in June 2010, Edgar Ortega, a junior at SDSU-Imperial Valley Campus majoring in International business, became the Area Assistant for USDA-Rural Development (RD) in the El Centro Office; participating as part of the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), which provides Federal Government employment opportunities to continuing students, and the prospect to gain hands-on experience.

Back in October 2009, Mr. Ortega was sponsored by the USDA-Hispanic Serving Institutions National Program Office as a USDA-HSI Student Conference Scholar to attend HACU’s 23rd Annual Conference in Orlando, FL. The conference setting provided Mr. Ortega the opportunity to further develop his leadership skills and network among professionals that are making a difference through public service. It was there that Mr. Ortega met and was inspired by the motivational speech of Victor Vasquez, Deputy Under Secretary for Rural Development at USDA, who was one of the contributing keynote speakers at the national conference. Through his own perseverance and with the assistance of Roberto González Jr. (Regional Director of the USDA-HSINP Regional Office) who helped in the whole process, Mr. Ortega, now as incumbent of the position of Area Assistant, currently serves the local rural community by providing loan and grant assistance, such as explaining the eligibility requirements, and preparing the applications of interest for processing.

Thanking Mr. González, Mr. Ortega said, "I will appreciate for a lifetime the comments and suggestions you gave me to achieve this goal. I will make my first steps in the Federal Government successful because of thoughtful, professional, and committed employees like you."