



Mechanical Engineering
Academy of Distinguished Alumni

Edgar Figueroa

Distinguished Mechanical Engineer, 2019

BSME, The University of Texas at Austin, 1994

MS Technology Commercialization, The University
of Texas at Austin, 1998

Executive Scholar, Northwestern University, 2017

President and CEO

Wi-Fi Alliance

Edgar was born in Guatemala and was raised there by his single mother. He earned his first diploma as a professional typist at age 12, fearing that he would soon have to provide for his family. At age 14, he immigrated to the United States. In his formative years, Edgar worked as a mechanic—from car engines to large excavators—and learned to speak English. He attended Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center in Chicago and became the first in his family to graduate from high school. Edgar joined the U.S. Navy as a jet engine specialist, and during four years of active duty received several commendations, including meritorious advancement and sailor of the year awards from his fighter pilot squadron. After the Navy, Edgar pursued a Mechanical Engineering degree at The University of Texas and graduated with Honors in 1994. He credits his UT ME education with teaching him the critical thinking skills that have been the hallmark of his career.

Edgar spent his early career at 3M Company in product design, quality, and manufacturing, before moving to product management. He ultimately managed the electronic projection systems and remote meeting solutions product lines, including a portfolio of voice, video and teleconferencing products jointly developed with Polycom. Edgar then joined entrepreneurs at Ridgeway Systems, a start-up that delivered the world's first session border controller—a solution to allow incoming ad hoc, live internet calls to traverse secure private networks. The solution became an International Telecommunications Union standard and continues to be used for real-time internet voice and video calls today. Ridgeway is now part of Cisco.

In 2003, Edgar joined Wi-Fi Alliance, the consortium that defines Wi-Fi, as its operations lead. He designed the industry's original program development framework and globally scaled Wi-Fi product certification. In 2007 Edgar was appointed by the Board of Directors as chief executive. Under Edgar's leadership, Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi Alliance achieved extraordinary growth. In addition to overseeing steady advances in interoperable Wi-Fi capabilities, Edgar established consensus agreements and strategic alliances across industries, and engaged with government agencies worldwide to ensure continued Wi-Fi proliferation into mass markets such as consumer electronics and mobile. As of 2019, Wi-Fi delivers an estimated \$2 trillion per year in economic value globally, more than 800 companies comprise Wi-Fi Alliance, and Wi-Fi technology is essential in society as 13 billion Wi-Fi devices carry the bulk of the world's data traffic. The Wi-Fi industry has recognized Edgar with Leadership and Hall of Fame awards.

In addition to his BSME, Edgar holds a master's degree in Technology Commercialization from UT and graduated from Kellogg's Executive Scholar program at Northwestern University. He is a member of Pi Tau Sigma, Tau Beta Pi, and the Hispanic Scholarship Fund Hall of Fame. Edgar and his wife, Colette, support the Friends of Alec Equal Opportunity in Engineering, HSF, Girls Empowerment Network, La Pedrera School Project, and the Texas Leadership Society. Together they enjoy living in Austin, spending time with family and friends, and travelling.