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*Alvarado has held senior management positions at the national level as deputy assistant secretary of defense, U.S. Department of Defense; counsel for the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary; and staff member of the U.S. House of Representatives. She was also appointed by President Ronald Reagan as director of ACTION, now the Corporation for Community and National Service.*

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**What guided you early on?** My father was a captain in the Air Force, and my mother was a nurse who always worked, even with seven children. We were transferred to Madrid, Spain, where we were in the first wave of American families to arrive before the base was built. My parents always told the children that we could thrive no matter where we lived and that we could accomplish anything by getting an education and working hard. They encouraged us to go as far as we could. Since I was the oldest of all seven, my parents gave me a lot of responsibility at a very young age. They instilled courage and confidence in my decisions. It was this confidence that truly helped to guide me throughout the start of my career and beyond. **What were some challenges you faced as you started your professional climb?** I became a teaching assistant at The Ohio State University during the late '60s, a time of massive campus unrest. I was 20 years old and teaching Spanish to seniors who were older than me. I quickly learned that in order to achieve credibility, I had to earn their respect through competency, compassion, and fairness. This experience served me well after I married an Army officer and found employment at the post education center, counseling veterans returning from Vietnam on how best to utilize their GI Bill benefits. Initially, I was told they wouldn't hire army wives. To me, that was not a plausible answer. I never gave up and finally was hired. I'll never forget walking into a large hall to brief several hundred combat-experienced artillery captains, all older than me, who were certainly not expecting a young woman. I was determined to share information that I knew would be of value to them and their men. To their credit, they were able to look past my being the only woman in the room, and the briefing became the focus. **Did your determination lead you to your professional interests?** My interest in public policy led me to Washington to work as a legislative assistant for Congress. I was privileged to participate in extensive hearings and historic immigration legislation. As a staff member for the Senate Judiciary Committee, we organized a yearlong series of hearings wherein all perspectives on this controversial issue could be shared. We included every interest group who wished to testify, from ACLU to Zero Population Growth. During this time, Ronald Reagan was elected president, and I was invited to serve as a member of the transition team, with a focus on briefing the new attorney general on issues related to immigration policy and drug education and policy. After the immigration bill passed the Senate, the Reagan White House appointed me to serve at the Pentagon, as deputy assistant for the secretary of defense for equal opportunity and safety policy. Later, I was named by the president as director of the independent agency now known as the Corporation for National and Community Service. Thus, I was able to gain valuable management experience in the executive branch, which has served me well throughout my business career. One of the greatest blessings of working in Washington, D.C., is that I had a ringside seat watching democracy come to life. For the first time, I understood the words of Frederick Douglass when he commented that the soul of this nation is harder than granite, and that our country will endure as long as we are true to our deepest values. **What other advice do you have for professional women?** As American women, we are privileged far beyond many women in this world, and yet we have far to go. Our leadership and our voices are critically needed here and abroad with regard to the grave issues of our time. So, I encourage women to listen to the wisdom of others, and never be afraid to contribute your own unique voice. **Today, you run Aguila International — a company that provides a forum for businesses to discuss public policy. You've had great success; what's next for you?** I see it not as "what's next" but "in addition to." I've been so fortunate to work in a diversity of sectors: government, nonprofit, and corporate. I love the work I am doing now in leadership development, corporate governance, and service to higher education on the Ohio Board of Regents. In these contexts, I'm very intrigued with the question of what are the deepest levels of stewardship we can bring to the resources entrusted to our care, to our values, and our people. Perhaps there will be an opportunity for me to go more global and collaborate with others around the world who are also exploring these dimensions of leadership and service.

