

UNO'S FAMILY TIES

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A WATCHDOGS REPORT

Embattled charter schools boss has three relatives on his payroll

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The embattled head of one of the largest charter school operators in Chicago, the politically influential United Neighborhood Organization, has three relatives on his payroll, records obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times show.

Juan Rangel, UNO's \$250,000-a-year chief executive officer, has his 30-year-old nephew working as his deputy chief of staff. Carlos Jaramillo, the son of Rangel's sister Rosario Jaramillo, is paid \$88,000, payroll records show.

Another Rangel nephew — Juan Antonio "John" Rangel, 38, makes more than \$71,000 a year as an information technology manager for UNO's charter school network. He's the son of Juan Rangel's brother Antonio Rangel.

Rangel's niece Araceli Estrada is paid more than \$49,000 a year as an apprentice kindergarten teacher. Estrada, 32, is the daughter of Rangel's sister Maria Teresa Rodriguez.

Sources said Estrada's husband, Victor Estrada, worked until recently as director of operations and administration for UNO's in-house janitorial services company, which is paid about \$3 million a year for cleaning its schools.

Rangel became godfather to the Estradas' infant son last year.

And Victor Estrada's brother, Jose Luis Estrada, is the UNO janitorial company's director of maintenance services, UNO records show.

In addition to Rangel's



Juan Rangel, shown in July with Mayor Rahm Emanuel, has run UNO since 1996 and made it one of the city's largest charter-school operators. | BRIAN JACKSON-SUN-TIMES

family connections, a private company called New Vision HR Consulting Inc. is working under contract to UNO's charter schools operation and its janitorial firm, the records show. New Vision is owned by Mary M. Quinn, the wife of Philip Mullins, the organization's \$187,000-a-year chief operating officer.

Quinn has been a consultant for UNO since 2009, making \$210 an hour. UNO officials would not say how much the firm has been paid in all. Records obtained by the Sun-Times show the charter-schools network paid New Vision \$3,675 on Dec. 24 and \$2,272 on Nov. 21.

Mullins, who would not comment, has been with UNO since it was founded nearly 30 years ago and is friends since childhood with the group's first leader, Ald. Danny Solis (25th).

"All 600-plus employees were hired and evaluated

based solely on the quality of their skills, abilities and work product," Rangel said Wednesday. "In the same way, [UNO's] over 1,000 vendors . . . are hired based solely on merits and qualifications."

Though privately run, UNO's 13 charter schools are funded largely by the Chicago Public Schools and the state of Illinois.

Under CPS' ethics policy, no public school official can hire or appoint a relative or help a relative get a contract that the official manages. That includes nephews and nieces. But until recently, CPS did not place any conflict-of-interest or nepotism restrictions on operators of charter schools, which it must approve to operate in Chicago and get tax-supported funding.

The Chicago Board of Education voted Feb. 27 to renew UNO's charter agreements,

ALL IN THE FAMILY

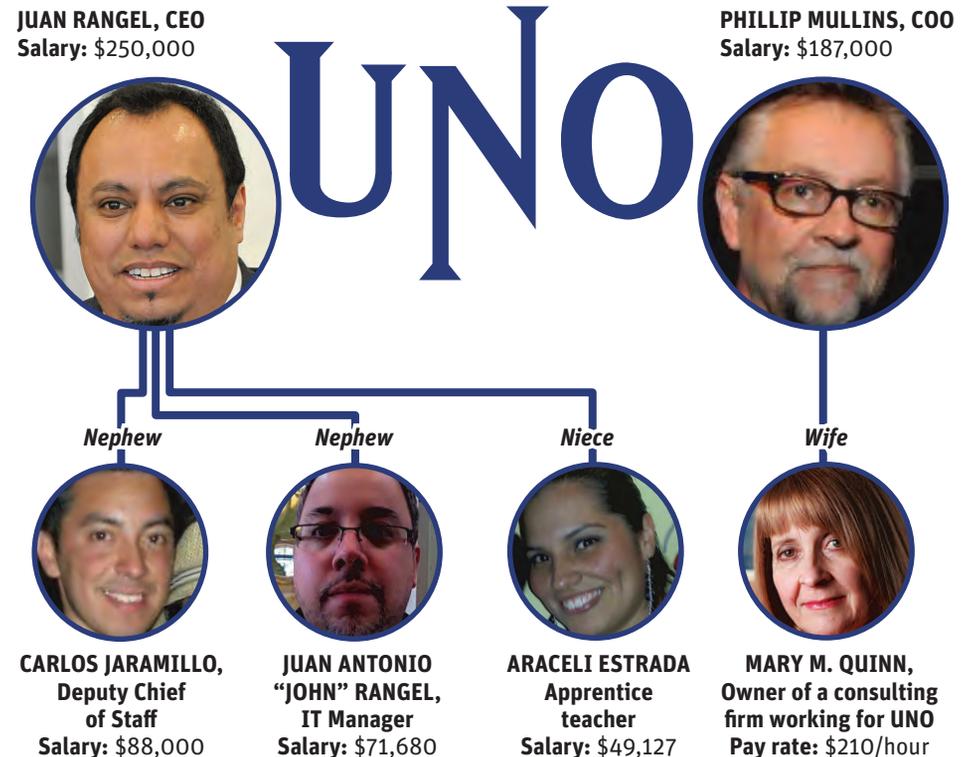
The United Neighborhood Organization's charter-schools network employs three relatives of UNO's boss, and the wife of another top executive has been a paid consultant for the group.

JUAN RANGEL, CEO

Salary: \$250,000

PHILLIP MULLINS, COO

Salary: \$187,000



Sun-Times

and Barbara Byrd-Bennett, CPS' chief executive officer, said charter contracts will now require the private operators to abide by the same ethics rules as the public schools.

Rangel — who co-chaired Rahm Emanuel's successful campaign to succeed former Mayor Richard M. Daley in 2011 — has run UNO since 1996, transforming it from a Hispanic community group into one of the city's largest charter school operators, with 6,500 students.

Emanuel appointed Rangel to the Public Building Commission of Chicago, which oversees construction of public schools and other government buildings.

UNO follows its own rules, though, in building and rehabilitating its schools. UNO officials have used a \$98 million state school construction grant to hire contractors with ties to the politically influential organization, the Sun-Times has reported. Among the contractors were two brothers of Miguel d'Escoto, who was UNO's \$200,000-a-year senior vice president for operations and chief of staff. D'Escoto resigned after the newspaper reported Feb. 4 that UNO was paying millions of dollars to companies owned by Federico "Fred" d'Escoto and Rodrigo d'Escoto.

In a letter last month to the state agency that admin-

isters the grant, Rangel said Miguel d'Escoto had no role in his brothers' deals with UNO other than signing off on payments to their companies.

D'Escoto Inc., owned by Federico d'Escoto, has been paid more than \$1.5 million by UNO, mostly for overseeing construction management on its state-funded schools. Miguel T. d'Escoto — Miguel d'Escoto's son — works for d'Escoto Inc., which Rangel suspended from doing business with UNO after the Sun-Times' report.

Reflection Window Co., owned by Rodrigo d'Escoto, stands to make nearly \$10 million for work on UNO schools.