

# Thunderbird at ASU alum, global financier to keynote school's spring 2026 convocation

By Nicole Almond Anderson, ASU News  
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[Diego J. Veitia](#)'s life story is a testament to resilience, entrepreneurship and the transformative power of a global education. A Cuban-born immigrant who arrived in the United States alone as a young teenager, Veitia would go on to build one of the world's leading global financial institutions, mentor generations of international business leaders and dedicate his life to expanding opportunity for others.

Now, nearly six decades after graduating from [Thunderbird School of Global Management](#), Veitia will return to campus as the keynote speaker for the school's spring 2026 convocation, a full-circle moment for a man who credits the institution with changing his future.

"Thunderbird changed my life," Veitia says simply.

A 1966 graduate of Thunderbird Graduate School of International Management's (now Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University) Master of International Management degree program, Veitia is the founder, former chairman and CEO of INTL FCStone (now [StoneX](#)), which he grew from a small startup into a Fortune 100 global financial services firm operating in more than 110 countries with offices around the world.

Today, he serves as chairman of Veitia & Associates, a family-owned investment and advisory firm, while continuing to pursue entrepreneurial ventures spanning finance, biotechnology and global development.

But long before he became a globally recognized financier and entrepreneur, Veitia was a young immigrant learning to navigate life on his own.

When Fidel Castro rose to power in Cuba, Veitia's mother made the painful decision to tell her teenage son, who was studying in Iowa at the time, not to return home. He would not see her again for seven years.

“That was the trampoline,” Veitia recalls. “The catapult to my journey in the United States. Being here alone at 13 or 14 years old without economic support forced me into independence and self-reliance.”

Determined to succeed, Veitia worked his way through Iowa State University, often juggling multiple jobs at once. He graduated with near-perfect grades in international studies and a minor in engineering.

While sitting outside a university placement office, Veitia met a recruiter from Thunderbird. The recruiter immediately recognized his international background, language skills and academic strengths as a perfect fit for Thunderbird's globally focused program.

At first, Veitia hesitated. He had little money and no clear way to finance graduate school. But he found a way — borrowing money and piecing together resources to attend Thunderbird, a decision that would shape the rest of his career.

Thunderbird also became the backdrop for one of the most meaningful chapters of his personal life. During graduate school, Veitia and his wife welcomed their daughter while balancing classes, work and family responsibilities.

“Thunderbird had a little nursery, and we would take our daughter there in the mornings while we attended classes,” Veitia said. “At lunchtime, my wife and I would pick her up, have lunch together, and then take her back to the nursery before finishing our afternoon classes. Looking back, it was incredible, we were building our future while raising a child at the same time.”

The international perspective Thunderbird provided became foundational to Veitia's success. After graduation, he began working in Central America, including time in Honduras and Costa Rica, where he helped establish the Costa Rican Stock Exchange. In 1980, he founded what would eventually become INTL FCStone in Winter Park, Florida. Over the next three decades, he transformed the company from a three-person operation into a global financial powerhouse before retiring in 2013.

“Everything in my life became international,” Veitia says. “Thunderbird and my background blended perfectly into the career I was meant to have.”

Throughout his career, Veitia also served as chairman and CEO of International Assets Holding Corporation, led global investment initiatives and advised companies across industries and continents. He later served as chairman of Lightmaker Property Manager, helping guide the company's strategic growth before its acquisition by a joint venture between Goldman Sachs and Blackstone.

Yet despite his many professional accomplishments, integrity always mattered more to Veitia than credentials alone. As his companies expanded globally, he frequently recruited Thunderbird graduates because of their international outlook, adaptability and multicultural fluency.

“The Thunderbird essence blended perfectly into our company,” he says. “People who weren't from Thunderbird had to learn international business. Thunderbird graduates already lived it.”

Retirement has done little to slow Veitia's entrepreneurial drive. Today, he remains involved in multiple businesses, including biotechnology companies focused on advancing cancer detection

technologies inspired in part by his daughter's courageous battle with Stage 4 cancer.

Philanthropy and education continue to remain central to Veitia's life and legacy. Through his family foundation, he has supported Thunderbird student scholarships and educational initiatives for those students pursuing international careers.

As Veitia prepares to address Thunderbird's 2026 graduating class, his story serves as a powerful reflection of the school's ethos: preparing leaders to thrive in a global world through resilience, curiosity and cross-cultural understanding.

"Diego's journey illustrates incredible resilience, entrepreneurial courage and a deep commitment to global impact," said [Charla Griffy-Brown](#), director general and dean of Thunderbird. "From arriving as a student to building a global financial institution and creating opportunities for others, he embodies the values we hope every T-bird carries into the world."

For Veitia, returning to Thunderbird is more than a homecoming. It is an opportunity to remind the next generation that adversity can become opportunity, that global thinking can transform lives, and that success ultimately begins with character.

"I don't know what my life would have been without Thunderbird," he says. "But I know it changed everything."

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*This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).*

## Main image



Diego J. Veitia, a Class of 1966 graduate of Thunderbird at ASU's Master of International Management program, will return to campus as the keynote speaker for the school's spring 2026 convocation, a full-circle moment for a man who credits the institution with changing his future. Photo courtesy of Thunderbird School of Global Management