The Future of STEM is Phenomenally Latina [1]

Submitted by Mónica Ivelisse Feliú-Mójer [2] on 5 March 2020 - 3:17pm

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CLOCKWISE: Roselin Rosario Meléndez, Greetchen Díaz Muñoz, Minerva Cordero and Beatris Méndez Gandica

Latinas earn 4% of bachelor's degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, also known as STEM disciplines, and hold only 2% of jobs in these sectors in the United States. This underrepresentation of Latinas in STEM limits their earning potential, their full participation in a fast-growing set of careers, and presents a troubling loss of talent and innovation.

We at CienciaPR want to change these statistics and ensure that the future of STEM is PHENOMENALLY LATINA. That's why we launched the Seeds of Success [3] program in 2015: to address some of the challenges that contribute to the underrepresentation of Latinas in STEM—particularly gender stereotypes, lack of role models and mentors and lack of early

exposure to STEM. The goal of Seeds of Success is to empower Latina girls with the confidence and the skills to become the Latina leaders in STEM of tomorrow.

This Women's History Month, we are participating of #GOMujeres [4] (a movement to promote gender equity) to raise funds to grow the Seeds of Success program. **You can donate HERE [5] now to help us ensure that the future of STEM is phenomenally Latina.**

The upcoming edition of Seeds of Success will be extra special, because it will feature a special collaboration with several IF/THEN Ambassadors [6]. IF/THEN Ambassadors are high-profile women STEM experts selected by the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Lyda Hill Philanthropies as national role models for middle school girls.

Today, International Women's Day [7], we celebrate all of the Latinas who are leading the way in STEM! And we want to introduce you to four phenomenal role models, Latina leaders in STEM, and IF/THEN Ambassadors collaborating with Seeds of Success: Dr. Minerva Cordero, our very own Director of Science Education Programs, Dr. Greetchen Díaz Muñoz, Beatris Méndez Gandica and Dr. Roselin Rosario-Meléndez.

Dr. Minerva Cordero is a Professor of Mathematics and Associate Dean in the College of Science at the University of Texas at Arlington. She is a renowned researcher in the area of Finite Geometries and has presented her research at numerous national and international conferences. She describes her research as creating the building blocks necessary to develop secure encrypting mechanisms.

Her teaching career spans over 25 years, and her passion and excellence in the classroom have been recognized by several prestigious teaching awards. She is equally passionate about increasing the number of women and other underrepresented minorities in mathematics and science. In 2016, Dr. Cordero was recognized as Ford Legendary Woman.

Cordero holds three degrees in mathematics: a doctorate (PhD) from the University of Iowa, a Master of Arts from the University of California-Berkeley, and a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Puerto Rico, her native land. She and her husband, who is also a mathematics professor, have two sons who also love mathematics!

Dr. Greetchen Díaz Muñoz is a scientist, educator, communicator and advocate for diversity and inclusion in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers. Throughout her professional life, Greetchen has participated in countless initiatives to promote the participation of girls and women in these disciplines, both in Puerto Rico and the United States. Her efforts include the creation of projects and collaborations in education, communication, community outreach and scientific public policy. Greetchen, who was a volunteer at Ciencia Puerto Rico for almost ten years, is currently its Director of Science Education Program and Community Partnerships. At Ciencia Puerto Rico, she founded the Borinqueña blog, focused on empowering Hispanic and Puerto Rican women and girls in STEM. She also created Semillas de Triunfo (Seeds of Success), a STEM Ambassadors program—the first of its kind in Puerto Rico—that motivates middle and high school girls to pursue STEM careers, and to develop their leadership skills through community outreach. For her achievements and trajectory, Greetchen is currently recognized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as one of their

“IF/THEN” Ambassadors, with the purpose of motivating the next generation of pioneers in STEM.

Ms. Beatris Alejandra Mendez Gandica originates from San Cristobal, Venezuela. She is an engineer working as a Program Manager at Microsoft. In this role, she runs the daily operations of two services, one that is a fabric for hosting engineering bits and another that performs static analysis automation on source code for Azure, Bing, SQL and Microsoft Teams. Her work is essential to Microsoft as it yields the most secure services for their customers.

Beatris' enjoys giving back to the community. In 2018, she started a nonprofit organization, Nuevo Foundation, where she works to prepare underrepresented minorities to become tomorrow’s leaders. Nuevo Foundation’s mission is to inspire kids to be curious, confident and courageous by discovering the world of STEM. The nonprofit has taught more than 3,000 students about Computer Science and STEM education across eight countries and Puerto Rico.

In 2019, Beatris was awarded with the HACR Young Hispanic Corporate Achievers’ 40 under 40 award, the Outstanding Recent Alumni award from her alma matter in Wisconsin, and selected to be one of the 125 ambassadors for the American Association for the Advancement of Science IF/THEN to help shift the way our country—and the world—thinks about women in STEM. Lastly, she loves volunteering for youth causes such as TechnoloChicas and DigiGirlz.

Dr. Roselin Rosario-Meléndez, is a Polymer Chemist with 7 years of industry research experience and 14 years of progressive laboratory experience. She obtained her B.S. in Chemistry from the University of Puerto Rico at Cayey in 2008 and her Ph.D. in Polymer Chemistry from Rutgers University in 2013. After earning her Ph.D., Roselin worked for an ingredient supplier for 2 years and in 2015 Roselin joined L’Oréal USA. For 4 years Roselin worked on lipstick formulation where she made significant contributions to new product invention and patents. Her major contribution has been the invention of Maybelline’s SuperStay Matte Ink, an extreme wear lipstick with a comfortable feel. Roselin is currently an Associate Principal Chemist and Project Leader in the Face Makeup & Hybrids Application Domain where she leads a team of scientists. Roselin is also a AAAS If/Then Ambassador, position she uses to elevate her passion for mentoring, diversity and outreach. In addition to her passions for science, makeup and mentoring, Roselin loves baking cakes and cupcakes in her New York City home.

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