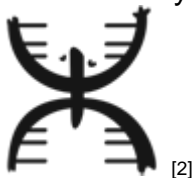


SHPE's Women In Leadership Summit ^[1]

Submitted by [Nicole E. Félix](#) ^[2] on 24 April 2018 - 10:27pm



Q&A Panel (From left to right: Alexandra Lúgaro, Dr. Madeline Torres, Dr. Mari Luz Zapata, Daneris Fernández, Mariano Vela, Ada Monzón, and Gretchen Clavell)

This past Friday, April 20th, the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) hosted their first ever *Women in Leadership* Summit, where they had a panel of guests talk about their careers and their trajectory. The roster of guests was full of women, with Alexandra Lúgaro, Ada Monzón, Gretchen Clavell, Daneris Fernández, Dr. Madeline Torres Lugo, and Dr. Mari Luz Zapata, as well as Mariano Vela, a guest speaker from Chevron.

Hats off to the team who put this activity together for their innovation, determination, and fantastic execution. The night was filled with thoughtful stories from the main speakers, a Q&A panel with all the guests, and a meet and greet. I was lucky enough to participate in the “Breaker room” segments, where I had a 10-minute one-on-one session with Dr. Mari Luz Zapata. Many other students had the opportunity to participate in these one-on-one sessions with some of the other guests, and if their session was even as half as good as mine, I can assure you that they learned

a lot. Dr. Zapata is a marketing specialist, and you're probably wondering *Why did a science/engineering major have a one-on-one session with a marketing professor?* Our conversation centered around how to successfully market yourself and how to build your brand. In my case, I want to build an internet presence as a student/science writer. Also, marketing yourself is extremely useful for job interviews. Although I wish I could've talked a little bit more with Dr. Zapata, our conversation was really insightful and engaging.

Mariano Vela from Chevron gave us fantastic tips on how to manage our career, which included, to do well in your current job; assess your competencies; identify a career path, but be aware that your plan will not always work out, and that's okay; acquire skills; document experiences; and identify options to grow.

Ada Monzón spoke about the impact of Hurricane Maria and its role in defining who we, as a community, became after it. "It's important that we tell our stories and perspectives from the hurricane.", she said at the very beginning. When asked about her career and the obstacles she faced, Monzón told a story about how someone once told her she'd never be a meteorologist. However, she decided to use this to fuel her and continue working towards who she is today. One of my favorite quotes from Monzón that night was "STEM is the base of our (Puerto Rico's) economic development." Many underestimate STEM's impact on society, especially here in Puerto Rico. Her words were also reassuring to me, as a budding scientist, to know that my career can have a impact on the island.

Gretchen Clavell, an alumna from UPRM, graduated from Industrial Engineering, works as a Senior Manager in Accenture's Finance and Risk practice. She took us along as she narrated her journey through her career and highlighted the importance of working hard, creating habits, and creating friendships. She emphasized this last one because it's the people whom you surround yourself with who propel you forward. One last piece of advice she gave us is to "always give 100%". I feel that as a Latina woman giving 100% is important because we represent not only one, but two minorities and in these trying times, representation is important.

Lastly, Alexandra Lúgaro took the stage with a message about female empowerment. As a candidate for governor of Puerto Rico, she was faced with the hard truth that politics in Puerto Rico is grim, especially for a woman. Still, she worked hard on her campaign because she wants to make a difference in the island. She mentioned how this started as an avid interest in bettering the Department of Education. She also spoke about touchy subjects, like how our patriarchal society doesn't give women the tools to be mothers and keep working on their careers.

I am glad that SHPE recognized the problem of lack of women in leadership roles and decided to tackle this problem head on. It's a fantastic initiative from this student-run organization and I hope they keep working at it.

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