

Latino Professionals Inspire Youth to Dream at Princeton Youth

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Princeton, NJ – Hispanic professionals will share their personal and professional journeys with middle school students during a youth conference themed “Take Action! Achieve your Dreams” at Princeton University on Friday, June 5 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. This is the 15th conference and the 7th at Princeton University by Hispanics Inspiring Students’ Performance and Achievement (HISPA), a nonprofit that connects Hispanic role models and middle school students to empower youth to work hard, graduate high school, and go on to higher education. The conference is co-sponsored by the Office of Human Resources at Princeton University. Students will come from Elizabeth, Hackensack, New Brunswick, Perth Amboy, and Princeton.

“Outstanding role models are joining us,” said Ivonne Díaz-Claisse, Ph.D., president and founder of HISPA. “Research shows a strong correlation between students having a role model and their pursuit of higher education. We want these students, many of whom will be visiting a university for the first time, to see first-hand the power of education and to envision a life of possibilities.” She credits her own doctorate in mathematics to a role model whose upbringing was similar to hers.

Founded in 2008 in New Jersey, HISPA has had many notable successes. To date, it has recruited more than 2,000 Hispanic Role Models and has organized over 450 Role Model visits to schools in New Jersey, New York and San Antonio, Texas. “We have reached more than 6,000 students,” says Díaz-Claisse. “And our research shows that we have moved the needle on attitudes toward higher education.”

The keynote speaker, Peru-born physicist Luis Delgado-Aparicio, Ph.D., from the U.S. Department of Energy’s (DOE) Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory (PPPL), will surely inspire all. He recently won a highly competitive Early Career Research award sponsored by the DOE’s Office of Science. The five-year, \$2.6 million grant will fund his research on eliminating a key barrier to developing fusion power as a safe, clean, and abundant source of electric energy.

Students will choose from STEM-focused workshops sponsored by non-profit organizations and corporate employee resource groups. “So You Want to Build a Game App,” funded by the Verizon Foundation and with the support of Verizon HSO and “Fun with Fractals” sponsored by Educational Testing Service, are two examples. “The beauty of mathematics will be obvious to students when they learn about these geometrical figures called fractals,” said Díaz-Claisse.

Princeton University Professor Edward Belbruno, Ph.D., will share his story in “Painting My Way to the Moon.” PSE&G’s Hispanic Employee Resource Group, Adelante, will present “How Energy is Moving New Jersey Forward.” In “Better By Design - Let’s Build a Rocket” AT&T HACEMOS and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers will help students build paper rockets and learn about engineering. During “Big Dreams Laboratories,” sponsored by Bristol-Myers Squibb OLA, students will wear lab coats and learn about careers in the pharmaceutical field.

Students will hear about “Life after High School” from 21 university student participants in the NJ Governor’s Hispanic Fellows Program co-sponsored by the Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development and HISPA. Rod Colón, a motivational speaker and radio show host, will moderate the panel. The day will wrap up with the nationally-recognized dynamic speaker Carlos Ojeda Jr., President and CEO of Coolspeak, and inspirational bilingual singer Verónica Kole.

HISPA 2015 Youth Conference sponsors are: Educational Testing Service, PSE&G, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Comcast, Verizon, and Siemens. HISPA’s corporate 2015 Annual Partners are Educational Testing Service, Verizon, ESPN, Comcast, and Southwest Airlines.

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