

## **LATINO ROLE MODELS INSPIRE STUDENTS TO DREAM AT SAN ANTONIO YOUTH CONFERENCE**

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Princeton, NJ - HISPA (Hispanics Inspiring Students' Performance and Achievement) will unite Latino professionals with 150 San Antonio students from Anson Jones Middle School at St. Mary's University for a youth conference on Friday, May 13 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Hosted by the St. Mary's Office of Student Retention with Annual Partner Educational Testing Service (ETS), the daylong conference, themed "Take Action! Achieve Your Dreams" fosters a college-going culture by exposing Latino youth to life on a university campus and a variety of careers open to those with a college education.

HISPA, a New Jersey-based nonprofit organization, is building the pipeline of Latinos in higher education by mobilizing professionals to be role models, sharing their stories to inspire students' academic achievement by demonstrating that they, too, can succeed through education and perseverance. Since 2007, HISPA's 2,000 mentors have reached 7,000 students in San Antonio, New Jersey, New York City, and Florida. The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanics recognized these efforts by naming HISPA a "Bright Spot in Hispanic Education" in 2015.

"Research shows a strong correlation between students having a role model and their pursuit of higher education," said Dr. Ivonne Díaz-Claisse, president and founder of HISPA. "We want these students, many of whom will be visiting a university campus for the first time, to see the power of education and to envision a life of possibility." She credits her own doctorate in mathematics to a role model whose upbringing was similar to her own.

After a welcome from Rosalind V. Alderman, Ph.D., St. Mary's Interim Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, will be keynote speaker Bexar County Criminal District Attorney Nico LaHood, a San Antonio native and St. Mary's alumnus. Students will also hear inspirational addresses from Lilyan Prado Carrillo of CoolSpeak, a youth-focused motivational speaking company, and attorney Lilia Gibson, also a St. Mary's graduate.

Along with taking in a performance by Anson Jones students and hearing about life after high school from a college student panel, students will choose from career-exploration workshops presented by NSHMBA, Rackspace VIVA, San Antonio Water Systems and several St. Mary's professors: José Tormos Meléndez, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Chemistry; Evelyn Mitchell, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Environmental Science; and Carol Luckhardt Redfield, Ph.D., Professor of Computer Science and Graduate Program Director of Computer Science and Computer Information Systems.

Annual Partner ETS is the lead funder of San Antonio's 2016 Youth Conference. Supporters are CoolSpeak, NSHMBA San Antonio, Rackspace VIVA, San Antonio Water Systems and St. Mary's University. A special thank you to AT&T, AT&T HACEMOS, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Lisa's Mexican Restaurant, UTSA MAES, NuStar, San Antonio Public Library and San Antonio Woman. HISPA's Annual Partners are ETS, Verizon, ESPN, AT&T, Comcast and Southwest Airlines, HISPA's official airline partner.

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