

# Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



## René A. Salinas

René Salinas was raised in Alice, Texas and earned his B.S. degrees in Biology and Physics at Texas A&M University-Kingsville in 1996, sparking his interest in ecology. In 2003, Salinas completed a Ph.D. in Mathematics with a concentration in Mathematical Ecology from The University of Tennessee-Knoxville and shortly after completed a postdoc position in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, also at UTK. In 2004, Salinas joined the Department of Mathematical Sciences at Appalachian State University as an assistant professor, focusing his teaching on inspiring students, research on agent-based models in wildlife biology, and service on trying to figure out how a university works.

Salinas' research has spanned a variety of topics during his academic career. As an undergraduate, he spent a summer helping graduate students sample bobwhite quail habitat in parts of the King Ranch. In pursuit of coupling that interest with mathematics, Salinas found the Mathematical Ecology program at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, which led to his dissertation on modeling management strategies for black bears in the southern Appalachians. Recently, Salinas has established a research program in sports analytics. He helped Appalachian State's College of Arts and Sciences become the first academic unit to purchase Trackman for a university baseball team. The state-of-the-art Doppler radar device is operated by students who also analyze data and develop reports. Current research projects include mapping umpire strike zone bias and determining successful fastball characteristics.

Undergraduate research and mentoring are activities that Dr. Salinas highly values. He has regularly mentored students in research projects and in preparing them for research opportunities through REU programs. After leading the development of the undergraduate certificate in sports analytics, Salinas has taken on the role of mentor and advisor for students, a role in which he provides guidance in projects and organizes internship opportunities. As an advisor to students in the department, Salinas has been nominated on multiple occasions as an outstanding advisor in the College of Arts and Sciences. In service to the community, Salinas has talked with high school classes in the region about topics in mathematical biology and regularly serves as a grader for problem solving contests for middle and high school students, including COMAP and Moody's Mega Math. Salinas often serves as a mentor to new faculty in the department as well, meeting with new faculty to discuss their scholarship plans, service commitments, and work-life balance.

*"It's a time to reflect on the parts of me that don't often present themselves in my daily academic life. Sometimes I'll put a Tejano or Mariachi station on Pandora while I'm working (door wide open!) or splurge and buy real fajitas to make my favorite Tex-Mex dish. Everyone misses home to some extent, but hispanics have a deeper void that never gets filled. That void gives us our passion for family and culture. Grito!!!"*

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Lathisms was founded in 2016 in order to showcase the contributions of Latinx and Hispanic mathematicians during Hispanic Heritage Month, which is celebrated in the United States from September 15 and October 15 every year. During this time, we feature/reveal a prominent Latinx/Hispanic mathematician daily. See all the featured mathematical scientists at [LATHISMS.ORG](http://LATHISMS.ORG).

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