

# Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



## Ayla Sánchez

Statistics Content Developer – zyBooks (a Wiley Brand)

*“Growing up in a Hispanic-majority area of the United States surrounded by a proud Cuban family, I did not feel isolated or alone in my identity until leaving home for graduate school. I sometimes felt as though I didn't belong, acutely aware that I was often the only Hispanic/Latin@ mathematician in the room. I've grown to feel that Hispanic Heritage Month is a chance to feel seen – to recognize that we have a place both in the math world and society at large.”*

Dr. Sánchez completed her B.S. in pure math at the University of Miami. As an undergraduate, Ayla participated in a work-study program for the math department at UM. As a work-study student, she aided in secretarial duties until a department member observed her helping a student who was stuck on a homework problem. She was then pushed to become a tutor for the department and a passion for teaching was born. Ayla completed an M.S. in pure math at the University of Miami and a pure math Ph.D. at Tufts University, where she balanced a research career in geometric group theory with a robust teaching assistant course load. After graduating, she took a teaching-focused position as a visiting assistant professor at Wheaton College (MA), teaching a wide range of mathematics and statistics courses. Exiting her academic career, Ayla took a position as a technical writer at MathWorks, where she primarily wrote software documentation to help users with statistical software. After several months, Ayla transitioned to the EdTech industry to combine her newfound programming expertise with her passion for teaching. She currently works as a Statistics Content Developer at zyBooks, where her main duties involve creating interactive textbook content in an online learning platform.

Upon entering graduate school, Dr. Sánchez was granted a Dean's Science Fellowship, which was a one-year, merit-based fellowship for incoming graduate students from underrepresented groups. As a teaching assistant, she was awarded a Distinguished Teaching Prize. During her time as a visiting assistant professor, she was part of a team that was awarded a grant for transitioning calculus courses to free, open educational resources, decreasing the financial burden placed on students.

In her daily job, Dr. Sánchez uses probability and statistics to design classroom tools for statistics education that use a simulation-based inference approach. Dr. Sánchez's advice for undergraduates wanting to work in business, industry, or government is to “practice coding in your own time as much as you can. A multitude of jobs that give the opportunity to think about interesting mathematics are locked behind career paths that require one to have a strong programming background.” Students who, like Dr. Sánchez, have primarily focused on pure mathematics coursework could especially benefit from gaining programming proficiency as a means to a rewarding business, industry, or government career.

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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](https://lathisms.org).

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