

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



Adrian Mendez

Actuarial Analyst, Dearborn Group

Adrian Mendez obtained his B.A. in Applied Mathematics with a concentration in Actuarial Science at the University of California, Berkeley, which allowed him to learn math, alongside probability and statistics. He had always been interested in math but had vaguely heard about the actuarial career path, which inspired him to take on that concentration. It helped that a lot of the background needed was statistics related. Although still not quite sure this was the career path he wanted to take, the coursework was interesting, so he continued with this track. Also, while in college, Adrian passed the first actuarial exam - of many - which was based on probability. The idea of becoming an actuary was always in the background, but Adrian had not quite decided to pursue this path while in or immediately after college.

After graduating, Adrian obtained his first actuarial analyst role at Humana, where he learned how to price health insurance plans. After a year and a half, Adrian moved on to work at Dearborn Group, where he works with the actuarial function pertaining to dental and long-term disability products. Daily, actuaries are not always doing complicated math work; at least that applies for most actuaries. The math that Adrian does daily is more akin to calculating averages, such as the average cost of a procedure or cost trend. These all involve what would be considered basic arithmetic, but the challenge is in knowing which quantities to take the average of, which has more to do with actuarial judgment.

Adrian works closely with the Organization of Latino Actuaries in various ways. He has mentored career changers and recent graduates who are interested in becoming actuaries and has helped these OLA contacts obtain actuarial jobs. Additionally, he helped connect them with the Humana actuarial talent acquisition team and is working to connect his current company's actuarial talent acquisition team with OLA to create a pipeline for talent.

As for students seeking careers in the industry, Adrian says, "First and foremost, if any undergraduates are interested in becoming actuaries, please get in contact with the Organization of Latino Actuaries. They do a great job of getting young students familiar with the whole process of becoming an actuary and helping them out. The advice they'd give, on a high level, is to pass actuarial exams while in college, get an actuarial internship, and do case studies if your university has them.

If not interested in becoming an actuary, it'd still be a good idea to obtain an internship in the career track that you'd be interested in, whether it be in engineering or software development. Even if you are not going into academia, it is also a good idea to do summer research programs since that can be valuable experience as well, not to mention it is usually paid experience."

"What Hispanic Heritage Month reminds us all that Latinxs make a huge positive impact on society, beyond the ways that are normally associated with Latinxs. Although I am proud of the food that Latinxs make, the music that Latinxs create, I am also proud of the contributions to mathematics, business, government, public affairs, etc. that Latinxs make."

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.

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