

Latinxs and Hispanics in the Mathematical Sciences



“As I’ve gotten older, I’ve learned that my voice does matter, and that youth need to hear the stories and examples of Latino struggles and accomplishments. Being present at the table and in the community can be a lot of work, but the more people there are to do the work the more that will be accomplished. During this year’s strike I was joined by my mother and daughter in hearing encouragement from Dolores Huerta, and I realize the generational legacy of Latinos is not just what my daughter and I benefit from, but what we in turn will do.”

Fernando Rodríguez

Teacher, Hiram W. Johnson High School

As a Modesto High School student, Fernando worked with 21st Century Afterschool Programs’ Karen Jordan, whose mentorship helped him develop a belief in his abilities in teaching mathematics. He then attended Modesto Junior College while continuing to work with students in the after-school program. After transferring to CSU Sacramento, he found a devoted mentor in Dr. Lisa Taylor, his calculus professor. Furthering his confidence in his own abilities, he pursued a second major in Mathematics. Fernando graduated with a dual BA in both Mathematics and Liberal Studies from Sac State, the first in his family to attend college. Soon thereafter he began teaching mathematics in 2010 at Hiram Johnson High School (HJHS) in Sacramento, a campus with a diverse student body and a history of issues characteristic of underserved schools. He looks forward to continuing to expand connections between HJHS students and staff with those at Sac State.

Fernando has become a member of the School Site Council, PTSA, ELAC, and has supported his colleagues districtwide on the Sacramento City Teachers’ Union Bargaining Team as certificated and classified staff persevered through the eight-day strike in 2022 with the support of families and community elected officials. He has been recognized by CSU Sacramento for over a decade of contributions to the university EOP learning community. Most recently, he has collaborated with Sac State professors to roll out two efforts: the Saturday Math Gymnasium, a program developed for HJHS students to connect with Sac State mentors through engaging mathematics activities and challenges; and Math Tutoring Buddies, where high school students are able to receive direct support live online from Sac State students.

His advice to people looking to teach today’s youth is to have a willingness to teach knowing not everything will go perfectly and to look forward to learning from students.

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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