HISPA mobilizes Hispanic professionals to inspire Hispanic students to discover their potential and ignite their desire to embrace education and achieve success.

We all need role models who can inspire us to reach our full potential, but not everyone has access to them.

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Hispanics Inspiring Students’ Performance and Achievement (HISPA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to developing the Hispanic educational pipeline and creating a workforce of highly-skilled leaders to contribute to America’s economic future.

Many children never have to ask themselves, “Can I really be a teacher, doctor, astronaut, politician?” Unfortunately, many Hispanic youths have never seen role models that look like them in those professions. For this reason, it is important to provide credible Hispanic role models to students.

HISPA mobilizes Hispanic professionals to serve as role models. Because HISPA Role Models reflect students’ heritage, language, and culture, they help to demonstrate to students that they, too, can overcome obstacles and attain success through education.

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hispa.org
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HISPA Recognized with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), with the National Science Foundation (NSF), has named 12 individuals and three organizations as recipients of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring (PAESMEM). HISPA was one of the three organizations recognized with the highest national mentoring award bestowed by the White House.

PAESMEM recognizes the outstanding efforts of mentors in encouraging the next generation of innovators and developing a science and engineering workforce that reflects the diverse talent of America. Nominations and awards are facilitated by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and the National Science Foundation.

"The Presidential Award represents the opportunity for HISPA to recognize the thousands of individuals—our HISPA Role Models—who have stepped into classrooms and inspired Latino students to discover their potential," said HISPA President and CEO Dr. Ivonne Diaz-Claisse. "This award means HISPA can celebrate and honor the mentors who have invited our youth to their corporations and colleges, leading lab tours and workshops that have ignited students’ desires to embrace STEM education and achieve academic and professional success."

Colleagues, administrators, and students nominate individuals and organizations for exemplary mentoring sustained over a minimum of five years. Since 1995, PAESMEM has honored the hard work and dedication which mentors exhibit in broadening participation in the STEM pipeline.

Mentors support learners from kindergarten through the collegiate levels, as well as those who recently started their careers in STEM. Mentors share their expertise and guidance with learners, sometimes through formal mentoring programs. Mentors have demonstrated impact on individuals historically underrepresented in STEM.
The **HISPA Role Model Program** enables Hispanic professionals to step into predominantly low-income, public middle school classrooms to serve as positive examples for our youth and encourage student success. HISPA Role Models emphasize the importance of higher education and introduce potential future careers. In light of the pandemic, 2020-21 marked HISPA’s first-ever all-virtual school year. With the Virtual ‘Live!’ Role Model Program, role models stream to classrooms, allowing for real-time interaction.

Since launching in New Jersey in 2008, the HISPA Role Model Program has expanded to New York, Texas, Florida, and Pennsylvania. In that time, HISPA has made 2,313 visits, reaching some 20,000 students. In 2021-22, HISPA completed 427 virtual Role Model Program visits, reaching 2,484 students in 34 schools.

**Creating a College-Bound Culture**

HISPA’s programming is strategic and research-driven. The Role Model Program targets middle school students, given that studies reveal that early intervention and having a role model strongly correlate to the pursuit of higher education. Throughout the academic year, the HISPA Role Model Program arranges sessions during which HISPA Role Models emphasize the importance of education to future success and introduce pathways to higher education and careers in the public and private sectors.
A Record of Impact

Our research—tools and metrics designed and analyzed with our partner ETS—shows that the HISPA Role Model Program positively impacts student attitudes toward and awareness of college and career.

Indeed, after participating in HISPA programs in 2021-22 based on 971 responses:

**91% of students** said the Role Models encouraged them to think more seriously about college (40% “a lot”, 51% “a little”)

**93% of students** said the Role Models inspired them to focus on trying their best in school (54% “a lot”, 39% “a little”)

**91% of students** said the Role Models made them believe that attending college is important. (52% “a lot”, 39% “a little”)

Based on over 5,000 instances of student feedback for individual Role Model visits:

**88% of the time**, students said the Role Model’s story inspired them to work harder in school;

**90% of the time**, students said that they learned new things about the Role Model’s career;

**90% of the time**, students said the Role Model’s story encouraged them to work harder to achieve their goals.

And even though nearly **80% of students stated that they had the goal of attending college (2-year, 4-year, graduate school) before participating in any HISPA program:**

**40% of students** said the Role Model Program increased their interest in college;

**42% of students** said the Role Model Program increased their belief they could attend college;

**48% of students** said the Role Model Program increased their understanding of what they needed to do to attend college.

Educational Empowerment

Diverse Hispanic professionals—approximately 50% with a master’s degree or higher—share their cultural backgrounds and educational and professional journeys, relating the key experiences that allowed them to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. These visits provide:

- A valuable opportunity for students to identify with Hispanic professionals
- Practical information (e.g., pathways to AP classes and career opportunities) and non-academic life skills (e.g., social-emotional learning competencies, self-efficacy)
- Promotion of bilingualism and biculturalism as assets in the 21st-century global economy
Our programs rely on volunteer role models to share their educational experiences and professional careers, relating the key events that allowed them to achieve their goals. These stories show students that they, too, can pursue challenging academic studies and rewarding professional careers. Our annual Kick-Off and Recruiting Event is essential to engaging the community and recruiting volunteers for HISPA’s programs.

Con Esperanza:
Celebrating Our Heritage and Our Commitment to Sharing Stories

OCT 7, 2021

“Con Esperanza” Musical Performance
- Anthony Rodriguez, Musician & Artist

Messages from HISPA’s Founding and Co-Founding Partners
Welcoming Remarks - Dr. Ivonne Díaz-Claisse, Founder & CEO at HISPA
“INSPIRE” Remarks - Dr. Miguel Cardona, Secretary of Education at the U.S. Department of Education
Special Guest Speaker - Emmanuel G. Caudillo, Senior Advisor at the White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics

Panel: “The Powerful Impact of Giving Back: 12 Years Later”
- Dr. Alicia Abella, Managing Director of Telecom, Media & Entertainment Industry Solutions at Google
- Luis Díaz, General Counsel & Chief Cybersecurity Officer at Gabi Solutions

Panel: “La Esperanza del Futuro”
- Yalitza Torres, Principal at Jerome Dunn Academy School
- Alejandra Piedrasanta, HISPA Student in 2016 at Elizabeth Public Schools
- Jasmine LeBlanc, HISPA Student in 2012 at San Antonio Public Schools
- Melissa Menchaca, HISPA Student in 2012 at San Antonio Public Schools

Breakout Rooms
- Hope for Growth: HISPA’s Strategic Goals
- Inspiring Hope: Becoming a HISPA Role Model
- A Hopeful Initiative: Connecting Your Story with Social-Emotional Learning
- Hopeful Projects: How Your Company Can Host a Virtual Imagine Day or Discovery Summit
- Verizon Employee Exclusive: Bring Hope to Our Communities with the Verizon Volunteering Platform

Closing Remarks: Call to Action - Rod Colón, Volunteer Management Director at HISPA
‘Deliver Us Outro’ Musical Performance – Anthony Rodriguez, Musician & Artist
HISPA Imagine Day Corporate Visits immerse students in the corporate environment. Touring labs and facilities and working with technology alongside skilled professionals introduces students to potential career opportunities. It also encourages students to envision who they want to be in the future and what they must do to get there. In 2021-22, HISPA held 14 virtual visits with 8 companies, with 80 role models hosting 948 students.

**2021-22 IMAGINE DAY CORPORATE VISITS:**

**AT&T**
October 28, 2021
96 **students** from Juan Pablo Duarte – José Julián Martí School No. 28 in Elizabeth, NJ

**Verizon**
December 7, 2021
55 **students** from Daniel F. Ryan School No. 19 in Passaic, NJ

**AT&T**
March 24, 2022
60 **students** from Anson Jones Middle School in San Antonio, TX

**Verizon**
March 25, 2022
65 **students** from Conniston Middle School in West Palm Beach, FL

**Visa**
April 13, 2022
100 **students** from Henry H. Filer Middle School in Hialeah, FL

**Office Depot**
April 21, 2022
45 **students** from Conniston Middle School in West Palm Beach, FL

**NBCUniversal – NBC10 & Telemundo62**
April 27, 2022
75 **students** from Trenton Ninth Grade Academy in Trenton, NJ

**Bristol Myers Squibb**
April 29, 2022
75 **students** from Trenton Ninth Grade Academy in Trenton, NJ

**Verizon**
May 3, 2022
129 **students** from Manhattan Bridges High School in New York, NY

**Merck**
May 12, 2022
84 **students** from Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy in Norristown, PA

**Merck**
May 13, 2022
69 **students** from Eisenhower Science and Technology Leadership Academy in Norristown, PA

**Verizon**
June 16, 2022
45 **students** from Passaic Gifted And Talented Academy School No. 20 in Passaic, NJ

**UPS**
June 27, 2022
50 **students** from Jerome Dunn Academy School No. 9 in Elizabeth, NJ
“I just wanted to take a quick second to let you know what a great success Imagine Day has been for us. In particular, our students were SSSSOOOOOO excited with the Building Bridges project :)

I really have to congratulate all the contributors & Ms. Addriana Montalvo-Andujar in particular. Ms. Addriana's follow-up is great. She is both personable & smart. She made sure we had the correct # of meetings so everyone knew what to expect and what to do. Lastly, Ms. Addriana opened the ZOOM call ½ [hour] before start time to work out all the technology issues before start time.

Thanks from all of us from Manhattan Bridges HS!”

Robert Orchanian, CTE-Graphic Design teacher at Manhattan Bridges High School

“It’s always so much fun to participate in HISPA events. The look on a student’s face when they "get it" is so fulfilling. And I absolutely love hearing all of my colleagues' stories—each one as inspiring as the other. I count myself blessed to work for a company that believes in giving back to the community, and provides us with the opportunity to specifically give back to our Latino community, providing a face that students can relate to, a voice that resonates, and stories that reflect their realities.

I look forward to the next opportunity to partner with HISPA. I hope you have a great summer!”

Ariel Rivera, Senior Manager of Logistics Services at Verizon
Education is the basic foundation for the people to thrive, and HISPA is key for the kids to stay in school. Education is also fully correlated with inclusion, so HISPA also raises the probability for Latinx kids to have an opportunity and excel in it.

– Eduardo Coello, Regional President – Latin America and Caribbean, Visa

HISPA ROLE MODELS:

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Federico Spagnoli
Regional President: Argentina, Mexico, Chile, and Peru
Prudential

Federico is Regional President of Argentina, Mexico, Chile, and Peru and is responsible for strategic business development in Europe and Latin America for Prudential International Insurance. Before joining Prudential, Federico held positions with AIG, Zurich Financial Services, and Santander Bank. Federico graduated from the University of El Salvador (Argentina) with a master’s in law, received an M.B.A. from Washington University in St. Louis’s Olin Business School, and obtained his post-graduate diploma in strategy and innovation from the University of Oxford Saïd Business School.

Fernando Pellerano
NESC Chief Engineer
Goddard Space Flight Center, NASA

Fernando was born in the Dominican Republic and grew up in Puerto Rico. At 13 years old, he became fascinated by space when he saw the first NASA Space Shuttle mission launch. His dream of working for NASA came true when he was recruited and hired by the Goddard Space Flight Center. His responsibilities have ranged from designing antennas and communication systems to developing instruments to monitor the Earth’s environment. Fernando earned his degree in electrical engineering from the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus.

Carmen Sachiko Villar
Vice President, Office of Social Business Innovation
Merck & Co.

Carmen joined Merck as the Vice President of Social Business Innovation in 2017. Carmen began her career working with Diane Martinez, who was running for California Assemblywoman in the 49th district. Carmen took her next job with the AIDS Healthcare Foundation as a Government Affairs Coordinator. Carmen spent the next 20 years with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); living in Africa, Carmen worked to fight, treat, and prevent HIV and AIDS. She went on to become CDC Chief of Staff. Carmen earned both her bachelor’s and master’s at the University of California, Berkeley.
WHO ARE HISPAS'S ROLE MODELS?

EDUCATION
6.5% hold a degree in education

ARTS & HUMANITIES
7.5% hold a degree in the arts or humanities

BUSINESS
39% hold a degree in business or a business-related field

STEM
45% hold a degree in a STEM field in the social, natural, or applied sciences, including medicine and healthcare

OTHER
2% hold degrees in other fields, like hospitality

OCCUPATION & INDUSTRY
Accounting, banking, finance, and insurance // Business, consulting, management, and training // Computer science, technology, and software development // Construction // Education // Energy or utilities // Engineering or manufacturing // Government // Healthcare, safety, and social assistance // Hospitality, entertainment, and recreation // Information technology and services // Legal // Marketing, advertising, and PR // Media or Internet // Nonprofit // Public services or administration // Publishing, journalism, and broadcasting // Real estate, rental, and leasing // Recruitment or HR // Retail or sales // Science and pharmaceuticals // Telecommunications // Transport or logistics

HISPA ROLE MODELS REPRESENT...

- High School/GED (0.44%)
- Some college (4.8%)
- Associate's (4.8%)
- Bachelor's (33.19%)
- Master's (48.03%)
- Doctoral/professional (8.73%)
PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

EMPLOYMENT SECTOR

- Nonprofit (8.48%)
- Government (6.25%)
- Corporate/private (74.11%)
- Academia (8.48%)
- Other (2.68%)

89 % Hispanic and/or Latino
3.037 Average years volunteered with HISPA
74 % Speak Fluent Spanish
COVID-19 created many programmatic challenges. However, HISPA transformed these challenges into opportunities. HISPA’s science, technology, engineering, and math career panels united students and their families with relatable STEM professionals to share pathways to higher education and careers.

L. C. Swain Middle School – January 19, 2022
Greenacres, FL
Presented by Verizon employees

Conniston Community Middle School – March 24, 2022
West Palm Beach, FL
Presented by employees from Bristol Myers Squibb, Merck, Rowan College of South Jersey, the U.S. Navy, and Verizon

Okeechobee Middle School – April 21, 2022
Palm Beach, FL
Presented by employees from AT&T, Bristol Myers Squibb, Organon, and the U.S. Marine Corps
Ready, Set, GOals! is a specialized Role Model Program, where role model volunteers guide students through six workshops focused on planning education and career paths aligned to personal goals:

- **My Dreams:** To inspire students to dream and imagine their futures.
- **My Strengths:** To help the students learn about themselves.
- **My Interests:** To learn about STEM careers, discuss their favorite subjects, and how academics and courses in high school impact their futures.
- **My Relationships:** To learn about how various adults and networks are critical to their future.
- **My Goals:** To support the students with setting short- and long-term goals.
- **My Future:** To review what they have learned and commit to embracing education.

Each one-hour workshop is further divided into four segments, each focusing on one "I" key to a transformative experience:

- **Inspire students to believe in their dreams:** a series of professionals share their stories, describing how they overcame barriers to get to where they are today.
- **Imagine future possibilities:** interactive challenges prompt students to solve actual workplace problems that they may encounter in their future careers.
- **Inform students of how to achieve success:** walk students through what steps they can take in high school, college, and beyond to achieve specific career goals.
- **Ignite the desire to take action:** an influential guest speaker delivers a motivational address with a message that all students can apply to their own lives.

June 9: Virtual Session: CEO of Me and Social Emotional Intelligence Workshops.


June 16: Virtual Session: CEO of Me and Social Emotional Intelligence Workshops.

June 17: Leadership in Global Media, Financial Data, and Analytics, Co-hosted by Bloomberg.

June 23: Leadership in Corporate America - Telecommunications, Co-hosted by AT&T.

June 24: Virtual Session: CEO of Me and Social Emotional Intelligence Workshops.

June 30: Networking with the NJ Governor’s Hispanic Fellows Alumni, Co-hosted by Rider University.

July 7: Leadership in Corporate America - IT and Supply Chain Management, Co-hosted by UPS.

July 8: Public Speaking and Mental Health Awareness, Co-hosted by The College of New Jersey and Bank of America.

July 14: Mental Health Awareness, Leadership in Philanthropy, and Vision Boards, Co-hosted by The College of New Jersey and Cafe Vision.

July 15: Leadership in Public Service, Co-hosted by Thomas Edison State University.

July 21: Virtual Session: Public Speaking and Mindful Leadership.

July 22: Leadership in Corporate America - Pharmaceutical Industry, Co-hosted by Bristol Myers Squibb and OLA.

July 28: Formal Summer Project Presentations.

July 29: Graduation, Co-hosted by Montclair State University.
“Thank you to the NJ CHPRD and HISPA for making these past two months possible... Week by week, I had the pleasure of seeing everyone test their skills and work on applying new techniques we learned from the many mentors we met...

Reinaldo e Ivonne son dos individuos quienes nos han inspirado a aspirar a mas que nuestro Bachelor’s Degree. De corazón, les digo que nunca en mi vida había conocido a una persona Latina con un doctorado. Mucho menos un Latino que emigró a este país. Sabía que existían, but I thought people like Ivonne and Reinaldo were unreachable for people like me to meet. The two of them have made a Ph.D. look not only attainable but also attractive...

During my first week in this program, I had the pleasure of meeting Brenda-Mejia Smith, a psychologist at Princeton University with a Ph.D. in psychology... I was already impressed with all of her accomplishments. But what really drew me in was her background. Brenda was born and raised in El Salvador. Moved to the United States at the age of 11 and had to go through the hardships any immigrant child must go through... She overcame her struggles in life to become a mentor and teacher for the youth the way she wished she had.

Brenda’s story reminds me of another Salvadoran girl who also came to this country at the age of 11. She too has aspirations and academic goals to achieve in her lifetime. If you haven’t caught on, that girl is me. I struggled to learn English, had a difficult time assimilating to my new environment, and lacked role models that reminded me of myself.

However, this changed thanks to the Governor’s Fellows Programs. Every session, we had the opportunity to network with a variety of Latinos where each one of us met our own version of Brenda Mejia-Smith.”
After seeing the results of HISPA’s Leadership Workshop Series, HISPA established the Latinos in College program in 2015 to expand the benefits of mentorship and professional development to students beyond the Fellows program. The Latinos in College program brings various leadership and professional development opportunities to help foster academic and professional success. In 2021-22, HISPA delivered Latinos in College workshops to students at the New Jersey Institute of Technology and Rider University.

“Being a part of the Latinos in College program made me feel comfortable and honored to be a Hispanic woman pursuing her dreams… I am immensely grateful for the connections HISPA has given me. I have met professionals I never would have been able to meet and have been coached by the amazing Rod Colón. He instilled into my mind the importance of making connections and breaking out of the Hispanic norm of being too humble… That brave mentality is thanks to HISPA, a program that has contributed great work in the process of shaping my most professional self.”

“They really make a difference in our lives. If it weren’t for HISPA I wouldn’t have had my summer internship due to the meaningful connections I’ve made in the program.”
“You have motivated me to never give up. No matter how steep the roads are.”

“I would like to thank you for not only your time, but also for showing us the lasting effect that hard work and determination can have in someone’s life.”

“I would like to thank you for helping me be confident in myself that I can go to college and achieve my dream job.”

“Thank you for showing me how and why I should live my dream and for inspiring myself to be confident and ignore what others think about you.”

“What I learned is no matter where you came from, you can achieve the most in life.”

“Thank you for helping ESOL students to be successful and inspire us. For giving me hope, I want to be a detective when I grow up.”

“You have motivated me to never give up. No matter how steep the roads are.”

“Thank you for teaching me that although there are difficult situations, we must always find a way to overcome it: I would like to thank you because you helped me to be more inspired in my studies to have a better future.”

“I would like to thank you for helping me be more inspired in my studies to have a better future.”

“Thank you for helping me understand that I should not give up and that I should work very hard for what I want to achieve.”

“She inspired me to fight for my goals and dreams.”

“[I learned] That even though you may face challenges in life you can still get into college and be successful.”

“[I learned] That it’s not too late to start trying in life.”

“[I learned] That even though you may face challenges in life you can still get into college and be successful.”

“What I learned is no matter where you came from, you can achieve the most in life.”

“Thank you for helping ESOL students to be successful and inspire us. For giving me hope, I want to be a detective when I grow up.”

“Thank you for helping me understand that I should not give up and that I should work very hard for what I want to achieve.”

“I would like to thank you for teaching me that although there are difficult situations, we must always find a way to overcome it: I would like to thank you because you helped me to be more inspired in my studies to have a better future.”
“Absolutely love this program. Something I wish was available to me when I was younger. A program that should be replicated around the world with involvement from all corporate organizations.”

“I believe in the program and its mission. I have seen firsthand how important is to have role models that inspire and motivate; and how crucial is for a student to see and meet a person in their career of choice when they can’t begin to imagine if it’s even possible.”

“One of the best programs I have been part of and seen.”

“I am grateful to HISPA because I have grown a lot personally and professionally by volunteering in their programs. I would not have done so much self-reflection about my career and my personal journey without my volunteering as a role model.”

“I love to give back to the community. I remember how hard it was for me to build my life when I got to the U.S. and I know sharing my story and letting others know I can relate to their struggles makes a huge impact.”

“I support the mission of HISPA and enjoy providing education to kids and mentoring college students. I have enjoyed every activity and have seen how the kids enjoy and learn. It motivates them and teaches them that they can achieve their dreams and future career plans.”

“I remember being at school and not having too many role models and not knowing much about what to do for my own future. To be able to be there for students and make a change in their lives, it’s such a rewarding experience.”

“I want other Latinos and Latinas to see they can do whatever they want and there’s room for them in big corporations. I want to motivate them to dream big!”

“It brings forward the spirit of giving back to the same community that gave to me when I was in a sea of people who did not look like me. In the end, I hope to be able to provide that same sense of community support to other young individuals.”
“Thank you so much for taking time to speak to our students. It’s extremely rewarding when I listen to kids talking about the experiences shared in your presentation.”

“You really made quite an impression on my students. I have never seen them so interested and excited to ask so many questions.”

“Your inspiring story made an impact on our students of setting goals in life and being determined about it. THANK YOU!”

“Thank you for taking time out of your day to speak to the kids. It shows them that they can accomplish their dreams and goals.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed your presentation to our students. I walked away inspired and I am sure many of them did as well. Your message was impactful and powerful, especially everything you said about failure! I am still feasting on your quote about failure not being personal. One of the students commented that so far, you were their favorite role model presenter. Thank you!”

“He was animated when speaking, he had a story they could relate to, he was the kind of person you hope everyone can grow up to be!”

“Thank you for inspiring my students to choose careers that they are passionate about despite what others think.”

“They were really engaged and wanted to keep learning about your profession.”

“It means so much to have individuals like yourself connect with our students at such a personal level.”

“The speaker was relatable to the students in both her background and the message she carried.”

“It is so good for [students] to see strong Latinas in diverse careers. A big thanks!”

“Thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to help promote a positive message to our students. Our students need to hear from people like you - positive role models.”

“The presenters were able to make real-life connections with the students.”

“Thank you for inspiring our students to learn from every single experience regardless of how little or insignificant it might seem.”
Additional financial and in-kind support for HISPA programming was provided by:

- Amazon
- Bank of America
- Elizabeth School District
- Investors Bank
- Norristown Public Schools
- Novartis
- Office Depot
- Organon
- Passaic Public School
- PNC Bank
- Prudential
- Refinitiv
- Rider University
- Roma Bank
- The School District of Palm Beach
- The State of New Jersey - Center for Hispanic Policy, Research, and Development
- Trenton Public School District
- UPS
- Wells Fargo