

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



Photo courtesy of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) 2026 Conference.

"To me, Hispanic Heritage Month is both a celebration and a responsibility. It is an opportunity to honor those who opened doors before me while helping open new ones for those who come next. I was once the student who needed someone to believe in her. Today, I strive to be that person for others. I hope that young people, especially Hispanic students, see in me not just a mathematics professor, but someone who struggled, persevered, and found her place in mathematics. If my story helps even one student realize they don't have to fit a stereotype to belong in mathematics, then sharing it is worthwhile. Representation matters because it reminds us that there is no single path—and no single look—to becoming a mathematician. Our different stories, perspectives, and experiences make our mathematical community stronger."

Dr. Raquel López
Professor of Mathematics
Paradise Valley Community College

Dr. Raquel López is a Professor of Mathematics at Paradise Valley Community College in Phoenix, Arizona. Raised on her family's farm outside Teocaltiche, Jalisco, México, she immigrated to the United States with her family as a teenager and began her higher education in developmental mathematics at Yuba Community College in California, where she discovered her passion for mathematics. She later earned a Ph.D. in Applied Mathematics from Arizona State University.

Throughout her career, Dr. López has served as a mathematics course coordinator, mentored undergraduate researchers, presented at regional and national conferences, and contributed to institutional assessment and curriculum development. Her work has been recognized through several honors, including the 2026 Dale P. Parnell Distinguished Faculty Award from the American Association of Community Colleges and the 2025 Dr. William Yslas Vélez Faculty Award. Her work is driven by the simple belief that every student is capable of learning mathematics when provided with opportunity, care, patience, and high-quality instruction.

Dr. López views mathematics as far more than a collection of formulas, algorithms, or abstract concepts. She believes it is one of the most powerful disciplines for developing critical thinking, logical reasoning, perseverance, and problem-solving—skills that remain essential in an era increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence (AI). While many of her students will pursue careers outside of mathematics, her goal is for every student to leave her classroom with greater confidence in their ability to analyze information, think independently, and tackle unfamiliar challenges. Most of life's important problems have no answer key and no formula to follow. Mathematics teaches students how to reason through uncertainty with logic, creativity, and confidence. She believes that the greatest lesson mathematics offers is not a formula or an algorithm, but the confidence to think for oneself.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. López is committed to mentoring the next generation of scholars. During the 2024–2025 academic year, she served as Principal Investigator for a Center for Undergraduate Research in Mathematics (CURM) grant-NSF funded project, guiding community college students through authentic mathematical research in collaboration with university faculty. She has also contributed to mathematics education through curriculum leadership, faculty collaboration, institutional assessment, and conference participation.

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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