

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



Photo courtesy of Dr. Kevin A. Palencia Infante

"Hispanic Heritage Month is a time of pride, unity, and reflection. Especially during uncertain times, it reminds me of the importance of standing united and recognizing the talent, strength, and value within our community. It is an opportunity to celebrate the richness of our culture and how our diverse backgrounds and life experiences enrich who we are. It also invites me to reflect on the work that still lies ahead and on how we can support one another, open doors, and create opportunities for others to move forward, pursue their dreams, and succeed."

Dr. Kevin A. Palencia Infante

Assistant Professor and Calculus Coordinator
Northern Illinois University

Kevin A. Palencia Infante was born in Barranquilla, Colombia. His passion for mathematics began to take shape in high school, where one of his mathematics teachers regularly challenged him to solve additional problems and develop his critical-thinking skills.

Dr. Palencia earned his bachelor's degree from the Universidad del Atlántico in Barranquilla, Colombia. During his undergraduate studies, he had the opportunity to gain his first research experience where he discovered the beauty and creativity involved in investigating mathematical problems. He went on to earn his master's degree from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez and his doctorate from the University of Montana, where his research focused on several complex variables and their connections to algebraic geometry.

Currently, he is an Assistant Professor and Calculus Coordinator at Northern Illinois University. His commitment to finding ways to better serve his students, together with collaborations with mathematics educators and his experiences as Calculus Coordinator, led him to shift his research focus toward mathematics education. His current research centers on the teaching and learning of mathematics, with a particular interest in calculus education. Through this work, he seeks to better understand students' mathematical thinking and to explore approaches that can support inclusive, equitable, and relevant learning in the calculus classroom.

One area of his research explores students' perspectives on the use of digital technologies for learning mathematics. Through this work, he examines the benefits and challenges students perceive when engaging with technological tools and considers how these tools can be used to support meaningful mathematical learning. Another area of his research focuses on the experiences of minoritized students in calculus. In particular, he has investigated factors that shape students' persistence and motivation, as well as how Black and Hispanic students describe their interactions with faculty. By centering students' voices and experiences, this research seeks to inform more equitable and supportive teaching practices in undergraduate mathematics.

Kevin's teaching reflects these same commitments. He strives to create inclusive and supportive learning environments by getting to know his students and fostering a classroom in which they feel comfortable asking questions, working collaboratively, and actively participating in mathematical discussions. He uses formative and summative assessments to understand students' learning and provide feedback, while also using students' responses to inform adjustments to his instruction. He incorporates digital tools such as Desmos, CalcPlot3D, and GeoGebra to help students explore mathematical ideas, develop conceptual understanding, and engage with mathematics in multiple ways.

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.

Thanks to the American Mathematical Society and the Mathematical Association of America for support of Lathisms.