

Latinxs and Hispanics in Mathematical Sciences



José María Menéndez

José María has been working at Pima Community College (PCC) for 8 years. His call as a teacher came when he was 8 years old. Teaching mathematics was a way of being, moved to it by how beautiful mathematics was (and the need of attaining a job quickly out of school, a 3-year program that took five years working full time while going to school). His first degree in teaching mathematics and physics at the secondary (6 - 12 grades) level was from the Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas" (UCA) in El Salvador, followed by a B.S. in (pure) math and Spanish from LSU, and a M.S. and Ph.D. in applied mathematics from Virginia Tech. After a 3-year post-doc program at the Center for Mathematics Education of Latinos/as (CEMELA) and 2 years at Radford University, José María reconnected with his first love of teaching, now at PCC.

José María loves teaching. Usually his teaching evaluations would mention how "hard" he is at grading, yet how much students learn, how passionate and patient he is. José María strives for imprinting the passion of math and portray how beautiful it is. I am glad my students pick up on that. Because teaching is his everyday job and duty, he probably does not think much about it. Research, on the other hand, comes, not out of his job description, but from his wanting to know more. José María has been extremely lucky to make connections with faculty at universities and collaborate with them in different projects. The most recent one is on bringing a supplemental, interactive-engaged problem solving, plus mentoring, seminar to my Community College. Their questions go about learning how much of the intervention helps students develop their identity as mathematics users and doers.

"I am a little bit ambivalent when it comes to dedicating one month to Hispanic Heritage: On the one hand I am excited about it in trying to promote the pride of being Hispanic. On the other hand, it upsets me that we still "need" to hold these events... for whom? I did not identify myself as an immigrant until after 2 years in grad school when I came to terms with myself that I was here to stay. Until then I was an international student. At that moment, I realized I am an immigrant and quite contempt with it."

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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