FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Great Minds in STEM Announces the Class of 2023 Professional Honorees

Los Angeles, CA, August 11, 2023 – Great Minds in STEM is proud to announce our 2023 Luminaries, STEM Heroes, and HENAAC Award Winners! Dozens of companies, government agencies, academic institutions and our nation’s uniformed services collectively nominated hundreds of outstanding candidates for the peer-review Selection Committee to evaluate on their way toward finalizing GMiS’s 35th annual class of professional honorees.

The HENAAC Awards were created in 1989 to honor the world-class achievements of outstanding Hispanic engineers, scientists, and STEM professionals. As a true peer-review distinction, a HENAAC Award designates the honoree as among the best and brightest in their field, and the members of the Class of 2023 meet the highest standards of excellence that the 35-year legacy of the awards have come to represent.

Luminaries are chosen for their achievements leading, collaborating, and initiating key programs and research in their respective fields, while STEM Hero honorees are selected from the pool of civilian and uniformed military personnel at agencies, labs and branches that report to the Department of Defense who excel in the STEM fields. All Luminary and STEM Hero honorees have emerged from the selection process, which was chaired by Dr. Yannis Yortsos, Dean of the Viterbi School of Engineering at the University of Southern California, and Dr. Nancy Warter-Perez, Dean of the College of Engineering, Computer Science, and Technology at California State University, Los Angeles.

All GMiS professional honorees will receive their awards at the 35th Anniversary GMiS Conference, “Recharging America with our Youth,” October 11 - 14, 2023 in Pasadena, California.

2023 Luminary Honorees

Nestor de Mattos
Corporate Vice President and Chief Supply Chain Officer of Integrated Supply Chain Dow

Sandra Hernández, Ph.D.
Chevron Fellow and Principal Materials/Corrosion Engineer Chevron Corporation

Nelson Morales
Chief of the Structural Dynamics Branch NASA Glenn Research Center

Ryan A. Cruz
Cyber System Security Engineer Senior Lockheed Martin

Maria Rodriguez-Moya, Ph.D.
Fuels Scientist Product Management and Deployment Shell USA, Inc.

Varinia Bernales, Ph.D.
Associate Research Scientist Core Research & Development Michigan Operations Dow

Yamil O. Huertas-Morales
Senior Principal SEA Systems Engineer Northrop Grumman

Maria J. Mendoza
Senior Operations Consultant External Contract Manufacturing – Skin Care Kimberly Clark Corporation

Angel Uruchima
Venezuela Strategy and Business Planning Manager Chevron Corporation

Guadalupe Perez
Senior Engineering Manager Avionics The Boeing Company

Ana Simonato
General Manager, Technology and Business Services Gulf of Mexico Chevron Corporation

Linda Garcia
Engineering Group Manager Core Combustion and Thermal Calibration General Motors

Norma Garcia Santos
Project Manager Office of Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards Division of Fuel Management Storage and Transportation Licensing Branch U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
2023 STEM Hero Honorees

- **Roberto Crespo**
  Senior Intelligence Analyst
  MASINT Analysis Squadron
  U.S. Navy

- **Carlos Javier, Ph.D.**
  Mechanical Engineer
  Naval Undersea Warfare Center Division, Newport
  U.S. Navy

- **Victor M. Garcia, Jr., Ph.D.**
  Research Civil Engineer
  Airfields and Pavements Branch
  Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory
  U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

- **Elizabeth Tello**
  Project Engineer, ATC Systems
  Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic
  U.S. Navy

- **Ernesto G. Cruz**
  Research Civil Engineer
  Impact and Explosions Effects Branch
  Engineering Systems and Materials Division
  U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

2023 HENAAC Award Winners

- **Engineer of the Year**
  **Alfredo Ramirez**
  Vice President
  Vehicle Development
  Northrop Grumman

- **Scientist of the Year**
  **Salvador Rodriguez, Ph.D.**
  Research & Development (R&D) Science & Engineering (S&E), Nuclear Engineering
  Sandia National Laboratories

- **Chairman’s Award**
  **Yannis C. Yortsos, Ph.D.**
  Dean, USC Viterbi School of Engineering, and the Zohrab Kaprielian Dean’s Chair in Engineering
  University of Southern California

- **Vanguard Award**
  **Ellen Rios de Acarón**
  Director of Engineering
  COOP Program
  University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez

- **Pioneer Award**
  **Arnold Morales**
  KC-46 Systems Safety Manager
  The Boeing Company

- **Albert V. Baez Award**
  **Sandra Cristina Kothe Milach, Ph.D.**
  Vice President, Breeding Technologies
  Corteva Agriscience

- **Executive Excellence**
  **Juanita Tavares**
  Vice President of Production Operations
  Lockheed Martin

- **Outstanding Technical Achievement – Government**
  **Azlin M. Biaggi-Labiosa, Ph.D.**
  Manager, Foundational Electrified Propulsion Subproject, Transformational Tools and Technologies Project, Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate, Aeronautics Mission Office
  NASA Glenn Research Center

- **Outstanding Technical Achievement – Academia**
  **Regina Ragan, Ph.D.**
  Distinguished Professor of Materials Science and Engineering
  University of California, Irvine
2023 HENAAC Award Winners (continued)

OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT—NATIONAL LAB
Humberto E. Garcia, Ph.D.
Directorate Fellow, Senior Advisor
and Senior Researcher
Idaho National Laboratory

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT I – INDUSTRY
Vanessa Vera
Program Manager
AN/TPY-2 Domestic Production
Organization
RTX

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT I – GOVERNMENT
Janette C. Briones, Ph.D.
Project Manager for the SCaN Cognitive
Communications Project
NASA Glenn Research Center

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT II – INDUSTRY
Mauricio A. Salinas, Ph.D.
Manager – ISRS Mechanical Analysis
Electro-Optic (EO)
Mechanical Department Intelligence
Surveillance, Reconnaissance Systems (ISRS)
Raytheon Intelligence & Space (RIS)
RTX

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT – INDUSTRY
Juanita Leal
Associate Technical Fellow / Assembly,
Integration & Test Lead Engineer
The Boeing Company

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT – GOVERNMENT
Carlos Fontanot
Manager, Imagery and Chair
Imagery Working Group
International Space Station
NASA Johnson Space Center

MOST PROMISING ENGINEER – UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE
Alexsandra Olaya-Garcia
Space Launch System (SLS)
Launch Integration Manager
The Boeing Company

MOST PROMISING ENGINEER – MASTER’S DEGREE
Melvin X. Soto-Barreto
Subsystem Lead Engineer
F22 Program Office
Wright Patterson Air Force Base
U.S. Air Force

MOST PROMISING SCIENTIST – PH.D. - NATIONAL LABS
Bryan Maldonado – Puente, Ph.D.
R&D Associate Staff
Building and Transportation Science Division
Oak Ridge National Laboratory

MOST PROMISING SCIENTIST – PH.D. – INDUSTRY
Juan F. Callejas, Ph.D.
Senior R&D Leader
Dow

EDUCATION
Manuel A. Jiménez-Cedeño, Ph.D.
Professor, Electrical and
Computer Engineering Department
University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez

COMMUNITY SERVICE – ACADEMIA
Patricia Anaya Sullivan, Ph.D.
Associate Dean in Engineering and
Director of Strategic Initiatives
New Mexico State University

COMMUNITY SERVICE – INDUSTRY
Suellen dos Santos Frank, Ph.D.
Sr. Principal Investigator/ Engineer
Sustainability Technology Enablers
The Boeing Company

About Great Minds in STEM (GMiS): Great Minds in STEM is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to keeping America technologically strong by promoting STEM education and careers, with a special emphasis on underserved communities. Founded in 1989, GMiS has been at the forefront of efforts to increase diversity and inclusion in STEM fields. Through its various programs and initiatives, GMiS has inspired countless students, provided scholarships, and facilitated connections between students and industry leaders.

About the GMiS Conference: Great Minds in STEM’s annual Conference is the organization’s flagship event. First held in 1989 and renewed every year since, the conference features executive forums, seminars, competitive programs, career opportunities and networking sessions and is attended by over 3,000 STEM students and professionals annually.

For media inquiries about honorees, please contact: Ms. Patsy Delgado, Conference Awards Specialist, at pdelgado@greatmindsinstem.org.

Note to editors: High-resolution photos of the GMiS logo are available upon request

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