

August 11, 2023

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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

Major Marisa J. Romero

Assistant Professor of Biology
Department of Biology
U.S. Air Force Academy

Roberto Crespo

Senior Intelligence Analyst
MASINT Analysis Squadron
Geospatial and Signatures Intelligence Group,
National Air and Space Intelligence Center
Wight-Patterson AFB
U.S. Air Force

Elizabeth Tello

Project Engineer, ATC Systems
Naval Information Warfare Center Atlantic
U.S. Navy

Isahi Cortes-Hunt

Deputy Program Manager/Supervisor
Littoral Combat Ship (LCS)
Fleet Introduction and
Sustainment Program Office
Naval Sea Systems Command

Carlos Javier, Ph.D.

Mechanical Engineer
Naval Undersea Warfare
Center Division, Newport
U.S. Navy

Ernesto G. Cruz

Research Civil Engineer
Impact and Explosions Effects Branch
Engineering Systems and Materials Division
Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory
U.S. Army Engineer Research
and Development Center
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Army

Victor M. Garcia, Jr., Ph.D.

Research Civil Engineer
Airfields and Pavements Branch
Geotechnical and Structures Laboratory
U.S. Army Engineer Research
and Development Center
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Army

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

PIONEER AWARD

Arnold Morales

KC-46 Systems Safety Manager
The Boeing Company

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

VANGUARD AWARD

Ellen Rios de Acarón

Director of Engineering
COOP Program
University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez

ALBERT V. BAEZ AWARD

Sandra Cristina Kothe Milach, Ph.D.

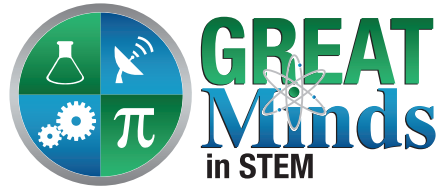
Vice President, Breeding Technologies
Corteva Agriscience

OUTSTANDING TECHNICAL ACHIEVEMENT – ACADEMIA

Regina Ragan, Ph.D.

Distinguished Professor of Materials
Science and Engineering
University of California, Irvine

August 11, 2023



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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