

HACU International Symposium

Innovative Collaborations: Tackling Current
International Education Issues Across the Americas



PROGRAM AGENDA



San José, Costa Rica - Costa Rica Marriott Hacienda Belén June 12, 2025

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HACU International Symposium

Innovative Collaborations: Tackling Current International Education Issues Across the Americas

Thursday, June 12

8:15 – 9:15 a.m.

Welcome Remarks

Antonio R. Flores, Ph.D.

President and CEO, HACU

Shirley Calvo

Executive Director, Cámara Nacional de Turismo, Costa Rica

Zeneida María Chávez Fernández

Mayor of San Antonio de Belén, Alcaldía de Belén, Costa Rica

Mario Sáenz Alfaro

Exports Development Principal Director, PROCOMER, Costa Rica

Juan Ricardo Wong Ruiz

Executive Director, Consejo Nacional de Enseñanza Superior Universitaria Privada, Costa Rica

Mtra. Elizabeth Rodríguez Vargas

President, GlobalEdu Consortium, Costa Rica

Luis Felipe Dobles Junqueira

Member of the Governing Board, GlobalEdu Consortium, Costa Rica

9:15 – 9:30 a.m.

Break

9:30 – 11:00 a.m.

Strengthening Research and Academic Partnerships Among the U.S., Latin American, and Spanish Institutions

Moderator:

Daniel López, Jr., Ph.D.

President, Harold Washington College, USA

Presenters:

Cuahtémoc Godoy, Ed.D.

Associate Dean – School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, USA

Luis Fernando Pantoja Amaro, DBA

President, Universidad Tecnológica de Querétaro, México

Britt Rios-Ellis, Ph.D.

President, California State University, Stanislaus, USA

11:00 – 11:15 a.m.

Break

11:15 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.

Public-Private Partnerships in International Education: New Models for Sustainability

Moderator:

Luis Felipe Dobles Junqueira

Member of the Governing Board, GlobalEdu Consortium, Costa Rica

Presenters:

Guillermo Díaz, Jr.

Founder and CEO, Conectado, Inc., USA

Mario Sáenz Alfaro

Exports Development Principal Director, PROCOMER, Costa Rica

Leonardo Andrés Urrego Cubillos

Member of the Board of Directors, FODESEP and Director of Strategic Planning, Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia (UNAD), Colombia

1:15 – 2:30 p.m.

Lunch at the Hotel

2:45 – 4:15 p.m.

Global Collaboration in Climate Research and Disaster Recovery: Universities as Catalysts for Innovation, Policy Change, and Community Support

Moderator:

Emma Grace Hernández Flores, Ph.D.

President, Universidad de Iberoamérica, Costa Rica

Presenters:

Kathy Halvorsen, Ph.D.

Associate Vice President for Research Integrity and Facilities, Michigan Technological University, USA

María Vicenta Mestre Escrivá, Ph.D.

President, Universitat de Valencia, Spain

Carlos Padín Bibiloni, Ph.D.

Vice President for Research and Compliance, Universidad Ana G. Mendez, Puerto Rico, USA

4:15 – 4:30 p.m.

Closing Remarks

Antonio R. Flores, Ph.D.

President and CEO, HACU

6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Dinner and La Academia de Liderazgo Graduation Ceremony



Antonio R. Flores, Ph.D., has served as president and CEO of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities for over 29 years, leading advocacy efforts for Hispanic-Serving Institutions across the nation and Latino higher education. His contributions to higher education have been recognized across the country. Under his tenure HACU has tripled membership, budget and programs, advocated for HSI legislation and funding, and secured new private funding for HSIs and member institutions.



Strengthening Research and Academic Partnerships Among the U.S., Latin American, and Spanish Institutions



Cuauhtémoc Godoy, Ed.D., currently serves as associate dean and professor at the school of engineering and applied sciences, Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, where he has dedicated over 35 years to advancing engineering education. His career has prominently focused on building strategic partnerships with industry and more recently, fostering international academic and research alliances. His leadership extends into international collaborations emphasizing innovative learning strategies, virtual education, and workforce development across the Americas. He earned a master's from Purdue University, and a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania.



Luis Fernando Pantoja Amaro, DBA, has been president of the Universidad Tecnológica de Querétaro since Dec. 2024. He previously led Colegio de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos del Estado de Querétaro from 2015 to 2023, overseeing 9,700 students across 12 campuses, and served as coordinator of higher secondary education from 2023 to 2024. He previously worked at UTEQ from 1998 to 2014, and has taught foreign trade and logistics since 1997 at institutions including the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education and Autonomous University of Querétaro. He was part of the National System of Researchers from 2021 to 2024, and evaluated the State Export Award for 13 years, promoting excellence in foreign trade.



Britt Rios-Ellis, Ph.D., is president of California State University, Stanislaus, a bilingual and bicultural leader with more than 30 years of experience advancing inclusive excellence, leading over \$59 million in equity-focused health and education initiatives. She previously served as provost at Oakland University, was founding dean at CSU Monterey Bay, and as a professor at CSU Long Beach. Rios-Ellis earned her degrees from the University of Oregon, and completed training at Harvard, HERS, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities.

Public-Private Partnerships in International Education: New Models for Sustainability



Guillermo Díaz, Jr., is founder and CEO of Conectado Inc., a Web3/AI platform advancing STEAM representation, and business leader and advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. He was formerly Cisco's Global CIO, and also chaired the Hispanic Technology Council, the leading Hispanic tech executive organization. Díaz held leadership roles at Silicon Graphics, Ingram Micro, and Alza Corporation, and serves on the boards of Blue Shield of California, Jack in the Box, and Unicoi Inc., as well as Cristo Rey, NPower, and the Stanford Latino Entrepreneur Initiative. A U.S. Navy veteran, he holds a bachelor's from Regis University.



Mario Sáenz Alfaro, is exports development principal director of the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promoter PROCOMER, with 25 years of international business experience in marketing, sales and innovation project management positions across the Central American, Caribbean, and Latam Markets. He earned a bachelor's from Universidad Internacional de las Américas, San José, Costa Rica, a master's in business administration MBA from Escuela Superior de Ingenieros Comerciales business and marketing school in Madrid Spain, and has studied MIT Design Thinking and Digital Marketing at Columbia University.



Leonardo Andrés Urrego Cubillos is an expert in strategic planning and sustainability in inclusive higher education. As Director of Strategic Planning at Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, Colombia's leading distance education institution. Serving over 300,000 students, he drives innovation to expand access in remote regions. With a background in economics and specializations in leadership and risk management, he develops models aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and Inner Development Goals. He also serves on FODESEP's Board, supporting strategic educational financing nationwide. His current role specializes in reaching marginalized communities and advancing sustainable, inclusive regional development through distance education.

Global Collaboration in Climate Research and Disaster Recovery: Universities As Catalysts for Innovation, Policy Change, and Community Support



Kathy Halvorsen, Ph.D., is university professor chair and associate vice president for research integrity and facilities at Michigan Technological University. She has over 20 years of experience studying how to reduce the risk of

catastrophic climate change while adapting to climate change impacts, particularly in coastal Indigenous communities. She led the BIOPIRE team with members from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, Uruguay, and the U.S. studying renewable energy adoption across the Americas. Kathy leads the international RACIMA team designing and testing bilingual Spanish and English training for university research administration staff and leadership to support international research collaboration.



María Vicenta Mestre Escrivá, Ph.D., became the first woman rector of the Universitat de Valencia in 2018 and was reelected in 2022. A professor of basic psychology, she has led research on childhood, adolescence, and protective and vulnerability factors, with over 200 articles, 23 books, and 50 book chapters. She has held key academic leadership roles, including vice dean, dean, vice-rector, and rector. She is part of the Spanish Academy of Psychology, has received several awards, and serves on the boards of the Ibero-American Postgraduate University Association and the FORTHEM University Alliance.

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Carlos Padín Bibiloni, Ph.D., is Vice President for Research and Compliance, Universidad Ana G. Méndez, and is an educator and planner with experience in academia, public service, and environmental organizations, dedicated to environmental protection, sustainable development, and civic engagement in planning. He is currently vice president associate for research and compliance at Ana G. Méndez University, and directs the environmental science program. He has served as Secretary of Puerto Rico's Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, co-principal investigator at Arecibo Observatory, and principal investigator at Las Cucharillas Marsh Field Lab. His international work includes service with the Organization of American States and HACU.



The Consortium of Costa Rican Universities and Spanish Language Schools for International Education is committed to improving the development and management of higher education institutions in Costa Rica and the region. It actively promotes internationalization through knowledge sharing, best practices, and cooperative programs at both local and international levels.

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