



*la Celebración*  
*Latina*



2023



**OFFICE OF ACADEMIC MULTICULTURAL INITIATIVES**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



# Celebration Welcome Letter

Greetings!

It is with great enthusiasm that we acknowledge the 24th Annual La Celebración graduates!

On April 28, 2000, the University of Michigan launched its inaugural Celebración Latina to recognize and celebrate this community's significant contributions to the University of Michigan and continue to do so. Throughout the history of this celebration, many things have evolved across campus. However, the commitment of Latino/a/x students, faculty and staff has remained constant.

As we honor you, we are excited for the opportunities that await you. We are confident that as Michigan graduates, you have the skills, talent, drive, and commitment necessary to overcome whatever challenges you face and make a difference in the nation and the world.

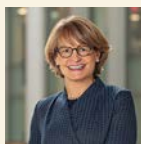
You are joining a community of over half a million Michigan alums spread around the globe—half a million friends, colleagues, and mentors ready to help welcome you into your next chapter. We encourage you to share your knowledge, experiences, talents, dreams, and aspirations with your communities and the world.

Go out and do great things with what you have learned. Do them well, with integrity and joy in the honest work of it. Carry with you the sense of self-assurance that even a pandemic cannot stop you from achieving your dreams. Whatever the next chapter of your story brings, we know the strength of your heritage, the beauty of your talent, and the resiliency of your experience have prepared you to make a difference.

And whatever you do, and wherever you go, Vamos Azul!



*Santa J. Ono*  
**Santa J. Ono**  
President



*Laurie K. McCauley*  
**Laurie K. McCauley**  
Provost & Executive Vice President  
for Academic Affairs



*Martino Harmon*  
**Martino Harmon**  
Vice President for Student Life



*Tabbye M. Chavous*  
**Tabbye M. Chavous**  
Vice Provost for Equity & Inclusion  
and Chief Diversity Officer



# *Order of Events*

## Opening

### **Master of Ceremonies**

**Dr. Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes**

*Professor and Chair of American Culture  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts*

## Welcome

### **Dr. Deborah Willis**

*Assistant Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion & Academic Affairs*

## Keynote Speaker

### **Elio Morillo**

*Space Systems Engineer, NASA*

## Circle Award

### **Alexa Lynch**

## Student Speaker

### **Adriana Ponce**

*Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology  
Rackham Graduate School*

## Class Recognition

## Closing

### **Héctor Galván**

*Assistant Director, Office of Academic Multicultural Initiative*

## *Master of Ceremonies*



### **Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes** *Professor and Chair of American Culture*

Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes is Professor of American Culture and former director and core faculty member of the Latina/o Studies Program at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is also Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and of Women's and Gender Studies. Born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, he received his AB from Harvard (1991) and his MA, MPhil, and PhD from Columbia (1999). He is author of *Queer Ricans: Cultures and Sexualities in the Diaspora* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) and of *Escenas transcaribeñas: Ensayos sobre teatro, performance y cultura* (Isla Negra Editores, 2018) and coeditor with Deborah R. Vargas and Nancy Raquel Mirabal of *Keywords for Latina/o Studies* (New York University Press, 2017). His book *Translocas: The Politics of Puerto Rican Drag and Trans Performance* was published by the University of Michigan Press in 2021 as part of the *Triangulations: Lesbian/Gay/Queer Theater/Drama/Performance* series and received the 2021-2022 Sylvia Rivera Award in Transgender Studies from CLAGS, the Center for LGBTQ Studies at the City University of New York. He has coedited queer issues of *CENTRO Journal*, *Sargasso*, and *Hostos Review/Revista Hostosiana* and has published two books of fiction, *Uñas pintadas de azul/Blue Fingernails* and *Abolición del pato*. Larry performs in drag as Lola von Miramar since 2010, and has appeared in several episodes of the YouTube series *Cooking with Drag Queens*.

## *Welcome Speaker*



### **Deborah Willis**

*Assistant Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion  
& Academic Affairs*

Dr. Deborah S. Willis is a passionate, enthusiastic administrator, educator, and certified executive leadership coach. As an Assistant Vice Provost she works with the leadership team to develop strategy and tactics that lead to institutional transformation around diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice issues.

Her role focuses on the student experience and she works closely with numerous student-focused units including Student Life and Rackham Graduate School. Prior to joining ODEI, she was an Assistant Director for Professional Development and Engagement at Rackham Graduate School and led the Rackham Professional Development DEI Certificate, a program she designed to prepare participants to work in a diverse environment while fostering a climate of inclusivity.

Throughout her professional career, Dr. Willis has provided vision and advocacy in the areas of diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice and leadership development. Her engaging style of collaboration and coaching encourages progressive, actionable and tangible growth for the people she serves. She is committed to creating initiatives that support an inclusive community and promote institutional change. Dr. Willis holds a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Michigan and is a proud wolverine.



## *Keynote Speaker*

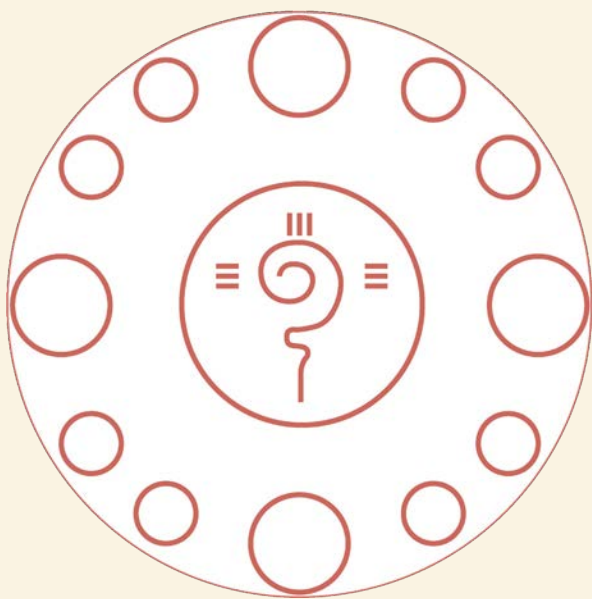


### **Elio Morillo**

*Space Systems Engineer, NASA*

Elio's journey as a space systems engineer has taken him from the far reaches of Ecuador, Puerto Rico, and New York City, to the cutting-edge lunar and Martian programs. With a strong foundation in mechanical and electrical engineering from the University of Michigan, Elio has played an instrumental role in groundbreaking missions like NASA-JPL's Mars 2020, where he contributed to the success of the Perseverance rover and Ingenuity Mars helicopter. Most recently, he has worked on Blue Origin's lunar Human Landing System. A product of diverse cultural experiences, Elio is driven by a deep passion for exploration, expansion, and creating equal opportunities for all to access the wonders of space. When he's not busy pushing the boundaries of human knowledge, Elio generously shares his insights through inspiring talks, volunteer work, and mentorship. Join Elio on his quest to reach for the stars and empower others to do the same.

*Congratulations*  
*Graduates!*





## *Doctoral Graduates*

### **Adriana Ponce**

Rackham Graduate School  
*Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology*

### **Mary Elizabeth Silva-Garza**

School of Music, Theatre & Dance  
*Doctor of Musical Arts in French Horn Performance*

## *Master's Graduates*

### **Ariana Bautista Cortes**

School for Environment and Sustainability  
*Master of Science in Geospatial Data Sciences*

### **Christopher Camacho**

School of Social Work  
*Master of Social Work in Children and Family Welfare*

### **Miguel Angel Lopez**

Stephen M. Ross School of Business & Gerald R. Ford School  
of Public Policy  
*Master of Business Administration; Master of Public Policy*

### **Eliana Lozano**

Stephen M. Ross School of Business  
*Master of Business Administration*





# *Master's Graduates*

## **Nilsa Ileana Pedanou**

Stephen M. Ross School of Business  
*Master of Business Analytics*

## **Idalys Vanessa Perez**

Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy  
*Master of Public Policy; Data Science Graduate Certificate*

## **Adrianna Itzamara Rojas**

School of Public Health  
*Master of Public Health in Global Health Epidemiology*

## **Angélica Larissa Tomé**

School of Information  
*Master of Science in Information; UX Research and Design*

## **Marisol Valentin**

Stephen M. Ross School of Business  
*Master of Business Administration*

## **Jessica Villarreal**

School for Environment and Sustainability  
*Master of Science in Ecosystem Services and Management*

## **Maite Alexandra Zapata-Ortiz**

School of Public Health  
*Master of Public Health in Health Behavior and Health Education*



## *Bachelor's Graduates*

Arely Alvarez

Xochitl Giselle Amaro

Diego Andrade-Cabrera

Marisveidy Arellano

Gabriela Pilar Barrett

Edgar Becerra

Julissa Marlyn Cardiel

Myrka Cardoso-Garcia

Ruth Mery Carranza Zurita

Alexandra Castro

Bianca Cobian-Campos

Adilene De Los Santos

Jenely Delgado

Shannon Nicole Flores

Kelly Flores Mendoza

Anjie Garcia

Airy Crystal García

Abigail Joana Gonzalez

Victor Manuel Jauregui-  
Tapia

Alexis Jimenez

Fatima Monserrat Lagunas  
Vazquez

Jacqueline Lopez-Bravo

Melanie Man

Ashley Martinez

Ericka Alejandra Mendez  
Velazquez

Ashley Durón Mendoza

Lesley Miranda

Lorena Miss Ozuna

Nayetzy Michel Munoz



## *Bachelor's Graduates*

**Alin Mustafat**

**Deanna Irene Nila**

**Bryan Oyuela**

**Karen Pacheco**

**Xalma Mavely Palomino**

**Maryanne Samantha  
Pantoja**

**Sydney Marie Perez**

**Nancy Perez**

**Joselyn Quintana**

**Jacqueline Rodriguez**

**Hiram Rodriguez**

**Raquel Rodriguez**

**Megan Roe-Leon**

**Stephanie Rosas**

**Crystal Sanchez**

**Karen Yesenia Sanchez**

**Alexander Thomas Scotta**

**Luis Fernando Solano**

**Carinna Sofía Solano-  
Vargas**

**Vincent Sposato**

**Lesley Michelle Tayagua  
Lua**

**Samuel Uribe-Botero**

**Valentina Vargas**

**Abylene Vargas-Leon**

**Martin Gabriel Vega-  
Velasco**

**Bernie Allen Velasquez**

**Ariel Savannah Vidrio**



## *Graduation Celebration History*

The University of Michigan's first *Celebración Latina* was held in the year 2000 with support from the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives (OAMI). This celebration was hosted in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theatre, and the number of students participating in the graduation continues to grow year after year. We are proud that the celebration continues to acknowledge the accomplishments of Latinx students at the University of Michigan. *La Celebración Latina* is one of seven cultural graduations hosted annually by the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives.

**Thank you to the offices, students, and staff that have supported *La Celebración Latina* throughout the years.**

## *Graduation Celebration Mission*

*La Celebración Latina* celebrates the commonalities and differences that characterize the experiences of Latinx and other students at the University of Michigan and serves as an example of the University of Michigan's commitment to diversity.

The ceremony acknowledges the value and uniqueness of the Latinx student experience and serves to commemorate the accomplishments of those students that participate in the celebration. *La Celebración Latina* recognizes faculty and staff who provide academic enrichments, research opportunities, programs, and activities that promote the communal striving and sense of accountability that help students to achieve.

The Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives (OAMI), in partnership with the *La Celebración Latina* Planning Committee, institutes this annual celebration as an expression and tradition of valuing the University's cultural offerings and commitment to diversity.

**La Celebración Latina 2023 is coordinated by:**

### **Héctor Galván**

Assistant Director, Office of Academic and Multicultural Initiatives  
A Unit of the Office of the Vice Provost for Equity, Inclusion and Academic Affairs  
3009 Student Activities Building  
515 East Jefferson Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1316  
Phone: (734) 936-1055



## *Regents of the University of Michigan*

Santa J. Ono, *ex officio*, President  
Jordan B. Acker, Huntington Woods  
Michael J. Behm, Grand Blanc  
Mark J. Bernstein, Ann Arbor  
Paul W. Brown, Ann Arbor  
Sarah Hubbard, Okemos  
Denise Ilitch, Bingham Farms, chair  
Ron Weiser, Ann Arbor  
Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor

### *Statement of Freedom of Speech and Artistic Expression*

The University of Michigan strives to create an open form in which diverse opinions can be expressed and heard. Members of the University community, speakers, artists, and other invited guests have a right to express their views and opinions, and the University will protect that right. The University also supports the rights of those with differing views to express their opinions. In the interest of protecting these rights for all, University representatives may warn anyone unduly interfering with a speaker or performer's freedom of expression, and if the warnings are not heeded, may remove those individuals from the building. The policy extends and affirms University policies set forth by our Civil Liberties Board in our Student Handbook; and in the U-M Standard Practice Guide; Regents Ordinance Article XII, Section 1; and state statutes.

### *Statement of Affirmative Action*

The University of Michigan, as an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination and affirmative action, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, sex\*, color, religion, creed, national origin or ancestry, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, or Vietnam-era veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions. Inquiries or complaints may be addressed to the Senior Director for Institutional Equity and Title IX/Section 504 Coordinator, Office for Institutional Equity, 2072 Administrative Services Building, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-1432, 734-763-0235, TTY 734-647-1388. For other University of Michigan information call 734-764-1817.





## *Land Acknowledgement*

The University of Michigan is located on the territory of the Anishinaabeg people. The Ann Arbor campus currently resides on land ceded through the Treaty of Detroit in 1807. Additionally, in 1817, the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadami Nations made the largest single land transfer to the University of Michigan, ceded through the Treaty of Fort Meigs, with the agreement that their children would be educated in perpetuity.

We assert the sovereignty of tribal lands and acknowledge the painful historical and ongoing genocide, forced assimilation, and displacement of Native communities in the establishment of the University.

We affirm contemporary and ancestral Anishinaabeg ties to this land, the profound contributions of Native American peoples to this institution, and the University's commitment to educate the children of Native ancestors.

Acknowledging the land is an important first step towards healing that needs to be followed by further action. We invite all of you to think about how you can support Indigenous communities that surround you.



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These symbols represent the cultural graduation ceremonies that are coordinated annually through the Office of Academic and Multicultural Initiatives (OAMI).

Top left to right:

Black Celebratory, Native American Graduation, La Celebración Latina

Bottom left to right:

Middle Eastern & North African Celebration, First-Generation Graduation, Asian & Pacific Islander Graduation

**[oami.umich.edu](http://oami.umich.edu)**



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