



# *2026 Scholarship Award Luncheon*

Digital Program



**Wednesday, May 20, 2026**



*The Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber  
presents:*

# *2026 Scholarship Award Luncheon*

- **Welcome & Program** ----- **Norma Palacios-Patricio,**  
Programs Manager, HMC
- **Welcome Speakers:** ----- **Nicole Davison León,**  
*Executive Director, HMC*
- **Student Panel** ----- **Alejandra Vazquez, Jesus Moreno**  
**Rangel, Melissa Martinez**  
*Scholarship Recipients*
- **Keynote Speaker** ----- **Dr. Mariana Zaragoza,**  
*Higher Education Coordinating*  
*Commission*
- **Award Ceremony** ----- **Alan Avila - HMC Vice Chair, Scholarship Chair**  
**Norma Palacios-Patricio &**  
**Dámaris Martínez-Guzmán,**  
*HMC Staff*
- **Student Keynote Speaker** ----- **Lisette Castañeda,**  
*Scholarship Recipient*
- **Special Thanks** ----- **Dámaris Martínez-Guzmán,**  
*Events & Operations Manager, HMC*
- **End of Program**

Wordly



**CONGRATULATIONS!**





The Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber (HMC) exists to create opportunities and grow the Latino community's wealth and assets by investing in its community's entrepreneurial spirit; supporting its future generations' access to higher education; and preparing its emerging leaders to succeed in their careers and in the communities at large. Ultimately, we aim to advance our vision of Latinos prospering and contributing as business owners and industry leaders in an inclusive and robust economy.

**Our Mission:** Increase the economic advancement of Latino businesses and professionals in Oregon and SW Washington, creating pathways for connection, influence, and growth. **Our Vision:** We envision a thriving and prosperous Latino community.



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# Student Panelists



**Alejandra Vazquez** is a Master of Arts in International Relations (MAIR) candidate at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, D.C. She earned her bachelor's degree from Portland State University, where she studied Political Science, International Development, and Marketing, with a minor in Chicano/Latino Studies. As a first-generation graduate student, Alejandra is committed to uplifting her community in every space she enters. Over the past year, she has been actively involved in the Mexico Club and the Latin American Studies Club at SAIS, working to ensure that regional perspectives are meaningfully included in conversations on international development and foreign policy rather than treated as an afterthought. Her academic interests focus on international development, with a regional emphasis on Latin America. In the coming year, she hopes to further deepen her expertise and contribute to impactful, community-centered development work.

**Jesus Moreno Rangel** is a Construction Engineering Management student at Oregon State University, driven by a commitment to supporting underserved communities across Oregon and the Pacific Northwest through the power of construction and infrastructure. Growing up, he witnessed firsthand the urgent need for resilient infrastructure, accessible transportation, and equitable housing in his community, which are experiences that continue to shape his academic and professional mission at Oregon State. He has built a strong foundation through rewarding coursework and hands-on experiences such as competing in the 2026 Associated Schools of Construction Competition and serving as an undergraduate assistant at the OSU Asphalt Materials and Pavements Laboratory. Jesus is deeply inspired by the next generation of leaders, and believes that through the power of education and mentorship, we can truly build a better tomorrow for all.



**Melissa Martinez** is a senior at Gervais High School and will attend Oregon State University this fall to pursue her dream of becoming an oral surgeon. As a first-generation Latina student and the oldest of five siblings, she is passionate about using education to create opportunities for herself and her family. Melissa has earned certifications in ICE and Radiology and is currently working toward her third certification to become an official dental assistant. She also completed a mentorship at a local dental office, where she gained valuable hands-on experience in the dental field. Her passion for oral surgery comes from seeing people close to her struggle with limited access to dental and oral healthcare, inspiring her desire to make a difference in underserved communities.

# Keynote Speaker

Dr. Mariana Zaragoza is a proud daughter of Mexican immigrants from Chihuahua and Durango, a first-generation college graduate, and someone who grew up in rural Wyoming, where college wasn't always part of the conversation.

Like many of the students being honored today, she had to navigate that path step by step. She didn't always know who to ask or where to start, but she kept going, carrying her family's sacrifices, her cultura, and a belief that education could open doors to something more.

Today, she serves as an Academic Policy Specialist with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission,

where she leads Oregon's Direct Admissions work to make college more accessible and easier to navigate for students across the state. She partners with schools, colleges, and communities to build clearer pathways, so students do not have to figure it out alone.

She is also a sociology professor at Clark College, where she helps students understand how lived experience and systems shape our lives, and how their own stories become theory.

Dr. Zaragoza holds a doctorate in Bicultural-Bilingual Education and has spent over a decade working across K-12, higher education, and state systems to expand opportunities for students and communities. Her work has been recognized by the Governor for advancing educational equity across Oregon. She continues to coach leaders and organizations to build stronger, more equitable systems that better serve their communities through her consulting business.

Her story, and her work, are grounded in one belief: when one student finds their path, it creates possibility for many more to follow.



# *Student Keynote Speaker*

Lisette recently completed her first year as a PhD student in Spanish Linguistics at Arizona State University, where her academic interests focus on sociolinguistics, heritage language pedagogy, and language equity and access within Latino communities. She is deeply passionate about serving the Latino community through education, advocacy, and increasing access to equitable linguistic and educational resources for Spanish-speaking and bilingual individuals. Lisette strongly believes in being the representation in academia that she did not always have growing up, and views academic work as most meaningful when it extends beyond the classroom and creates tangible impact within the community.

In 2025, Lisette earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Applied Linguistics and Spanish from Portland State University. Since then, she has remained committed to exploring the relationship between language, identity, and community empowerment through both research and teaching.

As a graduate student and educator, Lisette hopes to continue using her academic and professional journey to uplift underserved communities, promote equitable access to education and language resources, and inspire future generations of Latino students to pursue higher education and leadership opportunities.



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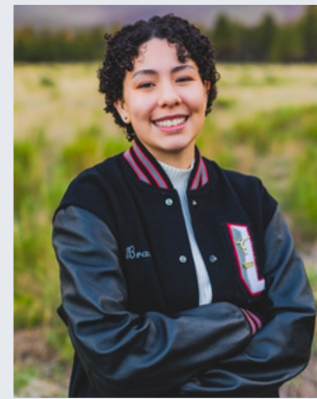
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**Alejandra Silva Hernandez**  
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**Elsa Moreno Rangel**  
Oregon State University



**Erika Cetina-Huchin**  
University of Portland



**Isabella Roldan Mendenhall**  
Oregon State University

# 2026 Scholarship Recipients



**Ivet Freixa Rodriguez**  
Sherwood High School



**Jason Bernal Azamar**  
Stanford University



**Jesus Moreno Rangel**  
Oregon State University



**Joaquin Alomia**  
Grant High School



**Kathleen Rodriguez Perez**  
Portland State University



**Kesley Yaklich**  
Oregon City High School



**Lisette Castañeda**  
Arizona State University



**Lizette Sanchez Mendoza**  
Portland Community College



**Luis Angel Amaral Ramirez**  
The College of Idaho



**Marcelina Pablo Garcia**  
Portland Community College



**Maya Hernandez-Olea**  
Westview High School



**Melissa Martinez Lopez**  
Gervais High School

# 2026 Scholarship Recipients



**Micah Joseph Viramontes**  
George Fox University



**Natalia Frias**  
Tigard High School



**Nicolas Borrego**  
Westview High School



**Pamela Melchor Burgos**  
Washington State University-  
Vancouver



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University of Portland



**Thank you for joining us for the  
2026 Scholarship Award Luncheon!**

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