

the world. Within her team, she is proud of “the collection of tools and training she has been a part of to make it easier for staff to measure impact.”

Preciado was founding director of Research & Evaluation at CollegeSpring, a college access nonprofit serving underrepresented students in Southern California, the Bay Area and New York.

CollegeSpring’s data systems were named best-in-class by IdealWare and the National College Access Network. Preciado also provided consultation services to National College Access Network, the Chase Foundation, the Microenterprise Program at Pepperdine University and the Office of Family Assistance Healthy Marriage and Relationship Education program.

Preciado’s pull to furthering quality education may be hereditary as she is a daughter of an elementary school teacher who instilled in her a love of learning and respect for the teaching profession.

Preciado began making her mark before even entering the workplace. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Yale University, where she was a Gates



Dr. Krystel Castillo
GreenStar Endowed Assistant Professor
in Mechanical Engineering
University of Texas at San Antonio

As GreenStar Endowed Assistant Professor in Mechanical Engineering at University of Texas at San Antonio, every day is different and presents a new challenge for Dr. Krystel Castillo.

“I love my job because it offers the flexibility to advance my research, and keep up with cutting-edge technologies in emerging energy field and development in the new green economy,” she explains. “I love the interaction with my students and am happy to see them succeed.”

As a small-town girl, Dr. Castillo quickly learned persistence is the key to achieving one’s dreams.

“Becoming the first Ph.D. in my entire family was my dream and I achieved it by overcoming unintentional stereotypical comments,” she says. “You have to believe that there is no ceiling and strive to excel in every aspect of your professional life. ‘Continue to move onward!’ has become my motto.”

She knew from a very young age where her future would take her.

“When asked, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up?’ I would immediately answer: an engineer,” Dr. Castillo recalls. “However, during my middle school years, I faced unintentional stereotypical comments that made me think about other career opportunities.”

The support from her parents and her exposure to trailblazers in STEM helped her to carry on. One trailblazer who stood



Millennium Scholar, and her Ph. D. in Social Psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles where she was funded by the National Science Foundation and focused on quantitative methods and statistical analysis.

“When more Latinas are involved in STEM they can ensure it reflects the needs and strengths of Latinas and the needs of their communities,” Preciado shares. “Latinas who enter STEM can help apply it in new ways. There is a big need for really smart people in STEM who have not only an interest in science and technology, but to important social issues.”

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– Mariana Preciado

out was a dean of the college of engineering who visited her high school class.

“By meeting a successful female leader in an engineering and technology-heavy field, I decided I wanted to become a professor and researcher,” she says. “Since then, I earned two doctorates in engineering at the age of 27.”

Once at UTSA, she found great mentors who inspired her to advance her research.

“This inspiration allowed me to establish a strong research group, secure externally-funded grants and become the recipient of the GreenStar Endowed Professorship in Energy,” Dr. Castillo shares. “I strongly believe that finding a champion is essential for your success and one role model can change the course of a life because if she made it, you can make it too! I feel that many Latina girls are curious and interested in STEM but sometimes are not paired with a role model that exemplify the STEM career path.”

Dr. Castillo puts her beliefs into practice by recruiting students who are underrepresented in STEM fields for her research team.

“I aim to attract, recruit and provide superior mentorship for students under my direction, including female and Hispanic students,” she says.

Kathya Chiluiza
Supply Chain Business Analyst
General Mills

Originally from Ecuador, Kathya Chiluiza and her family moved to New York City when she was about two years old. Her parents didn't know any English



but worked hard to keep food on the table and find greater opportunities for their children.

“As I continue to move forward I want to take advantage of the opportunities I have so their efforts don't go in vain,” Chiluiza explains.

A graduate from Cornell University with a Bachelor's of Science in Operations Research & Industrial Engineering and a Master's of Engineering in Engineering Management, Chiluiza is Supply Chain Analyst for General Mills where she works

with manufacturing plants and distribution centers on warehousing process improvement to better material flow. She uses her keen problem-solving and communication skills, cross-functional collaboration and technical knowledge to deliver business results.

Her path to STEM began at an early age when she first developed an interest in math and science. Her skills in these areas, coupled with the values she learned at St. Catharine Academy, an all-girls private high school in the Bronx, prepared her for a bright future.

“St. Catharine Academy really empowered us as women that we could do and be whatever we wanted to be,” Chiluiza explains. “I wasn't limited.”

That mindset led her to find out more about engineering and eventually break down barriers in her higher education and profession.

Chiluiza also keeps busy through her involvement with community service and outreach organizations, including as consultant to Partners in Food Solutions, a nonprofit that connects the business expertise of volunteer General Mills employees with small and growing food companies in the developing world. She sits on the executive board of the Cornell Latino Alumni Association where she helps promote the needs and interests of Latino students and alumni through networking, recruitment and retention strategies.

She is a volunteer audiobook reader for Learning Ally, an organization providing blind, visually impaired and dyslexic students tools essential to academic success. Chiluiza is also member of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers and the Gates Millennium Scholars Alumni Association.

“I've been involved in community service since elementary school; working with various organizations, mainly with those that support education,” Chiluiza explains. “They offer others an opportunity to succeed and sometimes an opportunity is all one person needs in order to be able to move forward and be successful.”

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