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Transcript inSTEM series, Season 2 Episode 7: First Generation inSTEM with Miguel A. Lopez Perez
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STEMculture Podcast 0:07

[Intro music]

Dani 0:15

Hello, welcome to STEMculture Podcast! Today we're talking with Miguel A. Lopez Perez and his experience as a first generation, Mexican-American graduate student. Miguel is passionate about redefining diversity in STEM as an advantage, not only a challenge. This episode goes out to all the first generation Pokemon out there, don't press B.

Today, I, Dani, and Miguel chat about who might identify as a first generation student, the advantages and challenges, some advice and finally, how to support first gen students.

[interview begins] Hi, everyone, we're here with Miguel A. Lopez Perez and I'm Dani. Now Miguel is from the The Ohio State University and he's a fourth year PhD student in biomedical sciences. And he's here to chat with us about his experiences as a first-gen graduate student.

So hi Miguel!

Miguel 1:01

Hi, Dani, how are you?

Dani 1:03

Good. How are you doing?

Doing well, doing well busy week.

So the reason we we had gotten in contact originally is because we had kind of been chatting on Twitter, you and me about, kind of, the podcast and our goal to really learn more about other people, especially kind of minoritized students in STEM. So we were wondering, kind of besides that, what was your impetus for being on in STEM episode?

Miguel 1:31

Yeah, so one of the main reasons I reached out to you through Twitter was I think I stumbled across one of your tweets. You know, I found it very interesting. So I can, you know, I started clicking and found out about the STEMculture Podcast, I thought that was a very unique podcast. It's by grad students for grad students. I thought premise was very exciting and thought to myself that this could be a very great vehicle to essentially begin a conversation that I've been having with a lot of my peers, a lot of my colleagues, about what it really means when we say, you know, diversity in STEM. Last year I did a one year professional development program with the Yale Sciencia Academy. It's a professional s- an NIH funded professional development program and they really stressed science communication. So since then, I've done a couple of outreach events essentially trying to connect and make science more accessible to those communities that have traditionally been excluded from science. And throughout this process, I found out that when when, when we say URM and when we say it in the context of science, they can sometimes be a little confusing, especially because there is so many international students in STEM. So So I think, you know, beginning and having a conversation of what it means when we talk about diversity in STEM, what do we- what do we want to achieve by increasing representation of traditionally underrepresented groups in STEM? And these would be, for example, you know, the African American students, Latino Hispanic students, Native students, women, right, there's not a lot of women in STEM, especially in leadership positions. So so in just beginning to have that conversation, I thought this would be a great way to kind of begin there.

Dani 3:39

Yeah. And then just for our listeners, URM stands for underrepresented minority. So often referring to minoritized students in whichever way they are minoritized, and like you were mentioning, there's there's a lot of ways that people can feel like they're not included, especially in STEM.

Yeah, exactly.

So- and you wanted to speak on kind of first generation students in particular. So can you share with us what first generation means? And who can be a first generation student?

Miguel 4:12

Sure, absolutely. So first generation students are defined as, basically neither parents having earned a bachelor's, or a four year degree. And really anybody can be a first generation student as it doesn't really matter whether or not you're part of a underrepresented minority group. It basically just dictates if you are the first person in your family to go to college. So it's very simple in that sense. I myself am first generation college attendee. I was the first student in my family to go to college, meaning I was the first person in my family to apply to college to fill out the FASFA and to kind of handle all the bureaucracies that come with attending a post secondary educational institution. So one of the reasons why I thought I wanted to talk about the first generation aspect is that it's a very unique experience. And for those of you that are listening, and that are first generation college students, we will highly likely have had shared experiences as you went through undergraduate. But in terms of what it means to to, when we talk about first generation college students, and how they affect, you know, or increased diversity at the college level in STEM fields, they overlap greatly, right? Generally, a lot or majority of first generation college students are from URM communities, and a lot of them are from, for example, low socio-economic status families. So So that exposure to college that exposure to university education is is novel, and can sometimes pose some challenges for those students.

Dani 6:12

Yeah, someone- so my mom went- she did her master's and applied to a PhD program. And so I felt much more prepared than I think a first generation student might have. Because when I was applying to grad school and even to college, I was able to ask her every step of the way, you know, what to expect. And I think it would have been, I know it would have been much harder if I hadn't had that. Absolutely.

So in terms of kind of your, your experience as a first generation student, how do you think that's affected your contribution to, and experience of, graduate school?

Miguel 6:50

So I'm a, I guess, a two-time first generation college student. I was the first person to go to, to college and the first person to go to graduate school. I'll be the first person to earn a doctorate degree in my family. My siblings have kind of beat me to it. So two of my siblings have already earned their masters. One has earned his master's in criminal justice and my sister just recently graduated with a master's in music. So I kind of paved the way for them and kind of bestowed upon them some of the tools, some of the tips, that I've learned as an undergraduate and graduate student. But really specifically for graduate school, I think, you know, we kind of face some of the same obstacles that the first generation students face in undergraduate. But some of the, kind of, most important ones are the ones that really spoke out, and I was able to pinpoint was that if you're the first person to attend graduate school and in pursuit of an advanced degree, you know, you often will find yourself feeling like everybody around you, your peers, know something that you don't, right? And it's it's kind of a double edged sword. And what I mean by that is that if you don't know something, right, you should ask. But But then if you ask, then you kind of reveal that you're kind of new at this, right? And that's something that that I struggled with a bit. I kind of was able to work my way through undergraduate without a tremendous amount of help. I mean, I did have a good support system once, once in undergrad, but in graduate school, it's it's a little it's tougher. Now, it's more difficult. There are a lot of- more- they're more unwritten rules in graduate school. They they- you learn from either peers or family or mentors. But I think that idea that you feel like, you know, everybody gets it, everybody has it figured out, but you don't was one of the biggest challenges. But also I think, for me in particular, and I can only speak about my experience, but I know from from my peers, my colleagues, they speak about having a constant self doubt or negative thinking in this academically is known as imposter syndrome. And it's very prevalent not just in first generation students, but really any student that feels like they don't have a sense of belonging in graduate school, for whatever reason. So imposter syndrome is a very real thing, and it can be subtle, and it can also sneak up on you. And essentially, essentially, for those that aren't familiar, perhaps are not familiar with imposter syndrome, but it's this feeling that you you know, snuck in that somebody has had, there was an accident, and you were accepted into graduate school by mistake, and that you are, you know, barely getting through it, but then one day you're going to be discovered as an imposter. So this is something that we create, you know, in ourselves for, for for mostly because of our experience in graduate school, but but it really is something that can be definitely inhibiting to your progress as a graduate student as you work through your program. And it's one thing that I found very challenging as an undergrad that I was able to overcome, but definitely as a graduate student, because it was 100% completely new world and it was very different than my my bachelor's degree.

Dani 10:52

Can I ask what worked for you to help you get over that feeling of imposter syndrome?

Miguel 10:56

So the one thing that I would say is that you never really get over it. And what helped me was a number of things. One thing that that really helped me is seeking out mentors and kind of looking for- looking to them for advice as to how to progress, how to, you know, make that next move in my career. But I think what really helped from my mentors is knowing that they still felt the imposter syndrome. I have two really good female professors as my mentors, you know, and they told me that they say "Yes, I, I feel that when I walk into the room, and I'm the only female." I mean, that's still there. So it's, it's reassuring for up and coming scientists to see that hey, you know what, this is something that you just have to deal with. You know, it particularly affects first generation students uniquely because you know, this is completely new to you. And also- so at the same time for underrepresented minority students, right URM students, it affects them because they don't generally see people like them around them, right, in ascendance or in a faculty position. So again, really kind of bolstering that, that idea that they don't belong. And I think that's what helped me a lot is relying on mentors for advice, finding a sense of belonging, and and the way that I did it, and a lot of my peers did it, is by finding some sort of organization, a sense of community on campus, that that will help you through those tough times. Because graduate school is incredibly hard, and it's, it's hard for everybody, you know, and I didn't realize that then but I know now that, you know, it's hard for everybody. But because, you know, some of my majority peers, their parents, or their friends or their their family have already gone to graduate school, they know that this challenge is temporary. And they'll, you know, they're bound to get over it. But for somebody that's never done it before it can seem like a insurmountable wall.

Dani 13:14

Yeah.

Miguel 13:15

And that's the difference. So so I think finding community and relying on mentors is critical to really try to be proactive about the imposter syndrome.

Dani 13:25

Yeah. And I think too, if you're able to find that community and then share with each other, if you have that safe space with that community, sharing with each other, like, "Hey, I feel like I don't do this well, or, like, I'm going to fail on this next thing." I know, that's definitely helped- helped me and my friends as well. But yeah, you're right. If you don't have that community as a first generation student or that support, it becomes much, much harder.

Miguel 13:49

Yeah, I mean, I agree. Absolutely.

Dani 13:51

And so you'd mentioned some of the the challenges that you've experienced, but what about some of the advantages?

Miguel 13:58

So So yes, Yeah, there's there's definitely challenges and I've experienced them a lot. You know, we've all kind of gone through them, one of- some of the advantages that I have really just recently kind of realized that first generation college students, URM students, experience or have when approaching graduate school, is there a couple but two of my top ones that I, that I thought of are that: so for me personally, when I was growing up, I come from a low SES or socio economic status family. That means that we didn't have much, right, we had limited resources. I attended a public school that had limited

funding. And when you are exposed to these lack of resources where you have to live and, and survive and thrive in these types of environments, you learn to become very resourceful. Right? So one of the arguments that I always have about, you know, "why should we care about diversity in STEM, why does it matter?" And the one thing that that I argue back or my, my counter argument is, there have been things that I've had to figure it out, figure out on my own because of my lived experiences. And one thing that one of my mentors said, is that when you have scarcity, when you have- when you lack resources, that is the best fuel for creativity. And for anybody that's done science, for anybody that's done any type of science, one of the most important things about really moving forward on a project is how creative can you get, how imaginative can you get, and trying to answer and trying to design a particular assay that's going to give you that information that you need to make the conclusion and kind of complete that story you're trying to answer.

So I think the resourcefulness is very very critical, and it's a benefit, especially from first generation URM students. And also one of the things that I found was beneficial for me was the kind of persistence that that I picked up along the way through. High school, you know, it was it was a challenge; through undergraduate, but the idea that this is something that's new, this is something that nobody my family's ever done before, but just kind of chugging along, right, and struggling through trying to ask for help when I could. But but the persistence and the grit that first generation students bring is really what you need and really is very valuable for graduate education. I would say that, that quantitated about 80 to 90% of the things you're going to do in graduate school, will not work. The- the experiment will not work, it will not give you the information you need. And a lot of graduate school I found is troubleshooting and trying to figure out the best way that will work. I think one of the- one of the important parts about graduate school is be persistent and understanding that a lot of things aren't going to work, especially the first time in having that experience. Having that lived experience of pushing through being, you know, just diligent with your work is just another advantage that first generation college students and your friends really bring as candidates to graduate school. So that's really what makes them uniquely qualified to take on these tough questions at science.

Dani 17:54

Yeah. And especially to I remember, you know, moving from undergrad to grad school. I had never really struggled and struggling for the first time in grad school feels awful. And it took me a long time to figure out how to struggle and not let it and not let it derail me. So if you have that grit already when you come through, yeah, I think that's absolutely an advantage. That's very interesting.

Miguel 18:22

So one of the things that that I did want to speak about, since we're, you know, while we're still on this topic, is this idea of, you know, what do first generation URM students, what do they bring to the table when it comes to graduate school? I realized not too long ago, actually. I realized this about a year and a half into my like, my training, was that there was a lot- there were a lot of things that I did as I was growing up, a lot of things that I learned. A lot of troubleshooting that I did, that I was able to apply to my technical, to my techniques, to my technical abilities as a graduate student, but had it not been for this these lived experiences, you know, I may have not over come those challenges as quickly. So, so essentially one of the- one of my main goals, as I talked to you, as I continue to really do science outreach is making the point that under- underrepresented minority science scientists, you aren't scientists, you're in STEM students are successful in science, not in spite of their their challenges and their obstacles in their life, but truly are successful in science because of those challenges. Right, those lived experiences have given them such novel perspective about problems and problem solving that make it- makes them incredibly, incredibly effective scientists. And I think that's the conversation we're

not having. I often will hear that, you know, we should care about diversity in STEM, or diversity in higher education, because it's the right thing to do. Right? We should care about diversity in STEM or in higher education, because it addresses a systemic exclusion of these groups, for decades, right, for centuries. And don't get me wrong. Those are all good reasons to care about diversity in STEM and in higher education. But I think a stronger argument can be made that if we don't get as many perspectives and as many different students solving the scientific problems, I think that the- that is the biggest disservice to the scientific enterprise. Right? So we're holding ourselves back if we don't do this, and I think that's, that's the conversation we should be having. It's all well and good, to be fair and to address discrepancies and disparities, but but really, this is what we need to do as a country to ensure that we stay as a top tier research country. And that, that is going to- that is going to take active recruitment of talented students from all different walks of life.

Dani 21:40

Yeah, absolutely. And it's um, the business world really has a market in terms of how they've studied this. They've shown that the more diverse and more inclusive that their companies are, the more money they make. Yeah, STEM needs to get on board because not only is it, you know, like you were saying kind of the morally right thing to do, but it makes sense because we're going to do better science. That's just a fact.

Miguel 22:08

Absolutely.

Dani 22:09

So we talked about how you found that being a first gen student has affected your experiences in graduate school, but how have you, how has that affected your experience outside of academia?

Miguel 22:22

So outside of academia, academia, going to graduate school has really been an interesting and and sometimes a little scary in terms of how it's changed me as an individual. As the first person to go to graduate school from my family, I have gone to school for longer than anybody in my family. [laughter] I forget what year of schooling I'm in but I'm in

Dani 22:49

Don't count, don't count!

Miguel 22:52

I am by years in school definition, the most educated person in my family So one thing that that is a little difficult to navigate it, and perhaps, you know, some of your listeners will be able to relate to this, but kind of navigating those two worlds of this is what you do in the academy. You know, this is how you think of the academy. This is how you approach a problem in the academy. And having that world coexists with your, you know, family. That, that may not have ever and had never had that exposure to the academy. So, I think, being comfortable with my identity, not only as a scientist, but as a Mexican American scientist, as somebody that has lived a very different, you know, upbringing than most of my peers in the academy, and has experienced a lot of different things in the academy, that most of my family members, but through, you know, throughout the years I've grown to take advantage of the education and everything that had been exposed to in, in the academy and try to bring it back to my community. I think that was one of the ways that I was able to consolidate that seemingly kind of contrary views. So so a lot of the information that I, that I've acquired throughout my education now, I

have tried to make it more accessible, right, make it less jargony and really try to communicate that to any and all family members that want to listen. So so I really enjoyed that aspect, kind of merging the the academy with my community and trying to make the science that I do in the academy more accessible to the community that come from them. So they can also benefit right from that knowledge. So I think I think that's the way that I've tried to consolidate those two and reconcile that conflict. It's worked. For me, that's been one of the biggest challenges. Absolutely: about being a first generation in graduate school, but outside of academia.

Dani 25:22

I was curious, when you bring kind of your science back to meet your community, are you are you speaking in Spanish to them? Or is it English? Or is it a mix?

Miguel 25:32

It's actually a mix. So I particularly don't really have a lot of experience with doing science in Spanish. It's something that that I really want to try to improve and then hopefully try to find an opportunity where I can maybe do research abroad in a Spanish speaking country. I think that would be very, very interesting. But But, no, generally when I take the science or try to bring something back to my community, to my family, to my my friends it's generally in a mixture of either Spanish and English, a combination of the two. And I'll try to try to describe it in Spanish, but then if there's a scientific word I don't know in Spanish, I'll revert to, to English.

Dani 26:17

Yeah, yeah, I have, um, me and my friend Maria Elise, we both have the same issue where we, we've never really spoken about our science in Spanish before. And so when we've tried we Yeah, we absolutely get tripped up on like, well, I don't know how to say that word in Spanish. So it's a science word. I've only ever said it in English. So yeah, so I was just curious about that. So what advice do you have for first gen students in grad school and beyond?

Miguel 26:45

So I think one of the biggest, one of the most important things about graduate school and succeeding in graduate school, from the perspective of a URM first generation students, is that one of the only ways that I was able to really push through the tough times and and get through candidacy was having a support system. And this can be a lot of different things for a lot of different people. For me, it meant finding a student organization that I really connected to that was composed of both undergraduate and graduate URM STEM students that were going through some of the similar experiences throughout their respective career trajectories. This organization is called SACNAS. Some of your listeners might be familiar with SACNAS, but SACNAS stands for the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, that is the largest minority STEM organization in the country. And it just, I think, turns 45 last year.

Dani 28:01

Oh, amazing.

Miguel 28:03

Yeah, so it's been around for a while. There is a chapter at The Ohio State University that I actually helped establish back in 2014. And it was this organization, actually was this organization that introduced the idea of being a doctor, when, when I helped establish the organization, I was actually a research assistant. So I was a technician. And I had been a technician for about two years at that point,

until I kind of stumbled across this organization. And through this organization, I was able to go to the National Conference in for that year, I think it was in DC. This was in 2015. Their their national conferences every October, November, and it's about a three to four day conference that kind of brings together science, culture and identity. One of the most unique conferences that I have ever been to. But at this conference, it was the first time that was actually able to see Mexican American and Native scientists being amazing, really excelling in their careers, being amazing and doing amazing, amazing, amazing research. And I remember actually very distinctly that it was during this conference that I realized that I could also do this. I was I was a research assistant at the time, and I was really enjoying my work. I was having fun in the lab, I was really kind of really, you know, just living the best life in the lab.

But that was said, I really hadn't considered, you know, pursuing any sort of advanced degree until I went to the conference and was introduced to such amazing people. The transformative conference, I came back I believe it was the first week of November. That I came back in 2015. And when it came back, I was so inspired, so motivated that I took the GRE in about a month. I got all my letters of recommendation in about a month, I applied to all the different schools and started graduate school about six months later.

Dani 30:19
Oh, wow.

Miguel 30:20

So it was this organization not only that inspired, you know, my my passion of science and, and introduced the idea of getting a PhD. But it was the chapter at Ohio State that was there through the tough times. So that's the number one thing that I would recommend to anybody, and especially first gen URM students going into graduate school, I think that the first thing you should do is search for a community. This can be a student organization. It can be a faith based organization. Some people are, you know, members of Greek letter organizations are good as well. But find a community, find a group of people that I refer to as your squad.

Dani 31:12
[laughter] Yeah!

Miguel 31:14

That I will be there through the good times through the bad times, that will be there to show you that it is going to get really hard, it is going to become very difficult, you are going to be asked to do things that not many people are asked to do. And that is solve a question that has never been solved before. Right? That is that is it's really difficult to really wrap your head around, you are creating knowledge for others to consume. Right. So so I think that really establishing yourself in a community that you feel supported, you feel loved. You feel how accountable i think is also important. And I think that would probably be the top recommendation that I would have. Close second and third would be one: definitely prioritize self care. So exercising. I know, I know you do. I believe weightlifting is that right?

Dani 32:18
Powerlifting, yeah.

Miguel 32:19

Powerlifting, right. So exercising, keeping your body in motion is very, very helpful meditation. Hobbies of any sort, kind of taking that time away from the lab away from science is important. And then the last bullet point that I think I wanted to mention, was be proactive about your mental health.

Dani 32:39

Yeah,

Miguel 32:39

Coming from a minority group, where mental health it is not really discussed. It's not really prioritized. It can be a little bit difficult to really begin that process, looking for a counselor, looking for somebody that really matches your needs, but being proactive about your mental health is just as important as going to your, you know, primary care physician, [Dani: yeah] and really honestly is going to be one of the best investments of your time is going to see somebody, going to talk to somebody about anything, it really doesn't matter. Initially, it doesn't matter. You just need to have a way, have an outlet for what's going to be going through your head, you know.

Dani 33:25

Yeah, and something I I learned recently, you don't even have to have something quote unquote, wrong, you know, but having someone that's completely outside of your everyday life that can see whatever you're talking about, from a totally different perspective is still incredibly helpful. Even if you just want to talk them about like, oh, work was crappy today. Why was it crappy? And then you explain and they're like, Well, that sounds like you're making progress even though it's hard like having- having that- you're speaking to my soul [thankful laughter]. At STEMculture Podcast, we often ask our guests, especially on our inSTEM episodes, how, how they think that the culture could be changed to make it better within STEM and STEM careers. So for you, you know, how can graduate schools help first gen students and first gen your students be successful?

Miguel 34:22

I think one of the most important things that graduate schools and individual graduate programs can do is making sure that all the resources are very clearly explained. Letting graduate students know exactly where to go in case or they're looking for the community that we spoke about. For you know, exercise facilities, mental health services. So I think that's, that's the the initial thing is to make sure that any and all resources that are there for the students are easily accessible, clear and concise and made available to students. In addition to that, I think graduate schools can also do a better job at discussing some of these very kind of taboo topics that I think we need to be having a conversation about. And three of the main ones that I think would be beneficial in creating an environment that is welcoming, right, that is belonging to traditionally underrepresented groups would be having some sort of workshop or seminar or about implicit bias, but I think that would be a very good thing to discuss and talk about what does that mean?

Dani 35:42

Yeah

Miguel 35:42

I think another topic that should be spearheaded in graduate programs, is the idea of micro aggressions, right? What are these small, seemingly insignificant things, and then let's look at the impact that they can have an individual. And let's have those tough conversations. And in addition to that, having a good idea of what it means to be culturally competent. So these are the main- these in my opinion are the

three main things that graduate schools or graduate programs can take the lead on and have those discussions. Have either a formal class where they discuss these- these things in the open and, you know, receptive environment so that people feel like, "Hey, you know what this is I'm not the only one feeling this, this is out, this is being talked about." And if there is some sort of misunderstanding, or if there is some sort of tension, then it's easier to have that follow up conversation. So I think those are some of the things that the graduate schools gr- graduate programs can get focus on, [Dani: Yeah] making resources readily available, and practice having these, these tough conversations about these very important topics.

Dani 37:04

Absolutely. And having having that be a conversation on purpose, and being able to really feel like you're in a safe space to be like, you know, "I don't understand what micro aggressions are and someone you know, someone got mad at me the other day" and, and being able to have that conversation helps so much and just like you're saying, practicing, and especially - I love all those suggestions a lot because I think in graduate school or in science and STEM, I think we often think, maybe subconsciously or consciously, that, "Oh, we're so rational, like, we don't have biases." We absolutely do. We're human like everybody else. And being aware of your biases is really the first step in being able to be like, "Oh, well, whoops, like I'm having that feeling now and so I can acknowledge it in my head and be aware." I love all those ideas a lot. Does the Ohio State have a diversity center?

Miguel 37:55

The Ohio State University has many departments and they do have an office of Diversity and Inclusion.

Dani 38:01

Okay

Miguel 38:01

It is an office that is under, I believe, the provost. But is an academic base office that's primary goal is to ensure that your students are properly supported so that they can attain- attain their degree. So they're very concerned about making sure that they are academically supported. And that's the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. There is also a multicultural center on campus, which falls under, I believe, student life, and that more so deals with identity and, kind of, sometimes having these conversations of of what it means to be Latino or Native, or you know, a woman in science and some of these conversations are where the Multicultural Center will- would actually be more involved. So there are two, there are two entities on campus that do help with with supporting those students.

Dani 39:02

Have you ever gotten- like do they put on events? Have you ever used any of their resources?

Miguel 39:06

Yeah, no, that we we actually have collaborated with ODI [Office of Diversity and Inclusion] and MCC [Multicultural Center]. And by we, I mean the Ohio State SACNAS chapter. Okay, we have we have done multiple events with both the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in the Multicultural Center in regards to how you are and succeed in STEM. So we've had speakers that we brought on campus, famous minority scientists that have done incredible things speak to students and know about different like networking things, professional development things. So yeah, we I liked the programming, it's, it's it's very supportive. I think they have a tall order on their plate just because there are so many students on

campus. And because there is a small percentage of minority students, it's a little difficult to actually reach out to them-

Dani 40:00
Yeah, okay

Miguel 40:01
-and capt- capture their attention but but they do offer year round programming on a variety of topics. ODI does a great job at putting on this, this programming for the students and MCC does does a really great job at doing a cross cultural support. So in the Multicultural Center, there are inter cultural specialists that maybe focus on the, you know, Latino community, when- we focus on the Native community and they do a lot of cross collaboration, which I think is beneficial.

Dani 40:35
You mentioned you help establish the SACNAS chapter at the Ohio - the Ohios State; how hard was that?

Miguel 40:41
It wasn't terribly hard to do the formal paperwork. I didn't do the paperwork itself. A previous Ohio State student did the paperwork and submitted it to the national organization and we got kind of a welcome kit. I think the I think the most difficult part was really increasing our presence and and showing that we as an organization were effective, we put on great programs. And we could and do act as that support community for these STEM students. So we have been on campus since, like I said, 2014. So we are, I believe, starting our fifth year now, and our membership is strong. We we have over 35 ish active members that generally come to the meetings, on you know, monthly meetings. We have list-servsthat are in the hundreds. So we have grown to really be a presence on campus. And the goal of the organization is to really be that support system for the students that need it. Professionally, personally, we are, we really want to be there for the students, right. So we want to see what we wish that we had before the chapter was not was not there.

Dani 42:03
Yeah, well I really liked that idea of having not only like the professional support, but the personal maybe cultural support in the same unit because having, you know, the diversity inclusion office, and then a separate Multicultural Center, like that's great, but really the two are combined, aren't they?

Miguel 42:20
Right, exactly. Yep, they are. They're intertwined.

Dani 42:24
Yeah.

Miguel 42:25
How you identify yourself and how you feel about who you are in this environment at the Ohio State, a predominantly white environment, it will will affect the way they do academically, will play a role in that kind of having those two work together, I think is very critical.

Dani 42:45

Yeah, absolutely. Well, Miguel, before we kind of finish up, we wanted to know: how can people follow up with you if they wanted to hear more about about you and SACNAS and the Ohio State and your life?

Miguel 42:59

Yeah. So the easiest way to follow up with me is, as you said before, I'm very active on Twitter. So you can find me on Twitter. My, my "at" name is, it's MIGZ and 614 [@Migz614]. You can just search for me on Twitter. Definitely there. Or you can also reach me via email, email is actually a very good way to get ahold of me actually, probably the only way to get ahold of me. and that is Lopez. L-O-P-E-Z dot 154 at osu.edu [Lopez.154@osu.edu].

Dani 43:39

Wonderful and we- we'll link that to our show notes so it'll be easy for people to to follow up with you.

Miguel 43:39

Fantastic.

Dani 43:40

We heard myself and Miguel chat about first generation students, about identity, advantages and challenges, advice and support. Thanks y'all so much for listening. Next time we'll be releasing part two of review Reviewers and rejections that we first released in season one episode 11 hear from Dr. needy Bala and Dr. Bill Matthews about their peer review experiences. You can find us on all the socials when you search STEMculture one word podcast and when in doubt, you can visit our website at STEMculture Podcast com for show notes, references and information about our guests and contributors and transcripts. To follow up with Miguel you can find him on twitter @Migz614. That's Migz, M-I-G-Z or zed, 6-1-4. Until next time, don't forget to consensually hug a grad student or at least buy them a coffee or pumpkin spice chatte boba milk tea. [Zach asks what a "chatte" is] you're a chatte. Chai latte.

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