



NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
CITY TECH
16 COURT STREET • SUITE 600 • BROOKLYN, NY 11241
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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Contact: Natalie Chepurniy
718.260.5031
Fax 718.260.8524
nchepurniy@citytech.cuny.edu

City Tech Civil Engineering Professor Earns 2018 Women of Color STEM Award

Brooklyn, NY—July 2, 2018—Melanie Villatoro, Assistant Professor of Construction Management and Civil Engineering Technology at New York City College of Technology (City Tech), will receive the Educational Leadership Award at the 23rd Women of Color STEM conference in Detroit on October 13, 2018.

According to Career Communications Group Inc. (CCG), which organizes the conference, the Women of Color STEM awards recognize outstanding women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, focusing on the contributions they have made to address the challenges of gender harassment, gender bias, discouragement and overall lack of support in the STEM workforce. This year's conference theme, "Press for Progress," reflects the global push for gender parity.

National Chair of the 23rd Women of Color STEM conference Monica Emerson says, "Melanie Villatoro was selected because she is among an extraordinary group of forward-thinking STEM experts. This year the candidates were the strongest and represented the most diverse collection of professionals we have had the pleasure of evaluating."

Villatoro enrolled at the Albert Nerken School of Engineering at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, where she was the only Hispanic student in her civil engineering class. In 2002, she graduated with her Bachelor of Engineering degree in Civil Engineering. She worked full time while pursuing her Master of Science degree, which she received from Columbia University in 2005. During her career in consulting with DMJM Harris and Langan Engineering and Environmental Services she provided engineering design services for residential and commercial developments in the NYC area. She is a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of New York.

Despite her many professional achievements, Villatoro longed for the opportunity to make a difference for New York City youth. Inspired by her brother's dedication to NYC youth as a social worker, she obtained a civil engineering Assistant Professor position at City Tech, making her the first female Hispanic full-time faculty member in the Department of Construction Management and Civil Engineering Technology at the College. During her eight years there, Villatoro has mentored and advised many students; she has, and continues to, make a difference in many lives—inside and outside the university. Not surprisingly, given her professional accomplishments and her outstanding impact on the community, Villatoro received tenure at City Tech in 2017.

Villatoro's approach to teaching builds on developing rapport with her students. She is highly effective in the classroom and as an advisor and mentor. She is involved in many projects within the College focused on student retention, first year experience and academic success. One of these initiatives is a grant-funded project (about \$150,000 per annum) that, via career seminars for women, peer mentoring, faculty development and community outreach, aims to increase retention of female students across six departments in the School of Technology and Design. Prof. Villatoro also coordinates the Peer Led Team Learning (PLTL) program, a pedagogical approach allowing students to participate in workshops facilitated by peer leaders, and has worked with the Faculty Learning Center since 2016 to provide faculty development for her colleagues across the university.

Moreover, Villatoro is passionate about outreach in STEM from the elementary to the high school level. Her outreach events target under-represented groups in STEM, with the goal of increasing the number of diverse qualified students entering the fields of STEM, particularly engineering. For multiple years, Villatoro has secured about \$80,000 in funding from the Federal Highway Administration to provide a summer program for high school students to strengthen STEM skills and provide exposure to transportation related careers. She also hosts an annual event for high school girls to provide exposure to STEM majors. In addition, since 2014, she has coordinated STEM outreach at Daniel Hale Elementary School, providing civil engineering lesson plans, afterschool programs, and family workshops to their students.

Throughout her career, Villatoro has filled leadership roles in the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), Metropolitan Section branch and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE), NYC branch. Currently, she is the secretary of the ASCE Committee on Faculty Development, a national committee recognized as a leader in faculty development for ABET accredited civil engineering programs.

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About City Tech (New York City College of Technology) City Tech, of The City University of New York, is the largest four-year public college of technology in the Northeast and a national model for technological education. City Tech has an enrollment of more than 17,000 students in 29 baccalaureate and 27 associate degree programs and was recently ranked ninth among more than 2,000 U.S. institutions in overall economic mobility for its students (www.equality-of-opportunity.org). For more information, visit www.citytech.cuny.edu.

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Photo: Melanie Villatoro

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