

Mathematician Erika Camacho receives national, local awards

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Erika Tatiana Camacho, assistant professor of mathematics in ASU's [New College of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences](#), is the 2012 recipient of the Distinguished Undergraduate Institution Mentor Award from SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos & Native Americans in Science). She will receive the award Oct. 11 at the SACNAS National Conference in Seattle.

Camacho also is among the recipients of the 2012 40 Hispanic Leaders Under 40 Award, sponsored by Wells Fargo. She and the other award winners are being honored at an Oct. 3 luncheon in Phoenix. This is the sixth annual 40 Hispanic Leaders Under 40 Awards event, organized by Univision Radio–Phoenix and Valle del Sol to honor and promote excellence in leadership and community service.

Camacho said she appreciates the recognition from SACNAS for having made a difference in the lives of numerous students through her mentoring, “because I want to do for them what my mentor did for me, create opportunities that allowed me to get out of poverty, empower myself and be where I am today.”

Camacho had a well-known first mentor, the legendary high school math teacher Jaime Escalante, who was the subject of the 1988 film “Stand and Deliver.” Camacho expected to become a store cashier until she took algebra with Escalante in East Los Angeles. She went on to earn a PhD in applied mathematics at Cornell University.

“In academia, research is often what gets counted first with mentoring being an afterthought,” Camacho said. “This is unfortunate because it is through mentoring, especially of diverse and underrepresented groups, that we will bring about equality and permanent change in our society and make our nation strong and sustainable. Careful, genuine and intensive mentoring takes a significant amount of time that usually only the mentors themselves can understand and appreciate. It is extremely important to



ASU's Erika Camacho has earned national recognition for her work mentoring students. She is continuing the legacy of her first mentor, legendary high school math teacher Jaime Escalante.

always let our passions and dreams be guided by the needs of others, and mentoring allows me to do this.”

“Erika’s recognitions from within and outside of academe are fitting recognition of her extraordinary efforts to bring underrepresented groups of students into the mathematical sciences,” said Roger Berger, director of the school.

The 40 Hispanic Leaders Under 40 Awards are designed to celebrate the accomplishments of Arizona recipients and their contributions and commitments to communities across the state.

“The reports have been coming out for years describing how abysmal the U.S. is doing in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and math) in comparison to many other countries in the world,” Camacho said. “And we still don’t seem to get it – so much emphasis is placed on business and entrepreneurship without a comparable investment in the overall education of our society. It was very satisfying to see that Univision and Valle del Sol recognize the contributions of someone in academia for her mentoring of others and her research in STEM. It is truly an honor to be recognized by my community because their support means a lot to me.”

Camacho teaches classes including Calculus (MAT 210, 211, and 271), Modern Differential Equation (MAT 275) and Mathematical Models in Biology (MAT 450) for the [School of Mathematical and Natural Sciences](#) in New College, the core college on [ASU’s West campus](#). Her scholarly work has been published in journals including The Journal of Theoretical Biology, Mathematical Biosciences and Engineering, Theoretical Computer Science, and International Journal of Solids and Structures.

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