GeoLatinas: Fostering an inclusive community to embrace, empower and inspire Latinas in Earth and Planetary Sciences

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Earth and Planetary Sciences are characterized by a lack of gender and ethnic diversity across job sectors, particularly in academia and industry. This imbalance is not representative of current demographic distributions, neither of the general population at large nor the people completing tertiary education in these fields. Gender and ethnic diversity is correlated with improved performance and productivity: in academia as better indicators of research quality and successful grant applications; in industry as higher long-term profitability and better public perception of their corporate values. Despite this, the change has been slow in persuading institutions and companies to create systemic changes to harness this potential.

Obstacles for inclusion are further amplified for Latinas who, after completing their degrees, navigate professional environments lacking representation and retention, prone to less promotion and access to opportunities. To address these issues, GeoLatinas was created with the mission to embrace, empower, and inspire Latinas worldwide to pursue and thrive in Earth and Planetary Science careers.

GeoLatinas is a member-driven, circular organization, composed of six key and interactive groups: the (i) GeoLatinas Leadership Council (GLC) formed of active leaders and volunteers, further subdivided into six committees working on particular initiatives; (ii) GeoLatinas Ambassadors (GAs), representing regions, identifying local issues and needs, and leading local events and initiatives; (iii) GeoLatinas Local Teams (GLTs), adapting the GeoLatinas mission and objectives to universities and workplaces; (iv) Liaisons, acting as supporters and collaborators representing other societies from our geo-community; (v) Advisory Committee, formed of experienced women and men in academia and industry; and (vi) Board of Directors, also representing academia and industry.

Facilitated by social media and real-time communication technology, GeoLatinas has become an important networking platform not only for Latinas, but for other demographics for which our
mission and objectives resonate. One year after its creation, GeoLatinas has 145 members in 24 countries (72% in academia and 17% in industry). In this presentation, we will share some of our experiences, describing how our initiatives have increased visibility of the talent and potential of Latinas in Earth and Planetary sciences, consequently increasing their access to opportunities, jobs and awards. Furthermore, we will show our impact in encouraging younger generations to identify different career paths, scholarships, research opportunities or jobs. Lastly, we will present key challenges and lessons learned, along with plans to improve long term diversity, inclusion, and retention across sectors in Earth and Planetary disciplines.