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**Rockland Community College’s Virginia Mel**é**ndez Selected for   
SUNY Hispanic Leadership Institute**

**[SUFFERN, NY] November 17, 2023 —** [Rockland Community College](http://sunyrockland.edu/) (RCC) takes immense pride in announcing that Dr. Virginia Meléndez, RCC Director of Strategic Initiatives, has been named a Fellow in the 2024 cohort of the prestigious [State University of New York](https://www.suny.edu/) (SUNY) Hispanic Leadership Institute (HLI).

[HLI](https://www.suny.edu/hli/) champions the development of Hispanic/Latinx leaders, providing a nurturing ground for their professional advancement through a variety of leadership activities, personal and group exercises, and mentorship from high-ranking Hispanic leaders. Beginning in January 2024, the six-month program will facilitate a combination of in-person and virtual engagements designed to foster leadership skills and collaborative endeavors.

SUNY's mission statement for HLI succinctly conveys their values and purpose: to identify, foster, and support the development and retention of current and emerging Hispanic/Latinx leaders for an increasingly diverse university system and nation.

“Leadership is not just about the individual; it's about the collective journey towards a brighter future. I am honored to have this opportunity to collaborate with our new cohort of distinguished Hispanic leaders within the SUNY system,” said [Dr. Meléndez](https://sunyrockland.edu/about/senior-administration/), RCC Director of Strategic Initiatives. "Together, we can make a meaningful impact and build a more inclusive tomorrow."

[Dr. Meléndez](https://sunyrockland.edu/about/senior-administration/) holds an Ed.D. in Higher Education Administration from Saint Peter’s University. She leads RCC's efforts in [Hispanic Serving Institution](https://sunyrockland.edu/about/hsi/) (HSI) initiatives and actively collaborates with national organizations like HACU and Excelencia in Education. With over two decades of higher education administration experience and recognized leadership roles, she brings invaluable expertise to her position at RCC.

"We are thrilled to announce that Dr. Virginia Meléndez has been selected as a SUNY Hispanic Leadership Institute Fellow," said [Dr. Lester Rápalo](http://sunyrockland.edu/president), President of RCC. "This prestigious fellowship reflects not only Dr. Meléndez's outstanding leadership qualities but also RCC's commitment to supporting emerging Hispanic leaders and fostering a collaborative environment for their professional growth."

The fellowship with HLI not only honors Dr. Meléndez’s individual accomplishments but also signifies RCC's larger mission to champion diversity and inclusivity within the leadership landscape.

[RCC's](http://sunyrockland.edu/) recognition as an [HSI](https://sunyrockland.edu/about/hsi/) by the U.S. Department of Education is a testament to the college's dedication to embracing and uplifting Hispanic culture. With a third of RCC's student body identifying as Hispanic, the institution remains steadfast in offering specialized programming and support to enhance their educational experience.

"Through this fellowship, RCC continues its mission to actively promote diversity, equity, and inclusivity in leadership, both within our college and in the wider community,” said Dr. Rápalo. “We are dedicated to nurturing a more diverse and equitable future for all."

**About Rockland Community College**

Rockland Community College (RCC), located in Suffern New York, provides purpose driven educational opportunities in a supportive, affordable, and accessible environment, empowering individuals to positively transform themselves and their communities. RCC welcomes students from diverse backgrounds who appreciate small class sizes and personal attention from a distinguished, award-winning faculty that includes Fulbright scholars and SUNY Distinguished Professors. Many graduates go on to top universities to further their education on their own or through RCCs institutional collaborations.

RCC is also proud to provide career training and professional development to adult learners looking to change careers or upgrade their skills through a variety of programs and educational opportunities including workforce training, certifications, and microcredentials. Many of the programs are developed with employers in the community in high demand industry areas to enable graduates to move into a new career upon graduation. More information can be found at [sunyrockland.edu.](https://sunyrockland.edu/)

**About the SUNY Hispanic Leadership Institute:**

The SUNY Hispanic Leadership Institute focuses on developing and supporting Hispanic/Latinx leaders through advocacy, education, and leadership development opportunities across the SUNY system.

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