

College to unveil new campus STEM hub, welcome special guests

BAYTOWN, TX — Lee College will celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month and national Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) next week with the grand opening of a new campus hub for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and special guest appearances from artist and author Marlon “Marley” Lizama and entrepreneur and recording artist Stefani Vara.

The kickoff for the HSI Week festivities will be the unveiling of the newly renovated STEM Hub at 11:30 a.m., Monday, Sept. 18, in Moler Hall. Funded by a multimillion-dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the original STEM center opened in 2013 to provide students with a dedicated space on campus to use the Internet and printing, receive free tutoring and meet with study groups. The new hub is also funded through the federal HSI STEM grant, which is designed to increase awareness, enrollment and completion of STEM degrees among Hispanic students and other underserved populations.

Lizama — a poet, writer, author and dancer who focuses on the cultural aspect of writing and the arts — will be the special guest speaker at 9:30 and 11 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 19, in the Rundell Hall Conference Center. He is currently the program director of Iconoclast Artist, a creative writing program that focuses on underserved schools and juvenile detention centers. He has published two student anthologies of poetry through Iconoclast and is also the author of “Cue the Writer: Cheers to the Notion of Love, Hate, God and Revolution,” a collection of short stories and poetry from a young immigrant’s perspective. The recipient of the 2015 John P. McGovern Award for his work in the community with the arts, Lizama has traveled to more than 40 countries to advance his mission of using the arts as a tool to connect with others and change lives and perspectives.

Vara will be the special guest for two “Follow My Feet” sessions at 9 and 11 a.m., Wednesday, Sept. 20, in the Rundell Hall Conference Center. An entrepreneur, professional foot model and recording artist who was raised by fierce Latina women in humble surroundings in Baytown, she has learned that her voice is her strongest asset and life is about diving headfirst into the unknown to blaze your own trail. Now committed to using her varied life experiences to give back to her community, Vara shares her personal journey in her “Follow My Feet” campaign to encourage others to realize their dreams are achievable and nothing is beyond their reach.

HSI Week at Lee College will also include a bash and informational table at the Student Center and gazebo; games of loteria, or Mexican bingo; an open mic session; and the “What’s Your Label” panel discussion hosted by the MAS Raza Collective student organization. All events and activities are free and open to the public. For a full schedule, visit www.lee.edu. For more information, contact Daisy Aramburo at 832.556.4026 or daramburo@lee.edu.