Welcome to the Spring 2025 edition of the HETS Online Journal!

This edition of the Journal features a variety of articles in keeping with the HETS mission of supporting institutions in their quest to enhance Hispanic student success and opportunities in higher education.

In their article entitled "Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences' Influence on STEM Belonging," authors Kristen Faye Linton, Blair S. Barker, Jasmine M. Betka, and Thomas A. Clobes examine the effects of Course-Based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) on STEM belonging among students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Using a pre- and post-intervention survey with 115 participants across four health sciences courses, the study measured belonging in STEM subfields (science, technology, engineering, and math) using the Student Attitudes Toward Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S-STEM) scale.

Reinforcement learning from feedback is an innovative technique in machine learning, enhancing artificial intelligence (AI) model training. Elizabeth Díaz Rodríguez, in "RLHF y RLAIF, Revolución Silenciosa de la Retroalimentación Educativa," compares two key approaches: RLHF (Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback) and RLAIF (Reinforcement Learning from AI Feedback) and suggests that the complementary frameworks can synergistically improve machine learning processes.

Marcos Torres-Nazario, author of "-La población y matrícula universitaria de Puerto Rico: Años 2013 al 2023," updates information on the population of Puerto Rico and its impact on enrollment in institutions of higher education to include data through Fall 2023. The data indicates that if the population and university enrollment declines continue, in the coming years fundamental adjustments in the composition of Puerto Rico's institutions of higher education will be necessary.

"Breve inventario de los programas educación a distancia en Puerto Rico al 2024," seeks to inform the country's academic community about the distance learning offerings licensed by the Board of Postsecondary Institutions (JIP) for August 2024. In this article, Marcos Torres-Nazario provides information on offerings including professional certificates and graduate and postgraduate degrees, as well as associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

In "Introducing the COTE Framework: A Practical Guide for Faculty," Ana Marjanovic and Carlos Guevara introduce readers to the Compass of Online Teaching Excellence (COTE) Framework, a structured, research-based resource developed by Hostos EdTech to enhance online course quality, foster student engagement, and support inclusive learning environments. COTE provides faculty with practical tools and checklists aligned with institutional policies and best pedagogical practices, integrating Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, accessibility standards, and evolving modalities such as hybrid, HyFlex, and AI-enhanced learning.

Lisbel M. Correa-Suárez and Yaniz A. Rodríguez Amaro, in "Redefiniendo la Ansiedad Académica en la Educación a Distancia: Estrategias Innovadoras para Crear Ambientes de Aprendizaje Más Sostenibles y Humanizados," examines academic anxiety, a phenomenon

widely experienced by distance education students. This article delves into the causes of anxiety within the virtual learning environment, addressing how technological and pedagogical challenges can impact student well-being.

"Accesibilidad e Inclusión: Asegurando el Derecho a la Información y la Comunicación para las Personas Sordas," by Ada Norely López Santiago and Lisbel M. Correa-Suárez, presents a descriptive analysis of the urgent need to develop inclusive tools that facilitate the labor integration of deaf individuals in the food industry. Based on the universal right to work, it emphasizes the lack of resources and sign language training programs tailored to this sector, which limits this population's equitable access to the labor market.

As always, we hope that you find inspiration in these articles that will facilitate the success of students at your institution.

Have a wonderful summer!