

Calixto Sáenz

*Director, Microfluidics/Microfabrication Core Facility, Harvard Medical School*

Calixto Sáenz is the director of the Microfabrication/Microfluidics Core Facility at Harvard Medical School, a facility dedicated to providing specialized scientific support and services in the microfluidics field for bio-applications to undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and researchers of Harvard University, as well as affiliated institutions, other universities, and startup companies.

Originally from Cartagena, Colombia, Sáenz showed promise in academia at a young age, along with a driving pursuit of knowledge and an inquisitive mind toward research. The groundwork for his future path was laid forth by the unwavering support of his parents, who supported, nurtured, and cultivated an environment of opportunities. Sáenz received scholarships to Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar and achieved two *cum laude* honors bachelor degrees in Electronics and Automatic Control Engineering and Electrical Engineering with a Laureate thesis. As a result of these successes, he was ultimately able to pursue his dream to continue his graduate school education in the United States at the University of Massachusetts (UMass) Lowell.

While attending the Plastics Engineering graduate program at UMass Lowell, Sáenz joined Harvard University in 2007 as a full-time cashier at Courtyard Café in Harvard Medical School where he could be seen studying daily while he worked. His drive to accomplish more led him to reach out to the Harvard Bridge Program center, which helped him to get a part-time internship in the IT department. All this was noticed by the executive director of systems biology, Becky Ward, who was impressed by his intensity and desire to learn, and invited him to apply for a job as a research assistant in the recently established Systems Biology Microfluidics Core Facility at Harvard Medical School. Sáenz moved his way up to become a full-time researcher. In 2012, after finishing his Masters Degree and taking several classes at Harvard Extension School in the Bioengineering and Nanotechnology graduate program, he was appointed to his current position as director of the facility.

Under Sáenz's leadership, the facility offers a range of advanced specialized services, including training consultations, collaborations, and assistance with complex projects. Sáenz also successfully applied for grants that have helped the facility expand its services and provide better support for the researchers in Harvard's biomedical research community.

Through all Sáenz's success, he never lost sight of his humble beginnings. Toni Morrison said it best, "When you get these jobs you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that, if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have the power, then your job is to empower somebody else." Four years ago, inspired by his journey at Harvard, Sáenz took the initiative to start an internship program intended to mentor and provide opportunities to underrepresented minorities and low-income students attending community college in the field of biotechnology, biology, and engineering. Interns work as an integral part of the microfabrication staff team and gain professional experience in their fields. Since its inception,

seven students from modest financial backgrounds and of different ethnic and socioeconomic statuses have graduated from the program. Their experience at Harvard has opened up a world of possibilities and helped them progress toward their professional goals.

Sáenz is an experienced world traveler with a desire to learn about the different cultures around our world. He also is an avid volleyball player, and was a member of his born state track and field and Taekwondo team.