Before coming to the US, Joel grew up in Mexico City in a Chinese household, where his family owned a small Mexican eatery/restaurant in downtown. Growing up, he was not aware of the possibility of doing science for a living, until he started participating in science olympiads, eventually representing Mexico in several International Chemistry Olympiads in Caracas, Mumbai, Groningen, and Athens (2000-2003) and getting a silver medal in the latter. These experiences influenced him enormously and opened many doors, the most important one being that after graduating from a public high school (UNAM), he applied to college at MIT and got accepted there. By virtue of his upbringing in Mexico, Joel's primary ethnic identity is probably Hispanic, although he believes that his Chinese background makes him relate to the Asian American community too. As a gay man, Joel also believes it is important to be out in his field, especially considering the lack of LGBT representation in the "hard" sciences. In his free time, Joel enjoys cooking (Chinese, Mexican, and many other cuisines), exercising, reading fiction, and watching independent films. Joel enjoys the inclusive spirit of science although he believes there is still a long way to go for underrepresented minorities, and is committed to work with SACNAS to promote further visibility and recruitment of Hispanic and Native American individuals into the sciences.

*Snacks will be provided*