

BU Holds First Latin American Alumni Summit

On the agenda: global roles for the region and the University

THE GUESTS TALKED about self-driving cars, thriving economies, surging urbanization, and political storm clouds from Washington.

Boston University's first Latin American Alumni Summit brought more than 160 alumni and friends of the University to the East, Miami hotel in March to discuss Latin America's ascending profile and its influence on global politics, as well as to bond around two commonalities: Hispanic heritage and BU.

"I just think it's fantastic that Boston University is reaching out beyond Commonwealth Avenue and bringing the best of the best to have these conversations and educate a lot of these alums," said Maurice R. Ferré (CGS'81, MED'92, SPH'92), a Boston University trustee.

Alumni from a dozen countries, among them Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Colombia, as well as US citizens of Latin American heritage, came to learn, to celebrate at a gala dinner, and to forge stronger connections with one another and the University through networking events with BU deans, professors, and other alumni. The summit was cosponsored by the BU Alumni Association and the Frederick S. Pardee School of Global Studies.

"This is really a landmark event," University President Robert A. Brown said in his welcoming remarks. "We are more global today than we ever have been as a university."

Ferré said he hopes the event will be a beginning for the region's alumni. "I think we can contribute a lot," he said. "The reach into Latin America will become more and more important. And Miami is an important



University trustee Maurice R. Ferré (CGS'81, MED'92, SPH'92) applauded the first Latin American Alumni Summit in Miami as the real start of the University's outreach to an ever-more-important community.

crossroads. Holding this event here is just a reflection of the pulse of this city."

Ferré, CEO and chair of the board of INSIGHTTEC, and his wife, Maria Dolores Ferré, served on the host committee for the summit. Their daughter is a sophomore in the College of General Studies, and several other family members are BU alumni. Ferré's father, Maurice A. Ferré, who also attended the event, is a former six-term Miami mayor. His late grandfather Jose Ferré (Questrom'24) was a longtime BU trustee.

Carlos Rey (Questrom'13) attended the summit with his father, Miguel Rey.

"It's nice having the University host an environment where we can come and talk about Latin America," said Carlos Rey. Rey was born in Colombia, moved to the Miami area with his family when he was eight,

and now works in Manhattan as a supervisor in analytics for Havas Media.

"To see what that next step of development is for Latin America and what opportunities are present is interesting for someone who never really got to experience those things firsthand," he said. "Seeing it as a college graduate and an adult is different."

Andrea Desosa (CAS'10) and Kelyn Sas-Rodriguez (CGS'08, CAS'10) grew up in different parts of Florida, met at BU, and became good friends. Now both work in New York City, Desosa for Bloomberg in electronic trading sales, and Sas-Rodriguez as a relationship manager and credit service underwriter for BNY Mellon.

The summit "brings you back to why you went to BU," Desosa said. "It's an international community, and it's great to see they're still doing it, and it's

great to see older alumni who keep those values.”

“If you’re a student, you have all these opportunities that you should be able to use, like tools in your toolbox,” said Sas-Rodriguez. “And being an alum, I don’t think you should just stop using them. This is a really good place to stop and rethink, what can I still offer BU? And what can BU still offer me?”

In a Saturday panel discussion, Latin America’s recent boom and its economic future were examined by Alfonso Baigorri Escandon (CAS’92), managing director and wealth adviser for J. P. Morgan, Ana Maria Carrasquilla (LAW’02), chair of the board and executive president

Keynote speaker Adil Najam, dean of the Pardee School of Global Studies, talked about Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, Brexit, and the rising tide of nationalist movements around the world.



“We are more global today than we ever have been.”

of Fondo Latinoamericano de Reservas, and Serge Elkiner, CEO and cofounder of the mobile payment and banking company YellowPepper, along with moderator Kevin Gallagher, a Pardee School professor of global development policy and a College of Arts & Sciences professor.

Sandro Galea, Robert A. Knox Professor and dean of the School of Public Health, moderated a panel on smarter and healthier cities. He kicked it off with a couple of important statistics: since 2010, more than half of the world’s population has lived in cities, and by 2025, 90 percent of Latin America’s population will be urban.

“If we are interested in building a better world,” Galea said, “the best return on investment” is investing in cities.

Public transportation and self-driving cars, adequate water, and affordable housing were major topics for Galea and panelists Maurice A. Ferré and Carlos Hernandez Topete (Questrom’08),

founder and executive director of microfinance group Fundación en Vía and a community leader in Oaxaca, Mexico. Ferré put the whole conversation in perspective by noting that in 50 years, much of Miami will be underwater, making climate change the most important challenge facing the city.

Thomas Fiedler (COM’71), dean of the College of Communication, moderated a conversation on media in Latin America with panelists Carlos Bardasano (Questrom’94, COM’97), senior vice president of original content at Univision, Luis San Martin (Questrom’02), CEO of SM Group, Adam Levy (COM’84,’86), vice president and general manager of CBS Television stations WFOR and WBFS in Miami, and Melissa Adan (COM’14),

a reporter for NBC’s WTVJ South Florida.

Keynote speaker Adil Najam, dean of the Pardee School and a CAS professor of international relations and of earth and environment, focused on President Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, Brexit, and the rising tide of nationalist movements.

“The market for authoritarianism is really hot,” Najam said. “Half of the world’s population, two-thirds of the world’s economy, and three-quarters of the world’s military are controlled by what you would call strongmen. A number of them, it seems, are itching for a small, manageable war.”

In the afternoon, Najam joined Galea and Ann Cudd, dean of Arts & Sciences and a professor of philosophy, on the panel Building Global Citizenship: The Role of the University, moderated by Jean Morrison, University provost and chief academic officer.

“The idea of globalism is being contested because it has become a serious idea,” Najam told the audience. “When ideas become serious, there is a pushback. They become a threat. But this is not a train that is going to move backwards. We don’t know exactly which direction it is going to go in, but that is the world our students are going to inherit. And that is the world we need to train them for.” **JOEL BROWN**

Kelyn Sas-Rodriguez (left) (CGS’08, CAS’10) and Andrea Desosa (CAS’10) grew up in different parts of Florida, met at BU, and became good friends. They now work in New York City and attended the Latin American Alumni Summit in Miami together.

