Ray Mellado is the founder and Chairman of the Board of Great Minds in STEM™ (Formerly HENAAC), a national 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to keeping America technologically strong by promoting Science, Technology, Engineering and Math careers in underserved communities. The mission of Great Minds in STEM™ (GMiS) is: To inspire and motivate underserved students to pursue careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM); To enlighten and engage families, educators, communities and employers to assist underserved students pursuing STEM careers; To inspire our nation through recognition of the achievements of Hispanics and other role models in STEM; To enable and leverage Hispanic STEM talent to play a leadership role; And to collaborate and cooperate nationally within the STEM community. Mellado served as CEO of GMiS until 2015.

GMiS began to pursue this mission through its annual HENAAC conference, now entering its 28th year. In recent years, the organization has also developed educational programs like the Hall of Fame, the College Bowl, Viva Technology™, and STEM-Up™.

In 2000, Great Minds in STEM introduced the College Bowl, an innovative, competitive two-day workshop for college students preparing to enter engineering careers. In 2001, it launched Viva Technology, a year-round K-12 educational program designed to introduce pre-college students to the exciting careers in science, engineering and technology. In 2009 Great Minds in STEM launched STEM-Up, the first initiative of its kind to bring Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math college and career pathways into schools and underserved communities. And in 2015, GMiS acquired MentorNet, a paradigm shattering virtual online mentoring service to connect more STEM students with professional mentors in related fields.

Before establishing Great Minds in STEM in 1989, Mellado enjoyed a distinguished 21-year career in the private sector as a marketing and sales executive with the Xerox Corporation. From the very earliest years of his professional life, he took active leadership roles in the Hispanic community. In 1977, as a rising star on Xerox’s marketing and sales team, Mellado joined a group of pioneers and established the Hispanic Association for Professional Advancement (HAPA), one of the first Hispanic Employee Associations in Corporate America. HAPA was proud to have him serve as one of its founding presidents. In his spare time, Mellado coached football at the high school, community college and college level for 17 years.

Mellado has been the recipient of several awards. Most recently he received the 2009 NASA Exceptional Public Service Medal. This award is limited to less than 1% of the contractor workforce. He received this medal for outstanding contributions to NASA’s mission in honoring and documenting the success of outstanding Hispanic American professionals, including NASA engineers, scientists and astronauts. In addition, Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations, presented Mr. Mellado with the inaugural Admiral David Farragut Hispanic Diversity Champion Award at the annual Association of Naval Service Officers (ANSO) Conference in 2010. And in 2013, Ray and his wife Carmela were inducted in the HENAAC Hall of Fame.

Today Mellado continues to serve as the Chairman of the Board of Great Minds in STEM. He is also active on various boards and committees. He is a member of the NASA Ad Hoc Task Force on STEM Education, which reports directly to NASA Administrator, Charles Bolden. He serves on the Boards of both the California State Summer School for Mathematics and Science (COSMOS), a residential academic experience for top high school students in mathematics and science from the UC System, as well as the Foundation for the Advancement of Science Education (FASE), producers of award-winning educational products that have earned three Peabody Awards. Mellado is also an officer of the Pasadena chapter of the National Football Foundation, and the Alumni Association of Cathedral High School of Los Angeles, his alma mater.

In recent years, Mellado has served on many important STEM-related boards and committees, including: the Executive Advisory Council for the College of Engineering, Computer Science and Technology at California State University Los Angeles (CSULA); the National Academy of Engineering’s Action Forum on Diversity, a group chartered to work with the Academy to increase the number of women and under represented minorities in engineering; the US Navy’s Diversity Senior Advisory Group (DSAG reporting to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO); the Advisory Board of the Association of Naval Service Officers (ANSO), an organization dedicated to Hispanic officer recruitment and retention.

Mellado was born and raised in Los Angeles, California, where he attended Cathedral High School, East Los Angeles College, and Whittier College. He and his wife, Carmela, have been married for 45 years and have three grown children and 4 grandchildren.