

**PUERTO RICAN/LATIN AMERICAN CULTURAL CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY 2007-2008**

MISSION STATEMENT

The Puerto Rican/Latin American Cultural Center's mission is to improve the status of Latinos and to promote awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the richness and diversity of Latinos and Latin American cultures. PRLACC works independently and collaboratively with University departments and community organizations to sponsor educational and cultural programs, provide services and leadership opportunities, foster connections, and educate the University and extended community about Latino issues. Our services and programs seek to enhance and support student, faculty, and staff recruitment and retention, as well as enrich the multicultural climate of our community.

HIGHLIGHTS

The 2007-2008 year was a busy year at PRLACC. The Center was the primary sponsor or co-sponsor of a wide variety of programs and events, which included guest authors and speakers, courses, films, trainings, lectures, artistic performances, conferences, and workshops. The Center *sponsored and co-sponsored 172 programs and activities, which served 13,640 students, staff, faculty, alumni, and community members*. We also have had a dramatic increase in the number of visitors, as well as the use of our space by University departments, students, staff, faculty, and student organizations.

One of the Center's biggest successes continues to be METAS, our peer-mentoring program. We are delighted to report that METAS, one of approximately fifty peer education programs at UConn, *received the Program of the Year Award*. We also conducted focus groups and individual interviews to assess the program and guide future directions.

The Center *worked with the UConn Foundation to complete the second annual appeal*. More than 30 alumni and community organizations donated to support our mission and programs. As a result, *we continued the PRLACC Scholarship Award*, which honors UConn student(s) who advance the role and contributions of Latinos in society. In May, during the Recognition Banquet, we announced two recipients of the award for the 2008-2009 academic year. Scholarship recipients demonstrated involvement with and commitment to Latino issues through leadership and service to the community at UConn and beyond.

The Center *served on the Association of Latina/o Faculty & Staff's executive board and continued to provide support*. The association is instrumental in building a support system for Latino faculty and staff at UConn. This year, a working group was formed to develop a report on the status of Latinos at UConn, which will be presented to the University community. ALFAS also *held monthly meetings at PRLACC and sponsored the 3rd Annual Latino Faculty and Staff Luncheon with keynote speaker Mayor John DeStefano*.

Approximately *20 work-study and student labor students were hired in 2007-08*. The student staff is a diverse group of students representing 14 countries and a variety of majors and class standings. In order to build community, we continued to make improvements in the professional and personal development of our student staff. We collaborated with the other Cultural Centers to sponsor a joint staff retreat,

socials, and picnic. In addition, the *WRAAP (5 Cultural Centers) Committee was established*. Consisting of the Center directors and student representatives, the committee seeks to enhance communication and collaboration between the Centers.

In addition to the staff, the Center's *Advisory Board continued to remain active through their work on various sub-committees* including Fundraising, Programming, Scholarship and Awards, and Outreach. The Board consists of faculty, staff, students, and community members from diverse disciplines, as well as racial, ethnic, and gender identities.

The Center *continued outreach to the community and alumni*. PRLACC held a *Latino Alumni Reception* at Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts before Latin Fest. The event was very well received with more than 50 alums and friends in attendance.

We also *hosted many high schools, middle schools, and community organizations to enhance the recruitment of underrepresented groups* at UConn. These visits included shadowing days, talks/presentations with our students, campus tours, and attendance at the Center's events. Visitors spent a day on campus to learn about the University and get a glimpse at college life.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

METAS

The METAS Program (Mentoring, Educating, and Training for Academic Success) is designed to assist Latino first-year and transfer students with their college transition by pairing them with a peer mentor who provides guidance and support throughout their first year at UConn. We are delighted to report that METAS, one of approximately fifty peer education programs at UConn, received the Program of the Year Award. In our third year in existence, we enrolled 94 students in the program. The Director trained 34 mentors through PeerFest Conference, individual training, and a 3-credit course. We also conducted 4 focus groups and held individual interviews with mentors to assess our program and chart future directions. The program and the assessment results were presented at 2 conferences, 2008 NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) Annual Conference and the NASPA Region 1 LKC Conference. Monthly educational workshops and activities to enhance skills and connections were also offered. We also interviewed 49 mentor applicants in March 2008 and accepted 36 mentors for the 2008-2009 academic year. The mentee recruitment is in process for 2008-2009.

Association of Latina/o Faculty & Staff (ALFAS)

The Center served on the board and continued to provide support to the Association of Latino Faculty and Staff. The association is instrumental in building a support system for Latino faculty and staff at UConn. This year, a working group was formed to develop a report on the status of Latinos at UConn, which will be presented to the University community in the fall. ALFAS also held monthly meetings at PRLACC and sponsored the Latino Faculty and Staff Luncheon.

Annual Appeal

The Center worked with the UConn Foundation to complete the second annual appeal. More than 30 individual alumni and community members donated money to help support our programs and services.

Latino Heritage Month Celebration

During the national observance of Latino Heritage Month (Sept 15- Oct 15), the Center celebrated the contributions, history, culture, and traditions of Latinos around the country and world. Some of the programs this year included a film screening and discussion with producer Perego-Moreno, Rethinking the Latino Ecology Conference, La Pocha Nostra Workshop with Gómez Peña, a poetry show by La Bruja, Mexico's Ballet Folklórico, book reading and discussion by Aracelis Girmay, and much more.

Latin Fest

For the second consecutive year, PRLACC had a full house at Latin Fest, which featured Grammy winner La India and Grupo Niche. The event was sponsored by Univision, the largest Spanish language television network in the world. Latin Fest has become a very popular and sophisticated event that is being described by the CT media as the “premier Latino event in Connecticut and the Northeast.” More than 1,500 alumni, faculty, staff, students, and community members attended the event.

Latino Alumni Reception

We continued outreach to our alumni and held a reception in the art gallery at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts. The event was held prior to Latin Fest and was very well received with more than 50 alumni and friends in attendance.

Need help... on your research?

We collaborated with the library and the liaison librarian for Latino and Latin American Studies, Marisol Ramos, to provide support for our students. The librarian held office hours at the Center to help students with questions regarding how to find information on their research papers, citations, information using HOMER and the library databases doing bibliographies, and much more.

Mapa Corpo – A performance by Guillermo Gómez-Peña

In collaboration with the Puerto Rican & Latino Studies Institute, we brought Guillermo Gomez-Pena to UConn. He is a world-known performance artist, writer, activist, and educator. Most of his work concerns the interface between North and South, Mexican and U.S. culture, border culture and the politics of the brown body. Mapa Corpo is a poetic interactive ritual that explores neo colonization and de-colonization through acupuncture and the reenactment of the post-9/11 body politic.

Community Assistant Training

For the second year, we helped trained over 300 CA's on race, class, gender, ability, and religion issues. These efforts are in collaboration with the Residential Life Department.

PRLACC Scholarship Award

We continued to award the PRLACC Scholarship to UConn students who advanced the role and contributions of Latinos in society. In May, during the Recognition Banquet, we announced the two recipients of the 2008-2009 awards. Scholarship recipients demonstrated involvement with and commitment to Latino issues through leadership and service to the community at UConn and beyond.

3rd Annual Latino Faculty and Staff Luncheon

The Latino Faculty and Staff Luncheon was held in October at the Alumni House and provided an opportunity for UConn Latinos to connect and network. More than 50 faculty, staff members and university administrators attended. Mayor of New Haven, John DeStefano was the invited keynote

speaker and discussed the city's effort to assist Latinos and other immigrants through the implementation of ID cards.

Homecoming

We participated in all the Homecoming activities, which included banner, alma mater, float/parade, lip sync, and royalty competitions. Student participation was an all-time high. We placed in the Parade and the Royalty Competitions, as well as received the first place prize in the overall Homecoming competition.

New England Latino Student Leadership Conference

The Center sponsored 18 students to attend the Annual New England Latino Student Leadership Conference held at Northeastern University in Boston, MA. The conference initiated and encouraged connections between 300 Latino student college leaders within the New England region. It showcased practical as well as progressive approaches within the field of leadership development via workshop sessions and panel discussions. With attendees totaling over 300 from all over New England, the conference overflowed with energy. It was the second year that PRLACC took students to the conference.

Recognition Banquet

In May, we honored our graduating students and outstanding staff, faculty, and students for their leadership, dedication, and service to the University and Latino community. It was the largest banquet and graduating class in the history of PRLACC with more than 200 students, staff, faculty, and family members. President Michael Hogan gave the banquet's "Opening Remarks."

All Cultural Center Staff Retreat

We collaborated with the other Cultural Centers to hold a joint retreat for the staff. The retreat helped build community and provided professional and personal development for students particularly in the areas of race, class, and gender.

Cultural Explosion

Held during Family Weekend, we collaborated with Campus Activities and the other Cultural Centers to hold the 8th Cultural Explosion. We disseminated information about the Center's resources and programs to parents and students. This year, the event was coordinated with the University BBQ and many student groups who volunteered their talents.

Relay for Life

For the first time, PRLACC joined the Relay for Life team to raise funds and fight against cancer. Thirty-five students joined the Center, walked, and raised over \$2,000.00. We received second place for fundraising.

Lectures

Throughout the year, we brought local, state and nationally renowned guest lectures and authors to campus. These included the following:

- "Activism in the Community: An insider's perspective" – Josie Ashton, community activist and feminist
- "Teeth" - Aracelis Girmay, writer and poet
- "Women's Political Representation in the Dominican Republic" – Jacqueline Polanco, Professor
- "From Hip Hop to Reggaeton" – Raquel Rivera, Research Fellow at the Center for

Puerto Rican Studies in Hunter College, Professor at Columbia University
“Latinos and the Election: A swing vote?” – Richard Fry, Research Associate at the
Pew Hispanic Center
“Walking the Line: U.S. vigilantes, undocumented migrants, and human rights” –
Jeremy Levine and Landon Van Soest, film producers
“Latina Confessions” – Louis Perego-Moreno, film producer and director
“Kool Logic” – Urayoan Noel, author
“Invisible Traces: Race in Puerto Rican Literary Discourses” - Mayra Santos Febres,
Professor at the University of Puerto Rico
“Nuestra Senora de la Noche” – Mayra Santos, Professor at the University of Puerto
Rico
“The Puerto Rican Queer Diaspora” – Larry La Fountain-Strokes, Professor, University
of Illinois

Movie & Discussion Nites

We continued to offer our film series every 3rd Thursday night. We showed a variety of Latino and Latin American films and held discussions to enrich the educational experience. These films included Manito, My Family, El Ultimo Tren, El Cantante, Manuela Saenz, Love in the Time of Cholera, and Real Women Have Curves. We also continued to partner with the Spanish Department to show films from “El Siglo de Oro”. These included Alla en el Rancho Grande, Campeon sin corona, Enamorada, Nosotros los pobres, Aventurera, and El esqueleto de la senora Morales.

Educational Workshops

PRLACC offered several workshops designed to help students succeed at UConn. While these workshops target students enrolled in the mentoring program, anyone interested in attending is welcome. The topics included, getting involved, secrets to success in college, stress & time management, safety, and networking.

International Women’s Day – LunaFest

This film festival promoted women filmmakers, raised awareness for women’s issues, and supported worthy women’s nonprofit organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada. Part of the proceeds went to the Breast Cancer Fund.

PeerFest 2007 Conference

The Center served on the planning committee as well as enrolled 36 student leaders. PeerFest provided an opportunity for peer educators from various programs at UConn to come together and examine what it means to be a peer educator. Student leaders had an opportunity to attend workshops, share knowledge and experience, and build valuable networks of support around campus.

Latino Organizational Council

The Center continued to work with the LOC to establish better collaborations with and between the Latino and multicultural student organizations on campus. The group consists of representatives from the Latino Student Association, Lambda Theta Alpha, Lambda Theta Phi, BAILE, Mu Sigma Upsilon, SHPE, and Lambda Alpha Upsilon.

Open House

At the beginning of the year, PRLACC hosts an Open House for students, staff, and faculty. Information about PRLACC’s services and programs and about other Latino organizations on campus as well as other resources available at UConn are distributed.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Trainings

METAS Peer Mentor Training
PRLACC Staff Training
FYE courses
Tunnel of Oppression

Class presentations

FYE 180
FYE 182
Sociology
Education

Meetings

1-on-1 student meetings
Staff meetings
Mentor meetings
Mentee meetings
ALFAS meetings
Advisory Board meetings & subcommittees
Focus groups

Conferences

Rethinking the Latino Intellectual Ecology Conference
True Colors Conference

Cultural/Artistic

Latin American Heritage Day - Avery Campus
Ballet Folklórico de México
Brujalicious: An evening of poetry and music
Día de los Muertos
Latin Dance Workshops
Holiday Dinner

Other

METAS Opening and BBQ
Homecoming Kick-Off
Resource Fairs
Latino Jeopardy
Ice Cream Break
Trick or Treat
Game Nights
University Open Houses
WRAAP Picnic
Latino Organizational Council Activities
Student, Staff, and Faculty Luncheon
METAS Informational
Shadowing Day

Lip Sync Rehearsals
Big Brothers Big Sister
BAILE Activities
Latino Student Association Activities
Lambda Theta Alpha Activities
Lambda Phi Upsilon
Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers Activities

TRENDS

In order to establish priorities to meet the most urgent concerns of Latino students, faculty, and staff at The University of Connecticut, it is important to take stock of the current status.

Latinos are now the largest minority group in the United States. The rise of Latinos is changing not only the nation's demographic patterns, but also the composition of classrooms across America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the Latino population is estimated at over 43 million, which represents 14.8% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Profile, 2006). This also means that Latinos have now surpassed African Americans as the largest minority group in the United States. The rise of Latinos as the largest minority group is transforming the nation educationally, culturally, linguistically, socially, and politically.

In Connecticut, the Latino population is 11.2% of the total state population (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Profile, 2006). Latinos in CT are highly concentrated in the major urban centers.

At UConn, Latinos remain underrepresented at all levels. As of Fall 2007, 5.5% (1556) of the total University enrollment at UConn was Latino. Of these 6.0% (1,261) of the undergraduate students and 3.9% (263) of the graduate and professional students were Latino. The Regional Campuses undergraduate Latino enrollment is 10.6% (435), while the Storrs Campus is 4.9% (795). The campuses with the highest percentages of Latinos are Stamford and Hartford with 14.6% and 11.1%, respectively. Current data also shows that 66% of Latino undergraduates graduate within six years. This rate is slightly lower than the rate for all students (74%).

Only 3.6% (49) of the faculty, .9% (1) of executives/management, and 3.1% (67) of professionals at UConn were Latino. There are no Vice Presidents, Vice Provosts, Deans, or Department Chairs who are Latino.

While the number of Latino students, staff, and faculty does not mirror the growth at the state and national levels, the numbers at UConn are growing slowly. With the overall University growth and the relocation to the Student Union, the Center has witnessed a dramatic increase in attendance at our programs and the use of our facility and services.

For example, the Center's computer room has 9 computers for public use. At almost anytime during our hours of operation, we have all computers in use. As a result, 5 computers had to be replaced this year. We are also witnessing large numbers of students who use our facility for studying on a regular basis, as well as using other PRLACC resources such as films and books. The number of reservations by University departments and student and community organizations has also increased. This past year, there were 340 reservations. Attendance at our events has also increased dramatically to 13,560 from last year's 9,185. University faculty and staff are also increasingly holding classes at PRLACC.

Furthermore, since the establishment of the peer-mentoring program, the number of cases of student advising and advocacy has increased substantially (see Advocacy Activities Section for details). Also, there were dozens of calls and visits from Latino community members in need of University information such as admission requirements, University resources, institutional climate, etc.

CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENTS

PRLS 3298

Latinos and Leadership - Fall 2007

A total of 21 students enrolled in the course in the fall. This was the second year the course was held through the Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Institute. The overall purpose of this course was to encourage students to carefully analyze their responsibilities and commitments in the context of leadership. The course was more than the study of leadership; it was designed to help them develop their own leadership potential within their communities. Students were encouraged to think critically about leadership issues facing our communities and society, to understand the importance of self-knowledge, to explore how values influence the leadership process, and to understand gender and cultural influences on leadership.

SYE 180

Senior Year Experience - Spring 2008

The Senior Year Experience course provides learning opportunities that promote a successful transition for college students to the world beyond the University. Students who participate in the Senior Year Experience course will have an opportunity for life skill development, reflection to determine the meaning and value of the undergraduate experience, and consideration of their growing role as a productive and valued citizen and University alumni.

OUTREACH AND PUBLIC SERVICE ACTIVITIES

High School and Middle School Outreach

The Center invited and hosted over a dozen high schools and middle schools to enhance the recruitment of underrepresented groups at UConn. These visits included shadowing days, talks/presentations with our students, campus tours, and attendance at the Center's events.

Community Organization Outreach

The Center continued to partner with community organizations to advance the role of Latinos in our society. We continued our work with ConnectiKids and developed a new partnership with Journey House. Youth spent a day on campus to learn about the University and get a glimpse at college life.

Latino Expo

We participated in the Latino Expo, an annual event held in Hartford for Latinos. During the 2-day event, we staffed a table and provided information to the community about the University of Connecticut and the Center's programs and services. We also promoted our spring community event.

Community Events

PRLACC co-sponsored and hosted two community symposiums. These included the following:

- “Getting to a Better Tomorrow: Economic and Financial Security,” sponsored by the State of Connecticut, PCSW, and UConn’s Women’s Center
- “Know Your Rights: Understanding the Constitutional and Employment Rights of Immigrants in the US,” sponsored by Democracy Works

Admissions

The Center was in attendance at several admission receptions for counselors and prospective students and their families. We met with invited guests to discuss the Center and University resources for Latinos, as well as other multicultural resources. In addition, the Center participates in both University Open Houses and Resource Fairs.

Other outreach

The following are other outreach activities conducted by staff, which are not included in our activities: participated in the Husky WOW Scavenger Hunt, Department of Residential Life Scavenger Hunt and FYE Scavenger Hunt and staffed a table at the Fall University Open House Resource Fair, Spring University Open House Resource Fair, International Night, Parent Orientation Fairs and Transfer Student Resource Fairs.

ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

Committee Work

This year, PRLACC continued to focus on our advocacy efforts. The staff served as an advocate for Latinos and served on 24 University committees and/or councils.

The Director served on the following committees:

- International Center Advisor Search Committee
- International Center Director Search Committee
- Association of Latina/o Faculty and Staff – President (Director)
- Student Life Awards Selection Committee
- Admissions Open House Committee
- WRAAP Committee
- Senate Enrollment Committee
- President’s Athletic Advisory Committee
- Women’s Center Recruitment and Retention Committee
- Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Institute Advisory Board
- Peer Fest Planning Committee
- Peer Education Directors Committee
- Alumni Association Reunion Weekend Planning Committee
- Student Union Partners Committee
- Alumni Center Committee on Diversity and Opportunity
- Faculty Mentor for the Leadership Legacy Experience Program
- WRAAP Committee

The student staff served on the following committees:

- SUBOG Policy Council
- Multicultural Greek Council
- Jorgensen Event Planning Committee

USG
UConn Homecoming Committee
WRAAP Committee
Peer Educator Student Advisory Committee
PRLACC Advisory Board

Advising

The Director maintains an open door policy and weekly walk-in hours. This year, there were a total of 79 individual student 1-on-1 counseling/advising meetings. The majority of these individual cases included issues relating to sexual assault, financial aid, residential life, adjustment/cultural shock, student organization advising, mental health, academic advising, discrimination, and family concerns.

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

El Pulso Newsletter

The Center published a fall and spring semester newsletter. The goal of El Pulso is to provide information about the Center's happenings and new developments, as well as to provide the community with information about issues pertaining to Latinos at UConn and beyond.

PRLACC Brochure

The Center's brochure was updated and revised.

METAS Brochure

A new METAS brochure was created.

PRLACC Website

The Center redesigned its website to match the University's template. We also updated all of our information and maintained a link to resources available at UConn and the community.

Presentations

Up Close & Personal: An Approach to Enhancing Student Retention and Leadership.

CALAHE Annual Conference, Storrs, CT, June 2007.

The Mentoring of Latino Students. NASPA Annual Conference, Boston, MA, March 2008.

Mentoring College Students. NASPA Region I LKC Conference, Boston, MA, June, 2008.

LIST OF STAFF MEMBERS

Mayté Pérez-Franco, PhD - Director

Cynthia Schaefer - Administrative Assistant