

## **Strategic Plan of the Program in Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Studies (LALACS)**

### **Mission, Vision, and Goals**

The Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Studies (LALACS) Program is an interdisciplinary minor with twelve active faculty members from eight different departments: Art and Art History, Geography, History, Modern Languages, Political Science, Religion, Soc/Anthro, Theatre and Dance.

As an interdisciplinary program we have a budget of \$1500 per year, plus one course release per year for the Director.

We have approximately 13 minors, the majority with majors in Spanish, History, Nursing, and International Management.

#### **Mission:**

The Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Studies (LALACS) Program at Gustavus Adolphus College offers an interdisciplinary concentration that joins students and faculty in a meaningful study of the Americas. As its name suggests, this is an inclusive program that combines area studies in Latin America and the Caribbean with recognition of the growing cultural plurality of the United States—diversity that is increasingly evident in Minnesota and the Gustavus community.

#### **Vision:**

LALACS offers students the opportunity to study the Americas across a wide spectrum of the humanities and the social sciences through a variety of geographical and cultural emphases. It also offers students the technical tools needed for in-depth experiential learning through language courses and cultural immersion in study abroad programs in Latin America and the Caribbean.

A unique aspect of the program is its focus on research internships and service learning. As part of the minor, students may work in Latin American, Latino or Caribbean immigrant communities in rural and urban Minnesota. Another unique aspect of the program is the exploration of historical and cultural ties to the countries of the Iberian Peninsula.

#### **ABOUT AREA STUDIES PROGRAMS LIKE LALACS:**

What is the difference between a minor in LALACS and a minor in Spanish?

The difference has to do with the interdisciplinary nature of the LALACS program. It is true that the minor in Spanish also develops knowledge of the Spanish language and Hispanic cultures. The excellent program in Spanish does this well. Like most language programs in the United States the minor in Spanish focuses in large part on the humanities.

An area studies program like LALACS, on the other hand, does something quite different. Students are expected to start with a high level of language learning, and must choose from a variety of courses that include offerings in the Social Sciences as well. Our core course is a class in the History department. Unlike a minor in a language, courses are taught across departments, and can be taught in English.

In practice, most students also study Spanish. However, we are looking ahead to a future in which students of French or Portuguese could also complete the minor.

Area Studies programs are very useful for students entering the global community. Students going to work on social justice issues in Latin America, in business in Latin America and the Caribbean, or with Latino immigrants in the U.S. benefit from a deeper understanding of the area's religious traditions, geography, political history, economic issues, indigenous past, cultural heritage and relations with the United States. This kind of interdisciplinary focus cannot be accomplished by any one department.

**Current Minor:**

Requirements for the Minor:

5 courses, including

1. HIS-160, Introduction to Latin America
2. SPA-320, Spanish-American Culture, or SPA-322, Masterworks of Spanish-American Literature.
3. Two courses selected from the approved list below or others subsequently approved by the adviser.
4. One semester-long course of approved field experience. This can be either from study abroad in a Latin American country or from independent study or internship work in a Latino community in the United States.

ART-265 Maya and Mexican Art

FRE-364 Francophone Literatures of Africa and the Caribbean

GEG-233 Central American/Caribbean Geography

HIS-261 Colonial Latin America

HIS-262 Argentina

HIS-263 Cuba

HIS-264 The Mexican Revolution

HIS-265 Mexican American History

HIS-361 Latin America and the United States

HIS-362 The Age of Conquest

POL-230 Latin American Politics

REL 244 God and Globalization

REL 273 Religion and Politics in Latin America

REL 344 Liberation Struggles in the Two-Thirds World

SPA 244 Travel Narrative and Latin America

SPA-280 Intro to Literature in Spanish  
SPA-320 Spanish-American Culture  
SPA-322 Masterworks of Spanish American Literature  
SPA-344 Caribbean Literature and Culture  
SPA-375 Women Writers  
SPA-390 Film in Spanish  
S/A-243 Globalization  
S/A-258 African Culture in Latin America and Caribbean  
T/D-265 Performance in the Americas

**Notes on the Minor:**

**Advising:** Students may choose a minor advisor, but per Gustavus rules, do not need to do so. We would like to change this aspect of our program, as many students simply "add on" the minor, as they are getting ready to graduate. Students, however, do need to work with an advisor if they wish to complete an internship in the Latino Community to fulfill their Field Study credit. The adviser helps the student choose an internship, arranges for the student to get approval from the Director, and oversees the internship in a very limited fashion.

**Internships:** As mentioned above, students may complete an internship in the Latino, Latin American or Caribbean community in order to fulfill the Field Study requirement. The Latino community in Minnesota -- and the number of Latino students at Gustavus -- has grown considerably since we started the Program. As a result, opportunities for internships and study have grown as well. The students who have received the Field Credit have generally worked in a leadership role in the Amigos program at Gustavus (a program organized by Spanish majors in which Gustavus students work in the Saint Peter schools with Latino students or develop programming to promote Hispanic cultures.)

**Study Abroad:**

Study abroad is not a requirement of the program, but we encourage it strongly. We had originally envisioned making study abroad a condition of the minor, but felt that we did not want to exclude economically disadvantaged students who may not be able to study abroad for financial reasons. However, we do encourage study abroad to the region of country associated with a student's area of interest.

**Support Relationships:**

As an interdisciplinary program, LALACS is entirely dependent on other departments for its curriculum, support staff, technology, and staffing. We have a budget of \$1500 per year plus a release for the Director. The budget allows us to fund special visits to LALACS classes and have a speaker every year.

The following departments provide key staffing for LALACS:

Modern Languages provides our support staff (Jenny Tollefson).  
Modern Languages, History, Geography, Religion, Art History, Political Science, and Theater and Dance provide us with faculty to teach courses.

In the past few years, there has been a concerted effort by both the Administration and separate departments to hire or retain positions related to Latin American Studies. The Departments of Religion, Soc/Anthro, and History invited LALACS faculty to participate in the search. In addition, serendipitous faculty hires such as Henry McCarthy in Theater have enriched the program even more. This has been a wonderful and welcome development. Communication Studies recently hired Beatriz Torres, whom we hope will join LALACS as well. Currently, the English Department has asked LALACS to participate in the search for an Ethnic Studies position. While we are not guaranteed that this person will be a fit for LALACS, it is another welcome development.

**PROGRAM GOALS:**

We have goals for the program to make it a more focused and stronger program, in order to better prepare our students for lives of service.

The Goals that we have set for LALACS are based, in part, on our belief that the program needs to grow in order to continue to build a knowledge base about Latin America, Latinos in the U.S. and the Caribbean on the Gustavus campus. The current number of minors has stayed level throughout the years: we would like to increase that number dramatically, and add a major as well.

LALACS would like to more fully develop programs that provide students with the understanding of the particular issues and challenges facing Latinos in the U.S., Latin America and the Caribbean that also highlights the region's many strengths.

We recognize that the challenges in Latin America include persistent urban poverty, vast inequalities among citizens in the same nation, persistent discrimination against the indigenous population, governments that are often run poorly and are plagued by corruption, a history of military dictatorships, low levels of literacy, inadequate access to health care, and a history of intervention by the U.S. These factors are precisely those that bring Latino immigrants to the United States.

We feel that Gustavus students should be equipped to understand these challenges as they prepare themselves for the global economy.

At the same time, all of the faculty in LALACS are connected through our fascination and love for these same places and people. The strengths of Latin America are in its amazing diversity -- both human and geographic. There are hundreds of languages spoken by diverse indigenous tribes and many dialects of Spanish, Portuguese, French and English. The geographic diversity is stunning, ranging from the pampas of the Southern Cone to the Andes Mountains to rain forests of Costa Rica, the desert regions of Mexico. The religious diversity is equally astounding -- from santería, created by Latin American slaves upon their encounter with Catholicism, to the growing evangelical Christian movement. It is a place of great literary accomplishments as well: Latin America produced Nobel-Prize winning writers like Gabriel García-Marquez of Colombia and Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda,

both of Chile. The chaotic political landscape has given rise to great human solidarity, represented by people such as Nobel Peace Prize winning activists Rigoberta Menchú.

We feel Gustavus students set to work on social justice in Latin America should also study the brilliant achievements and complex history of its inhabitants.

### **Specific Goal**

1. In the year 2020, LALACS would like to have a rigorous major in Latin American Studies, which encompasses training in the humanities, social sciences, language, and the arts.
2. LALACS would like to strengthen its bonds with participating departments.

### **Specific Goal #1: LALACS MAJOR**

We believe that LALACS should become a full major, with two releases per year for the director, an operating budget, student work-study lines, dedicated faculty lines, and a capstone course.

Reasoning behind a major:

Strategic Goal #1 A major in Latin American, Latino & Caribbean Studies would meet the Gustavus Strategic Goal #1 Educate for leadership and service.

Students have shown interest in a major in Latin American Studies, as many students would like to have an interdisciplinary major which combines language studies, social sciences, and the humanities. We feel that such a major would attract students to Gustavus.

Having an interdisciplinary major in Latin American Studies would also put Gustavus in line with current trends in academe. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has featured a number of articles in the past few years that discuss the demand for integrated programs in area studies, including an article titled, "Global Competency' Is Imperative for Global Success."

The program at Gustavus is already unusual at such a small college. It reflects the fact that we have a large percentage of faculty members with a research and/or teaching interest in Latin America, outside of the Department of Modern Languages & Literatures. The Program in Latin American, Latino & Caribbean Studies was born, in part, because as faculty members we felt that it was important to take advantage of this incredible knowledge base.

The program could be useful in attracting a more diverse student body.

### **Brief Outline of the Proposed Major:**

Students would take courses in four different areas (based on course we have now.)

1. Language & Literature
2. History
3. Social Sciences & Religion
4. Arts

Other requirements:

Capstone course on Social Justice with Senior Thesis

Field Study: Immersion Experience

From the Four Areas, students would have to declare one area of concentration in which they would take 3 courses. They would then take 1 course from each of the three other concentration areas; do the capstone course and an immersion experience (field study). Students would have to demonstrate proficiency in a Latin American language equivalent to Spanish 250 (Composition).

### **Strategic Initiatives to Support Goals:**

#### **Dedicated Faculty Lines for LALACS**

We would like to have an Endowed Chair, and 3 dedicated faculty lines, only for Latin American Studies (1 in Latino Studies, 1 in Caribbean Studies, 1 in Southern Cone).

Reasoning behind having an endowed chair:

**Endowed Chair (3-year term, revolving):** We understand that this request falls under the "dream big" request of the Strategic Plan! However, we do believe that Endowed Chairs are very useful in guaranteeing the long-term future of programs. A revolving endowed chair (three-year term) would give visibility to the program, and would allow the chair to develop programming. At the moment, the ability for LALACS to have a Director is dependent on the goodwill of participating departments. Dedicated faculty lines for LALACS (also, we realize, within the "dream big" category) would also ensure permanence for the program. This would also give the program added visibility, and would increase the prestige of the college within the academic community.

#### **Protected Faculty Lines for Departments with LALACS faculty**

We would like the six faculty lines outside of Spanish that now have faculty with Latin American interests to be protected (i.e. Art History, Geography, Two lines in Soc/Anthro, Religion)

#### **Reasoning for protecting faculty lines:**

Right now we are lucky in having the commitment of the college to protecting these lines, and even to expanding them if possible. In the past few years, the LALACS Program has been asked to participate in faculty searches in several departments, with the idea that we would be included as a voice in the decision-making process. We appreciate the fact that the Administration and the relevant departments have wanted our participation, and that they have wanted to support the study of Latin America through these faculty hires. However, we do not know what will happen in the future. We would like to have, if possible,

protection for these faculty lines so that new hires would also have an expertise in Latin American Studies.

**Named Scholarships:**

We would like to attract funding for Named Scholarships. This would require fund-raising by the college to individuals.

**Reasoning behind Named Scholarships:**

We believe that Named Scholarships could be important in attracting a more diverse student body and in attracting national and even international funding. For example, we believe that a Music Scholarship named for the great salsa singer Celia Cruz (a giant in the music world) would attract major funding from the Cuban American community, and would put Gustavus on the map nationally.

**Specific Goal #2:**

LALACS would like to strengthen its bonds with participating departments.

Many of these initiatives will require that we strengthen bonds with the departments that already provide LALACS with our faculty and support staff. In this, we need to make sure that any initiative is seen to be of value for participating departments as well.

We would like to be good “faculty citizens,” in part because we understand how much other programs have done to ensure the birth and survival of LALACS.

**Strategic Initiatives for Strengthening Bonds with Participating Departments:**

We are considering ways to strengthen these bonds without asking already overburdened faculty members to come to yet another meeting!

We have begun to do this by using our speaker money more thoughtfully – in ways that enrich the classes in participating departments. We are devoting a great deal of speaker money this year to class events in the History department that will also be made available to LALACS minors.

\*\*The first draft of the LALACS Strategic Plan included information on a proposed Study Abroad Program in Argentina. Please note that the LALACS Program Committee decided not to pursue a LALACS Study Abroad Program at this time. For many reasons -- concern about costs, concern about student numbers, concern about replicating existing programs -- we have decided to wait until a later date to pursue that goal.

**External Environment Analysis**

Trends: Opportunities and Threats

As we mentioned above, current trends in academe favor interdisciplinary programs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has featured a number of articles in the past few years that discuss the demand for integrated programs in area studies, including an article titled, "Global Competency' Is Imperative for Global Success."

The trends towards increased interdisciplinary programs gives LALACS the opportunity to grow, as we share information with other Latin American Studies programs at other colleges as they experience growth.

The current trend towards interdisciplinary programs could be a threat to the health of current language majors, if students switched majors. We do not feel this will happen in great numbers, as our Spanish majors are interested in taking as many courses as possible in the target language. We feel that LALACS will develop its own constituency.

As the result of hard work by admissions, we have an increased number of Latino and native speakers, who add a great deal of depth to our courses. Students who are immigrants themselves add greater complexity to a course by providing their personal experience. On the other hand, this also requires great sensitivity on the part of the professor, so that the students do not feel marginalized or "used" as cultural artifacts themselves in classes. (It can be tiresome to constantly be used as an example for a class, or to be asked to discuss experiences that may be personally painful. Great care must be exercised in asking students to discuss their personal histories in class. )

The economy has made students think much more intentionally about their curricular choices. We do not know what kind of influence that the poor economy has had on our Program. It has certainly had an effect on Spanish, as students across many majors have chosen to take Spanish to improve their career choices. We can imagine that this trend might encourage students to think more globally about their choices of classes and majors, and that this might encourage students to take LALACS classes.

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