

**Latin American Studies Program
Grand Valley State University
Strategic Plan Document
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Latin American Studies Program Strategic Plan Document

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NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION CORE COMPONENTS

- 1a: The organization's mission documents are clear and articulate publicly the organization's commitments.
- 1b: In its mission documents, the organization recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.
- 1c: Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the organization
- 1d: The organization's governance and administrative structures promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the organization to fulfill its mission.
- 1e: The organization upholds and protects its integrity.
- 2a: The organization realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.
- 2b: The organizations' resource base supports its educational programs and its plan for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.
- 2c: The organization's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies for continuous improvement.
- 2d: All levels of planning align with the organizations' mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.
- 3a: The organization's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.
- 3b: The organization values and supports effective teaching.
- 3c: The organization creates effective learning environments.
- 3d: The organization's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.
- 4a: The organization demonstrates, through the action of its board, administrators, students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.
- 4b: The organization demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its educational programs.
- 4c: The organization assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.
- 4d: The organization provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.
- 5a: The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.
- 5b: The organization has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.
- 5c: The organization demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.
- 5d: Internal and external constituencies value the services the organization provides.

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY GOALS

1. To support high quality, student-focused, undergraduate and graduate education provided by a faculty dedicated to excellent teaching, scholarship and professional service.
2. To create a broad educational experience that is guided by a philosophy supporting liberal education in all academic programs.
3. To build partnerships and collaborations between the university and external entities that contribute to the enrichment of society in the region, the state and beyond.
4. To promote and integrate diversity in all aspects of university life.
5. To encourage a vibrant campus culture that fosters an atmosphere of inquiry and learning in all campus settings.
6. To effectively develop and allocate financial resources with which to advance the university mission and respond to change and emerging opportunities.
7. To enhance the image and visibility of the university and its work.

COLLEGE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES GOALS

1. Increase participation of faculty, staff and students in CoIS programs
2. Increase the visibility of the work of CoIS in the GVSU community
3. Promote excellent interdisciplinary, integrative teaching and learning in the tradition of liberal education.
4. Develop Curriculum, scholarships, programs, initiatives and campus events that internationalize the university.
5. Increase college engagement with external communities for the common good
6. Imbed diversity, intercultural competence and inclusive excellence in CoIS curriculum, scholarship, initiatives and programs
7. Increase the involvement of students, faculty and staff in sustainability education and initiatives

I. Program Overview

The Latin American Studies Program (LAS) and Minor were approved by the Board of Control in December 1992 and Walter Foote (ENG) was soon named as the program's first coordinator. The LAS minor seeks "to acquaint students with the cultures and social issues of Latin America and to encourage students to continue their interest in our southern neighboring nations beyond graduation." This goal embraces students who seek formal training for a degree minor and contributes to GVSU's liberal arts mission. The catalog description of the program continues:

“Knowledge of Latin America and its people, including those in the United States, is an essential part of a liberal education today. Not only is the Latino population of West Michigan growing rapidly, but Latinos are the most populous ethnic group in the United States. In the meantime, U.S. economic, political, and cultural relations with our Latin American neighbors...continue to grow in importance In fact, the Latin American Studies (LAS) program is for any traditional or continuing student who simply wants to learn more about the fascinating and diverse cultures of Latin America The LAS program encourages student participation with Latin American and international student organizations on campus, the West Michigan Latino community and its institutions, and groups dealing with international relations.”

The program hosts a minor consisting of twenty-one credits divided between a three-course core and four electives, teaches several General Education courses, and provides students with opportunities for practical experience and cultural immersion through the Model Organization of American States simulation, as well as community-based and international internships. LAS also organizes many on-campus events every semester, most notably the Conference on the Americas and LAS Symposium (held on alternate winter semesters) that provide students, faculty, staff, and community members unique opportunities for learning about Latin America and Latino immigrants in the U.S. LAS actively collaborates with other Area Studies programs and units in the College of Interdisciplinary Studies (CoIS); Modern Languages, Political Science, Sociology, Geography, English and Anthropology departments; as well as the offices of Multicultural Affairs and Inclusion and Equity.

II. Mission, Vision, and Values:

Mission:

- To educate students and the university community about Latino/Latin American matters with our courses and event programming.
- To support internationalization, diversity, and interdisciplinary efforts on campus and in the community.
- To promote an increase the size of the Latino/a and Latin American student body, faculty and staff.
- To serve and educate West Michigan communities. The LAS Program enhances GVSU's relations with the regional Latino community.

Vision:

- The LAS program and minor will integrate an interdisciplinary approach to create excellence in liberal education. We will educate undergraduates to develop a holistic understanding of human populations across the hemisphere and provide them with the skills needed to become active participants in diverse communities. We will prepare our students to appreciate cultural diversity and other ways of living. We will initiate programs that allow students to apply their knowledge and skills in advanced studies, the workplace, and in their communities.

Values:

- 1) We value excellent teaching by interacting with students in appropriate sized classes, field studies and community settings.
- 2) We value faculty and student research and career development that infuses teaching and learning.
- 3) We value and respect the people of and from Latin America as informed by an appreciation for human diversity and respect for all cultures.
- 4) We value interdisciplinary initiatives across disciplines and programs.

III. Strategic Goals and Objectives:

1. Value – Excellent teaching

A. Add tenure line faculty filling key geographic and disciplinary gaps in program.

1. Recruit tenure track faculty member in Latin American politics to staff MOAS course, add consistency to LAS 210, and add permanent LAS designated courses
2. Recruit tenure track faculty with expertise in areas that better connect the program with the natural sciences (e.g. environmental policy), arts and culture (e.g. art history, ethnomusicology), and professional Colleges (e.g. law, urban planning, public health, business, education).
3. Recruit tenure track faculty in geographic areas where we currently lack sufficient faculty expertise (Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, Andean countries)

B. Grow program and minor through collaboration with other units

1. Expand number of faculty on advisory committee
2. Invite existing faculty to staff LAS courses and committees and propose new courses
3. Collaborate with other units on joint hires
4. Collaborate and create courses with professional programs, especially in health, international business, and social work.
5. Reorganize minor requirements to create a more cohesive instructional program.
5. Pursue a certificate program for professional students.

(NCA Components 1b; 2a,b; 3a,b,c,d; GVSU Goals 2, 4, 5, 6, 7; CoIS Goals 1, 2, 3,4,6,7.)

2. Value – Faculty and Student research

A. Promote Faculty professional development

1. Alternate community-focused Conference on the Americas annually with LAS Symposium focused on faculty scholarship
2. Expand the range and geographic scope of universities participating in COA and Symposium
3. Expand faculty collaborations with peers in other U.S. and Latin American universities
4. Increase number of faculty participating in Latin American Studies Association and other specialty conferences focused on Latin America

B. Promote student research

1. Continue community based research through LAS 475
2. Promote student participation in Student Scholarship Day and Student Summer Scholars
3. Develop opportunities for student independent research with community partner institutions.
4. Develop opportunities for student research in Latin America.

(NCA Components 3b, c, d; GVSU Goals 1, 2, 4, 5, 7; CoIS Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.)

3. Value – Respect for People of and from Latin America
 - A. Link program to the community and region
 1. Increase collaborations with community partners
 - a. Increase community agency participation in Conference on the Americas
 - b. Circulate newsletter and maintain LAS and Latinos in West Michigan websites.
 - c. Establish a formal partnership with one or two agencies working with Latinos
 2. Increase opportunities for student internship, service learning, study abroad and community projects
 - a. Establish partnership with local agency
 - b. Better integrate community projects into LAS courses
 - c. Expand range of agencies available for internships.
 - B. Enhance connections with Latin America for faculty and students
 1. Create a partnership with a Latin American university
 2. Expand student participation in study abroad and international internships in Latin America
 3. Increase faculty participation in research and conferences in Latin America.
 4. Secure a dedicated Latin America/Latino-focused art gallery/performance space for arts/culture exhibitions and displays and collaborative teaching between LAS faculty in MLL, Art and Design, Photography, Theatre, Music, and Social Science departments

(NCA Components 2a, 3b 3c; GVSU Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 7; CoIS Goals 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.)

4. Value – Interdisciplinary initiatives

A. Improve faculty expertise by region, discipline, and domestic/international focus

1. Survey faculty on research expertise and needs
2. Consult with other units about prospective hires and joint appointments in LAS

B. Support existing and new interdisciplinary initiatives

1. Collaborate with Area Studies directors on speakers and initiatives
2. Support discussions on creating a Global Studies program or expanding International Relations

(NCA Components 1b; 2a,b; 3a,b,c,d; GVSU Goals 2, 4, 5, 6, 7; CoIS Goals 3,4,6,7.)

Student Learning Goals with their Respective Objectives

- a. *Goal:* Students in LAS courses will gain increased knowledge of Latin American societies and respect for all cultures and peoples across the Americas.
 - (1) *Objective:* Students will articulate increased respect for Latin American and Latino cultures
 - (2) *Objective:* Students will identify the basic features on contemporary Latin American cultures, societies and politics

- b. *Goal:* Students will apply research and analytical skills through essays on Latin American History and Politics
 - (1) *Objective:* Students will design and write an original research project on a Latin American revolution
 - (2) *Objective:* Students will apply skills of historical analysis to the understanding of one Latin American revolution

B. Body of the Plan

1. Overview of the Assessment Plan, including when, during the next 3 years, all of the objectives listed above will be phased into the program's assessment plan.
 - a. *Goal:* Students in LAS courses will gain increased knowledge of Latin American societies and respect for all cultures and peoples across the Americas.
 - (1) *Objective:* Students will articulate increased respect for Latin American and Latino cultures
 - (a) Measure 1: Results from attitude questions in LAS 210 Pre/Post Cultural Awareness survey
 - (b) Measure 2: Level of LAS 210 student participation in LAS campus events
 - (c) Data collection procedure: Cultural Awareness Pre/Post survey produced by LAS faculty
 - (d) Collected at beginning and end of course during first three semesters of assessment period (FA 07, WI 08, FA 08).
 - (e) Course instructors collect data
 - (f) Collected by instructors in each section and analyzed at the end of the collection cycle by assessment committee
 - (g) Findings will be used to determine how to improve instruction in LAS 210 to increase student cultural competency.

- (2) *Objective:* Students will identify the basic features of contemporary Latin American cultures, societies and politics
- (a) Measure 1: LAS 210 Pre/post test on knowledge acquisition
 - (b) Measure 2: LAS/HST 374 Pre/post test on knowledge acquisition
 - (c) Procedure for data collection and analysis: LAS 210 and LAS/HST 374 Knowledge Acquisition Pre/Post tests produced by LAS Faculty
 - (d) Collected at beginning and end of course: LAS 210 (FA 07, WI 08, FA 08); HST/LAS 374 collected at beginning and end of course during first three semesters of assessment period (SP/SU 07, WI 08, WI 09).
 - (e) Course instructors collect data
 - (f) Collected by instructors in each section and analyzed annually by assessment committee
 - (g) Findings will be used to explore how to improve instruction in LAS 210 and HST/LAS 374, so that students better retain and apply knowledge as they move up to higher level courses.
- b. *Goal:* Students will apply research and analytical skills through essays on Latin American History and Politics
- (1) *Objective:* Students will design and write an original research project on a Latin American Revolution
- (a) Measure 1: Quality of historiographical sources used in final paper
 - (b) Measure 2: Quality of analysis of sources in final paper
 - (c) Procedure for data collection and analysis: LAS/HST 374 papers analyzed using grading rubric
 - (d) timeline for data collection and analysis: (SPR/SU 07, WI 08, WI 09)
 - (e) Collected by instructors in each section and analyzed annually by assessment committee
 - (f) Findings will be used to explore how to improve instruction in LAS/HST 374

- (2) *Objective:* Students will apply skills of historical analysis to the understanding of one Latin American revolution
- (a) Measure 1: Quality of paper's analysis of causal forces leading to one revolution
 - (b) Measure 2: Quality of paper's ability to break revolutions into their component parts
 - (c) Procedure for data collection and analysis:
LAS/HST 374 final projects analyzed using grading rubric
 - (d) timeline for data collection and analysis:(SPR 07, WI 08, WI 09)
 - (e) Collected by instructors in each section and analyzed at end of the collection cycle by assessment committee
 - (f) Findings will be used to explore how to improve instruction in LAS/HST 374