

Chican@ Latino@ Studies Certificate Program
Assessment Update 2009

The CLS program is in the process of developing an assessment plan. The curriculum committee is developing learning goals that include both content and skills that it would like students to master in the program. The committee hopes to identify 3 ways to assess these goals: adding key questions to the course evaluations, an exit interview and survey of graduating certificate students, and an alumni survey.

The program director provided her perspective on the goals she views as important to the program:

Mastering Content: In my course on Understanding Latino Families, I have students who are juniors and seniors, and have already taken several CLS courses. At the beginning of the class, I noticed that there is some content that many students have not been exposed to, for example, understanding the political and migration history of different Latin American groups beyond Chicanos and Puerto Ricans. Students do seem to have a handle on important historical events in Chicano history such as the US-Mexican War, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the Chicano movement in the 1960s and 1970s. They do not usually have knowledge of social movements of other Latino groups in the US. To better understand the level of knowledge about historical and cultural aspects of different Latinos groups, we can add a couple of questions about this to our student evaluations, and include questions in our exit interview survey. We can then examine the content in our courses to make sure missing information is covered.

Important skills and activities: An important goal of our program is to promote civic engagement and leadership among our students with respect to Latin@ issues. We would like them to develop leadership skills such as writing, articulating, speaking, organizing events and working in the community with respect to Latin@s and Latin@ issues. One way our students do this is through our peer reviewed journal in which they write scholarly pieces that are reviewed by faculty and other students. We have seen an increase in journal submissions this year and the journal will be published in May (it wasn't published in the previous two years). The published journal gives us a forum to display the learning our students do in a scholarly way. Another way students demonstrate leadership is by engaging in Latino issues after graduating. In informal conversations with alumni, I have observed that several have gone on to graduate school to continue to study Latino issues. Through our newsletter, we have a regular feature of alumni and are able to keep tabs on their progress. Current students develop their leadership and civic engagement skills through service learning. Many of our current students are or have been engaged in service learning courses. I have observed at least five students from my service learning courses that have continued their volunteer commitments beyond the course. We have applied for a planning grant with the office of service learning to explore how to expand our service learning offerings in the community. We will look at ways of measuring the level of leadership and civic engagement among our students such as questions in the exit interview and alumni survey.