

NEWS FROM LASA

# Report on Ford-LASA Special Projects

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The following is a summary of procedures and outcomes of the most recent LASA/Ford Special Projects competition, as well as recommendations for conducting the next round of the competition.

In response to a request for proposals issued in mid-April, 2006, more than ninety projects were submitted for consideration by the June 15 deadline. Three projects were selected for partial funding, at the level of \$8,333 each.

I chaired the review and selection committee and the following LASA colleagues served with me: Guido Podesta, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Luis Reygadas, Department of Anthropology, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de Iztapalapa, México; and Arlene Tickner, Departamento de Ciencias Políticas, Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá.

The procedures for undertaking the review were as follows. The proposals were first divided into two groups of equal size, one of which was reviewed by myself and Reygadas, and the other reviewed by Podesta and Tickner. Each of the two teams reached consensus on 10 proposals that merited consideration by the entire committee. The 20 projects that remained were read separately by all four reviewers, each of whom assigned a numerical rating to all 20. The ratings were tabulated to produce a composite score, and attention was given to the standard deviation, that is, to the degree of dispersion of scoring for each of the proposals.

This procedure generated three groups of proposals: first, a set that was rated relatively low, and that at this juncture was excluded from consideration; second, a set in which there was sharp variation in scoring and thus put aside for debate among the

four reviewers; third, a set rated highly by all. All four reviewers arrived independently at the conclusion that three proposals stood out as especially meritorious, but before settling on these there was discussion of those proposals that elicited sharply divergent scores. Following debate, it was decided unanimously that the three proposals rated initially at the top of the list were to be funded. However, in the case of one project it was agreed that the award would be contingent on confirmation of plans to make the results of the effort available in Spanish or Portuguese, as stipulated in the request for proposals.

The committee had a \$25,000 fund to distribute. The intention had been to fund just two proposals at \$12,500 each, but the committee ended up recommending funding three proposals at a lower level.

The following three projects were selected:

**Workshop and Edited Volume on the Politics of Business and Social Responsibility**  
Felipe Agüero, University of Miami

**Judicialization of Politics and Legal Culture in Latin America: An International Research Collaborative**  
Javier Couso, Universidad Diego Portales  
Alexandra Huneeus, Stanford University  
Pablo Rueda, University of California, Berkeley

**A Distributed and Collective Ethnography of Academic Training in Latin American Anthropologies**  
Eduardo Restrepo, Universidad Javeriana (Colombia)  
Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, Universidade de Brasília (Brazil)  
(On behalf of the Latin American Working Group of the WAN Collective)

## About the Process and Recommendations for the Future

All three of the successful applicants were encouraged to submit a proposal for a session at LASA2007, although this was not made a condition for receipt of the grant. Perhaps a future competition could stipulate that "applications that envision activities associated with LASA Congresses are especially welcome."

Judging from our experience, the Committee would suggest that several other points be noted explicitly and highlighted in future calls for proposals. These include:

- 1) Since eligibility for this competition is limited to "groups of ad hoc members of LASA and/or LASA Sections," applications submitted by only one member in active standing will not be considered.
- 2) Given that the competition is intended to foster novel approaches to collaborative work and activities that will result in innovative products, the committee is unlikely to support applications contemplating conventional research by two individuals proposing to publish a paper or volume. ■