

ON THE PROFESSION

A Consortium that Works: The Consortium in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University

EGUIZÁBAL *continued...*

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in an “us” versus “them” way. Despite references to the increasing interconnectedness of today’s world, we all know that Title VI, as it is commonly referred to, does not consider migration, diasporas, heritage speakers, or other similar transnational issue-areas as belonging to (in the words of the program’s brochure) “the fields necessary to provide a full understanding of the areas, regions, or countries in which the languages are commonly used.”

At close to fifty million, the Hispanic population of the United States is the second-largest Spanish-speaking community in the world, second only to Mexico’s and larger than Spain’s. Univision, headquartered in Manhattan, is the largest producer of Spanish-language television programs and also one of the most popular networks in the United States among the 18-35 demographic. The electronic version of *El Nuevo Herald*, Miami’s Spanish language daily is widely read in Latin America. Alongside Madrid’s *El País*, it has the best regional coverage in the world.

Thirty-eight percent of Hispanics in the United States are foreign-born and more than half entered the country after 1990 (63 percent of Mexicans, 66 percent of Salvadorans, and even 21 percent of Cubans.) One in four Salvadorans, one in five Mexicans, and one in ten Cubans live in the United States.

Are they here? Are they there? Those are questions from a bygone era. They are here and they are there. They are everywhere. ■

The Consortium in Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) and Duke University is a collaborative program of teaching, research, and public outreach. Created more than twenty years ago as a result of a deepening shared interest in Latin America at both universities, the consortium is a partnership between the Institute for the Study of the Americas (ISA) at the UNC-CH and the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) at Duke. The geographic proximity of the two campuses—less than ten miles apart—greatly encourages and facilitates regular collaboration among faculty, staff, and students. The consortium is committed to the development of the Latin American and Caribbean undergraduate curriculum, the enhancement of the capabilities for graduate student training, support for faculty and student research projects representing all disciplines and professional schools, and the promotion of institutional and public awareness of the importance of Latin America and the Caribbean. The consortium works to fulfill its mission and meet program goals through educational activities, research and training support, collaborative outreach activities and the dissemination of relevant information. It seeks to integrate into a single community, members of the faculty, staff, and students with interests in Latin America, in all fields of knowledge.

Encouraged by the enthusiasm and collegiality among faculty and administrators from both campuses, the consortium was formalized in 1990 with funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. In the mid-1990s the consortium received subsequent endowment challenge grants from the Mellon Foundation. During those years academic administrators of both universities committed new staff positions and expanded faculty appointments in Latin American

studies. In 1990 Carolina and Duke joined together as a consortium program to prepare the first successful Title VI National Resource Center and FLAS Fellowship grant application. Rather than competing with each other, Carolina and Duke combined their formidable resources in library collections and deep faculty and staff assets to offer a joint program in Latin American studies. This tradition of collaboration and cooperation has continued for more than two decades.

The Consortium has maintained the practice of frequent communication between directors and staffs from both campuses. Staff members speak with one another almost daily and meet periodically. The consortium organizes social events, including picnics, pot-luck dinners, and faculty book-launching parties, all of which are designed to enhance a sense of community. There is a commitment to the development of the partnership at all programmatic levels. The continuity of staff members and faculty leadership has contributed to the maintenance of the tradition of collaboration between ISA and CLACS. New students and faculty members are informed of the resources and activities offered on the other campus and are apprised of joint activities and activities unique to each campus. Students from one campus are able to take classes on the other campus. It is not unusual for graduate students from one campus to have faculty representation from the other campus on their committees. Both libraries are open to students and faculty from the other campus.

Among the key activities that support teaching, outreach and research are the following:

Yucatec Maya Language Instruction

The consortium now offers three levels of instruction during the Summer Intensive

Yucatec Maya Institute provided through UNC-CH. Beginner-level instruction is offered every other spring semester. Important language-learning materials have been developed and distributed to students. In the past twenty years more than 400 students from around the world have enrolled in this program.

Latin American Film Festival

Inaugurated at UNC-CH almost twenty-five years ago, the month-long film festival is now a collaborative project organized under the auspices of the consortium and involving five other local university and colleges campuses, as well as Durham City Parks and Recreation, a local movie theater in Durham, and a public library in Greensboro.

The Consortium Conference

The annual Consortium Conference provides a forum for UNC-CH and Duke faculty and graduate students in the social sciences, humanities, and professional schools to engage one another in a constructive exchange of ideas derived from a variety of methodological perspectives, divergent theoretical frameworks, and differing thematic interests. The conference is intended to provide a venue for intellectual debate, exchange of ideas, and the development of collegiality. Conference themes vary from year to year.

Interdisciplinary Research and Training Working Groups

The working groups provide one of the principal means by which the consortium discharges its missions to promote interdisciplinary research and innovative scholarship, enhance the experience of graduate education, and disseminate knowledge of Latin America and the Caribbean to the wider university community. The program supports collaboration among faculty and graduate students from different departments,

professional programs, and curricula on both campuses. Working group themes range from Afro-Latin American perspectives, to the environment in Latin America, to Latin American political and economic regimes. The working groups have often organized panel presentations at national and international conferences such as the Latin American Studies Association, and have also published scholarly books and journal issues.

Latin America in Translation/en Traducción/em Tradução

Through a collaborative agreement with the consortium, the university presses of Duke University and the University of North Carolina publish English translations of Spanish- and Portuguese-language works from Latin America and the Caribbean. More than thirty such titles have appeared in the series, with additional titles currently scheduled for publication in the near future.

The consortium has a long history of educational outreach services to local and regional schools, colleges, universities, the state of North Carolina, the Mid-South, and beyond. ISA and CLACS share an outreach coordinator position and sustain a commitment to supporting outreach initiatives. The consortium's outreach office is a dynamic educational center that partners with public schools and colleges while disseminating information and materials to educators and the general public and serving as a resource to museums, businesses, media and government.

In organizing workshops, film festivals, the film collection/lending library, art exhibits, lecture series, and other public events, the consortium draws upon the expertise of Latin Americanist faculty, students, and staff from both campuses. The consortium is especially committed to developing partnerships with North Carolina schools.

To this end, it has instituted professional development workshops, in-service teacher training institutes, teacher study tours to Latin America, a lending library of instructional materials, and Web-based materials and curriculum units. Last year, the program partnered with Alexander County Schools in western North Carolina and Durham Public Schools to assist in the development of an understanding of the increasing population of students from Latin America.

Under current budgetary circumstances at both universities, the consortium faces the challenge of diminishing institutional support, principally in the form of decreased funding and reduced staffing. This necessarily has given new importance to enhancing fund-raising capabilities, both from private donors and foundations, a task to which members of the consortium have increasingly dedicated themselves. At the same time, an environment of diminishing internal support has encouraged innovative—and low cost—program initiatives designed to maximize the resources that are available.

The consortium is confident that it possesses institutional credibility of senior academic administrators at both UNC-CH and Duke. Certainly that has been the position articulated during the past two years of budgetary adversity. Members of the faculty and staff can look forward with optimism to the resumption of full institutional support in the not too distant future. ■