

## MEMO

**To:** Professor Montgomery, Chair, President's Task Force on Anti-Racism, Equity & Inclusion

**Date:** March 23, 2021

**RE:** Preparing to best serve Hispanic/Latinx members of the FSU Community

Florida State University is at a defining moment in its' changing student demographics. Over the last ten years, FSU has increased Hispanic/Latinx undergraduate enrollment from 13% to over 20%—classifying us an “Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institution” according to the *Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities*. Hispanic graduate student enrollment increased by 5% between 2010 (7%) and 2019 (12%). Despite this increased student enrollment, the percentage of Hispanic/Latinx faculty and staff has remained at 5% since 2015; the university closed the Office of Multicultural Affairs, which is just now being reestablished; and has dramatically reduced the physical space allocated for El Centro—the “home away from home” for Latinx students. If FSU is to be a true Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) within the next 2-3 years and not, simply a Hispanic-Enrolling Institution there is much work to be done.

Over the last year Hispanic/Latinx faculty, staff, students, and alumni have been working in various committees to identify the gaps in service to our community. Below you will find a summary of the work done thus far and recommendations for setting FSU up to be a **leader** in serving this growing population:

### **University Hispanic-Serving Institution Status Committee:**

This year we have been benchmarking where FSU stands in relation to our peers in the State of Florida and in “*el nuevo south*” as well as documenting the best practices of these institutions. Currently, Florida Atlantic University, Florida International University and University of Central Florida are designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). University of Florida and University of South Florida are designated as Emerging-HSIs.

#### Recommendations:

- Hire an executive level leadership position to serve as the manager of HSI Services & Programs similar to the University of Central Florida
- Reestablish the Dr. Antonia Pantoja Scholars Program to recruit prospective students from Tallahassee and the neighboring counties
- Join the [Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities](#)
- Partner with [Excelencia in Education](#) to work towards earning the [Seal of Excelencia](#) for creating a campus that serves the Latinx members of their institution
  - [A Florida Briefing on 25 Years of HSIs](#)

### **Latinx Faculty and Staff Network:**

Though demographics place FSU among a small number of highly ranked, research-I universities poised to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution in the near future, the university cannot currently compete with peer institutions in Florida, in the southeast, or nationally in terms of the services, academic programs, and institutional spaces it offers to serve its Hispanic/Latina/o/x students, staff, and faculty.

#### Recommendations:

- Implement [recommendations](#) of Black faculty
- Submitted to President Thrasher and Provost McRorie a “[Proposal for the Creation of a Florida State University Institute for Latinx Studies \(ILS\)](#)”

### **Student Affairs Hispanic/Latinx Student Life Taskforce in partnership with the Hispanic/Latinx Student Union:**

Recognizing the needs, challenges, and goals of Hispanic/Latinx students at Florida State University, the Hispanic/Latinx Student Life Taskforce strives to enable the academic, professional, and social success of Hispanic/Latinx students on Florida State University's campus. The taskforce will explore ways to better connect and create lasting resources for Hispanic/Latinx students. With this initiative in mind, this taskforce represents a diverse population within the Hispanic/Latinx community at Florida State to ensure that accessible and representative resources remain our utmost priority. More details on each of our recommendations can be found [here](#).

#### Recommendations:

- Renaming of the Global and Multicultural Engagement Building
- Latinx member on the President's Cabinet
- Permanent increase in funding for the Latinx Cultural Celebration
- Identity Based Counseling
- Identity Based Orientation
- Expansion of resources for students with an unstable immigration status
- Creation of a Hispanic/Latinx Affairs Department - housing a Latinx major/minor, drop-in spaces, and Dream Center
- Creation of the Hispanic/Latinx House

### **Hispanic Graduate Student Association (HiGSA):**

HiGSA aims to promote Hispanic culture at FSU, to generate a support network that helps new graduate students settle and adapt to FSU and the local community, to mentor graduate students to succeed in academic life and goals, and to generate awareness of social and political issues in Hispanic countries and their relationship with the USA. Two of our major programs include *Cinehassee* and *HiGSA Talks*. This year we virtually hosted over 200 subscribers for the fourth season of *Cinehassee*—an Iberoamerican Film Festival that celebrates their people, artists, makers, and all related to these shared cultures and communities. *HiGSA Talks* offer an inclusive interdisciplinary space where members, conducting research and work about America, or interested in Latin America, can share their findings. *HiGSA Talks* is an opportunity to share ideas and serves as a learning experience that develops our understating of the global society we live and work in. The fourth annual session of *HiGSA Talks* will be hosted virtually over two days this April.

#### Recommendations:

- Recommend that the Congress of Graduate Students (COGS) guarantees funding for HiGSA every year
- Include representation from members of HiGSA in university searches, committees, or other meetings where the undergraduate population is always present
- Include a member of HiGSA on the University Diversity & Inclusion Council, the Power of We, and other like University committees
- Reduce from 12 to 9 credit hours (Fall and Spring semesters) the criteria to apply to the Latin American-Caribbean (LAC) Scholarship

### **Hispanic/Latinx Alumni Network:**

The mission for FSU Hispanic/Latinx Alumni Network is to continue fostering the community created by students at Florida State for Hispanic/Latinx Alumni. The network strives to connect alumni, families, friends, and fans who are passionate about FSU and their Hispanic/Latinx culture through ongoing events and programming. As alumni we hope to provide support and guidance for FSU and the current Hispanic/Latinx students in any way that we can.

#### Recommendations:

- Assist in establishing a network of Hispanic/Latinx alumni to create or grow the current mentorship program to assist current students. Through mentorship students will have guidance through their time

at FSU and beyond graduation, where mentors can continue to provide a sense of support and belonging.

- Recommendation for the FSU Career Center to partner with organizations such as the [Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement](#) (HACE) and [Hispanic/Latino Professionals Association](#) (HLPa). These organizations can build a network of alumni, employers, and internship opportunities for current students.

**We have also engaged in advocacy as individual members and stakeholders in the FSU community:**

- **Latinx Faculty (Individuals):** [Letter in Support of Black Students, Faculty, and Staff \(Summer 2020\)](#)
- **President's Council for Diversity and Inclusion membership:**
  - Lara Perez-Felkner's email to Taskforce on 2/22/2021 requesting an investment of physical space in a centralized location close to campus was titled "Proposal for Dedicated, Central, and Beautiful Space for Equity and Inclusion" and followed a discussion in the Diversity and Inclusion Council about the need for physical space for communities to convene.
- **Caribbean Studies Working Group**
  - Including faculty and graduate students across campus, the Caribbean Studies Working Group (2015-2020) created a forum for presenting scholarship-in-progress, discussing shared pedagogies across different disciplines, and responding to recent publications. This group eventually spun out two formal, international events, with the support of the Winthrop-King Institute for Contemporary French and Francophone Contemporary Studies: one a symposium on comparative colonialisms, the other a conference on Caribbean Disasters. This group has brought together researchers across campus who are invested in developing a wide range of courses and intellectual opportunities for exploring Caribbean and Latin American histories, arts, social organization, and more, to the benefit of Latinx students and beyond. While on hiatus during the pandemic, the fundamental aim of this group is to support Latinx student cultural events and initiatives and to include undergraduate and graduate students in the research activities of faculty specializing in the wider Caribbean and its diasporas.

As you can see, we have been working diligently to have a holistic view of our Hispanic/Latina/o/x community at FSU. We hope the Taskforce can see that merely increasing Latinx student enrollment is not enough to claim that FSU is serving their Hispanic/Latinx community. FSU needs to create a climate and culture which honors the rich tradition, research, talent, and work ethic of all our Hispanic/Latinx members by institutionally and financially supporting our community.

**Embedded Links:**

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities: <https://www.hacu.net/hacu/default.asp>

Excelencia in Education: <https://www.edexcelencia.org>

Seal of Excelencia: <https://www.edexcelencia.org/seal-excelencia>

A Florida Briefing on 25 Years of HSIs: <https://www.edexcelencia.org/25yrs-HSIs-Florida>

A Letter from the Black Faculty & Staff Network: <https://diversity.fsu.edu/affinity-groups/bfsn/letter-black-faculty-staff-network>

FSU Institute for Latinx Studies Proposal: [https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kHsZHMmjVT4ZScSzDCmwi\\_vBSAEUWq9r](https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kHsZHMmjVT4ZScSzDCmwi_vBSAEUWq9r)

Division of Student Affairs Hispanic/Latinx Student Life Task Force 2020-2021 Recommendations: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/19-jdwcVPyJbiPrWXQxSKOLjqTPvFFIInve6YiTzfrUU/edit>

Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement: <https://www.haceonline.org>

Hispanic/Latino Professionals Association: <https://www.hlpa.com>

Latinx Faculty Letter to Black Students, Staff, and Faculty: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z-ecnlE-EpcDg\\_uFRxRQg\\_5U4TOpmJyt/view?fbclid=IwAR36IqeKRXerJtE4uzVi1U7Li7aleTjBIpdM3gMuyC0wkStEKk55vLcOgr8](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Z-ecnlE-EpcDg_uFRxRQg_5U4TOpmJyt/view?fbclid=IwAR36IqeKRXerJtE4uzVi1U7Li7aleTjBIpdM3gMuyC0wkStEKk55vLcOgr8)