

Report of CEP subcommittee to review the undergraduate program in Latin American Studies (13 May 2010)

Description of the program

The Latin American Studies program at UCSD is founded on the academic resources provided by a broad range of campus faculty with a strong interest in Latin America. The program is housed in the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies (CILAS), an ORU benefiting substantially, in cooperation with SDSU, from Department of Education Title VI funding; it does not however operate formally under the aegis of CILAS. The academic program consists of a graduate degree program, with various areas of focus leading to the M.A. degree, and an undergraduate one offering both a major and a minor in Latin American Studies. Although housed in the Gildred Latin American Studies Building in the Institute of the Americas complex (the locus of CILAS), the undergraduate program draws its curriculum almost entirely from courses offered by a large number of affiliated faculty (84, according to this year's catalogue) within various departments in Arts and Humanities and Social Science, since it has no FTE of its own. The program, both undergraduate and graduate, is administered by a Director, currently Michael Montéon from the History department, and a staff Student Affairs Officer; financial management is provided by the MSO of CILAS.. There are just two courses specifically designated as requirements for the major, LATI 50 (which offers optional foreign-language sections) and LATI 190, the senior seminar (with the possibility of continuing with LATI 191, Honors in Latin American Studies). LATI 50 (entitled "Introduction to Latin America," and described as an "interdisciplinary overview of society and culture"), is taught by a faculty member in Sociology, and has a high enrollment fueled by college requirements, especially from Thurgood Marshall; LATI 190 is a dedicated LAS research seminar taught by program-affiliated faculty and supported by individual faculty advisers appropriate to the student's research focus.

Requirements of the major and minor programs

The major in LAS consists of one introductory lower-division course (LATI 50), one upper-division seminar (LATI 190), and eleven elective upper-division courses drawn from Anthropology, Communications, Economics, Ethnic Studies, History, Literature, Political Science, Sociology, Theatre and Dance, and Visual Arts; there is also a requirement of Spanish-language proficiency equivalent to two full years of college-level Spanish (i.e., at the successful conclusion of Literature/Spanish 2C). Electives, chosen from a list of about 176 courses, must be drawn from at least three different departments; a minimum of three courses must be taken in each department, but no more than five. In addition, at least two courses "must concentrate exclusively on periods earlier than the twentieth century." According to the catalog copy, "students majoring in Latin American studies are also urged to minor in a core discipline such as anthropology, economics, history, literature, political science, or sociology."

The minor calls for seven courses, of which five must be upper division; required lower-division courses are LATI 50, and a course demonstrating language proficiency in Spanish or Portuguese (a requirement fulfilled by LTSP 2C or LTSP 2D, for non-native and native speakers, respectively, or by LTSP 50 or above, or by a Spanish- or Portuguese-language education abroad course.) The five upper-division courses are to be chosen from the list set out for the major.

Strengths and weaknesses of the undergraduate academic program

With its proximity to Mexico and the growing campus visibility of Latin Americans, combined with the increased interest in Mexican-American relations and issues of immigration from all over Latin America, UCSD would seem to be a particularly promising site for an outstanding undergraduate program; especially as it could be enhanced by the resources provided by CILAS, and by its close association with SDSU. As it now stands, however, the LAS program has not capitalized on these advantages as much as it might. The various events sponsored by CILAS (conferences, visiting lecturers, a film series, etc.), although open to all students, are seldom if ever attended by undergraduates, who do not seem to see CILAS as relevant to their own academic programs. The undergraduate program nevertheless benefits from a large number of faculty at UCSD with a strong interest in Latin America, and from what we heard it appeared that faculty who are engaged with CILAS regarded the educational program as an integral part of the Center. It is not clear, however, just how many of the 84 faculty members listed in the catalogue have any involvement in shaping the program; just four in addition to the Director came to speak with us.

Size of the program

In recent years the program has served about 16-24 students a year. Students in the major appreciate being given the ability to shape their programs of concentration according to individual interests. At the same time, however, they miss the opportunity to interact with other students in the major, with whom they have no contact until nearly the end of their time at UCSD. The number of students in the major has never been large, but has decreased significantly (by about half) in recent years; this decrease has been accompanied (and perhaps, as some program faculty suggest, precipitated) by a phenomenal growth in the major in International Studies (currently said to number about 1000 students). Possible reasons that were suggested to us for this vast discrepancy in numbers were the apparent greater flexibility of an IS major, and the somewhat more rigorous language requirement of LAS. Another important factor, we believe, is the extremely low profile of LAS, which has engaged in little if any outreach to publicize its existence; in comparison, IS has apparently conducted a vigorous publicity campaign directed especially to college advisers. With such a small number of students, there is an opportunity for close student-faculty interaction. In practice, such interaction occurs only in the second quarter of the senior year in LATI 190, the only upper-division course specifically designed for LAS majors.

Advising

The broad, not to say dizzying, choice of courses available to students (176 in this year's catalog) ideally requires a high level of advising not possible within the current staffing level of a single part-time SAO (this year in a temporary 60-70% position) serving both undergraduate and graduate students. The advising structure at present seems understandably rather haphazard, dependent on students' own initiative to consult the SAO, the Director, or the instructors of LATI 50 and 190. LATI 50, the only LAS course provided to students before they undertake their individual elective programs, is an introduction to contemporary Latin America, focusing mostly on socio-political issues; the catalog claim that the course "prepares majors to build a coherent curriculum on Latin America" seems at best overblown.

Curriculum

The ten students who responded to a questionnaire from college advisers, as well as the three who met with us, all expressed satisfaction with their ability to shape their own programs of study. At the same time, however, they voiced a desire for suggested course curricula with a particular focus. This wish probably stems in part from their sense that the program provides no real sense of direction; they also complain of the lack of interaction with other students in the major, since they take LATI 190 only in the winter quarter of senior year and usually do not even know one another before then. The absence of a sense of program cohesion or even of collegiality of shared interests is aggravated by the small numbers of undergraduate students in both major and minor programs. Under the current structure of the program there is no obvious way in which this situation might be remedied. Students actually requested an increased number of required courses, one or two lower-division to follow LATI 50 on particular topics, and two or three upper-division courses specifically for LAS students; they also expressed a wish for more research opportunities, and suggested a required project in Mexico, similar to that in Immigration Studies. Another proposal was for the organization of a student club for majors and minors, similar to one in Urban Studies. All these suggestions seem to us to be well worth pursuing.

Issues of material support:

Personnel:

The program is administered by a Director, drawn from the regular campus faculty, and an SAO who provides staff support and especially student advising. The Director, responsible for both undergraduate and graduate programs, also does graduate admissions, and teaches the introductory graduate seminar. The time of the SAO is split between graduate (2/3) and undergraduate (1/3) students; the position has been reduced this year to a temporary one at about 60% time. Financial management is provided by the MSO of CILAS.

Funding

The program is currently funded by a patchwork of temporary year-to-year allocations of three different administrative units, the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Vice Chancellor for Research, and the Dean of Social Sciences, whose contribution over the past three years has been cut by about two thirds. Perhaps as a remnant of the separation of the educational program from CILAS, within which it was first created, the VCR supports the Director with a summer ninth in salary and release from one course in his department (presently History). The SVCAA provides salary for the SAO, as well as stipends for the LATI TA's, who are students from the LAS Master's program. Although in the past the DSS supplemented the SAO salary in addition to funding incidental program business expenses, for the last two years the SAO contribution has been cut, most probably the immediate

reason for the present part-time temporary nature of the position. LATI 50, which attracts a large number of students, largely from college requirements (especially ERC), is funded by Sociology, which gives course credit to the instructor. LATI 190, however, is currently taught without any compensation or course relief for the faculty instructor, who essentially volunteers her time.

Morale among the staff and the faculty most actively involved with the program appears to be extremely low, despite the faculty's evident passion for its mission. Rumors (that we were not able either to substantiate or discredit) abound, within a generally held sense of a lack of commitment to the program on the part of the Administration. We were told, for instance, that the SVCAA intends to withdraw his funding next year, and that the DSS has announced that there will be no free-standing programs in the Division, making it necessary to find some existing academic unit to house the program (see Issues of the larger institutional context, below).¹ In any case, the present funding model fails to provide the stability required if the interim director (the second in two years) is to be replaced by a permanent one.

Issues of the larger institutional context

Although LAS is a "stand-alone" educational program within the Division of Social Sciences, the current text of Title VI (a program to foster education) seems clearly to require such a program as part of the grant, which provides significant funding for CILAS in collaboration with SDSU, which together are designated a National Resource Center. In the past, both undergraduate and graduate programs have been closely integrated with CILAS; while that appears still to be the case for the M.A. program, the undergraduate program is dependent on CILAS only for its MSO, and indirectly on the attraction that CILAS provides for faculty to this campus. Any consideration of changes in the status of the program would nevertheless need to take account of this larger context.

If the program were to remain intact, but become administratively part of some existing larger unit, the leading possibilities appear to be the History Department and Eleanor Roosevelt College; such a move would bring a change in MSO and advising staff but presumably not in physical location.

Recommendations for the LAS Undergraduate Program

1. *Size of program.* To remain viable, the program needs to attract a significantly larger number of students, as both minors and especially majors. Accomplishing this will require vigorous outreach to departments and especially to college advisers, publicizing the existence and advantages of the major, and highlighting ways it differs from and might be more desirable for a particular student than International Studies (now with 1000 majors).

*This continuing outreach effort would require additional, appropriately compensated time of both Director and staff, who now lack the necessary time.

2. *Advising.* To give students needed guidance in constructing their independent, interdisciplinary programs, they must have the benefit (and requirement) of more intensive advising than is now possible.

*This focus on advising would require sufficient and stable funding for a full-time SAO (and perhaps additional staff as the number of students increased).

3. *Curriculum.* To provide a coherent academic foundation, we believe there should be at least one (with ideally a second) LAS lower-division course to succeed LATI 50 as a requirement for the major and the minor. Further, we recommend a minimum of two upper-division courses, possibly topics courses, directed particularly at LAS majors (and cross-referenced by related departments), to provide more focus for the major curriculum and greater cohesiveness among the majors themselves. The number and nature of all these courses should be proposed by the affiliated faculty of LAS, or by some subgroup of that (rather large) faculty that identifies itself as LAS faculty. It is perhaps symptomatic of the program at present that although we were told there were "about 30" affiliated faculty, there appeared to be no clear organization or role for them.

*Any curricular expansion would require funding to compensate departments for faculty release time.

¹ The issue of a "new home" may have emanated from discussions preceding the Campus Budget Committee presentation given by the SVCAA on 12 May 2010; the slide headed "Management Efficiencies Under Review" includes the following item:

- Move administration of programs to departments or schools
 - International Studies Program
 - Urban Studies Program
 - Latin American Studies

4. *Directorship*. To survive for even a short time, the program must have stable and dedicated leadership. The present Director considers himself to be more or less the caretaker of the program, working to sustain it until he retires from the position (and perhaps the University). Attempts to identify a new director have been so far stymied, largely it would seem because of the low level of compensation, although the inadequacy and impermanence of staff support is probably also a factor. If the program is to attain any stability, it needs appropriate and ongoing support for both Director and SAO.

In conclusion

UCSD is one of the leading centers in the country for Latin American Studies, with both a national and an international reputation. Enhanced by its close proximity to Mexico, with lively research activity provided by CILAS and an active cooperative relationship with SDSU, the campus represents a rich resource for the study of Latin America in all its aspects. Awareness of this scholarly preeminence, as well as the obvious need for greater cultural awareness and more student diversity on the UCSD campus, has shaped our conclusions about the LAS program. All our recommendations for the academic program unavoidably require increases in funding, and this at a time of broad budget cuts. It seems necessary, then, to consider the future of the program in more fundamental ways. We see three possibilities for that future, only one of which (no. 2) would preserve the aims and composition of Latin American Studies as it has been conceived from the beginning.

1. Maintain the current status quo, with more stable and dependable funding. We do not however believe that this current model serves undergraduate students as it should, nor that is sustainable in the long run.
2. Increase the number of specifically LAS courses, to strengthen the academic integrity of the undergraduate program and to provide a sense of identity and cohesion to majors. At the same time, increase the compensation for both the Director and the SAO, in order to provide significant and systematic student advising as well as an active publicity effort to attract more students. Such an expansion might best be achieved if LAS were housed within ERC, with which it shares both general campus location and a similar focus of interest.
3. Discontinue the independent undergraduate program in Latin American Studies, while simultaneously developing a visible and coherent program as a focus area within International Studies. Especially given the current campus concern with issues surrounding ethnic and cultural diversity, however, together with what has been (or has perceived to have been) an underlying global business orientation of International Studies, this alternative appears to us unwise, as it risks erasing the program as it has been conceived and carried out since its inception.

Steve Erie (UCSD, Dept. of Political Science)
Steven Topik (UCI, Dept. of History)
Jane R. Stevens (UCSD, Dept. of Music), for CEP

Date: May 5, 2011

To: Committee on Educational Policy and Courses (CEP), Academic Senate UCSD

Re: LAS response to the report of the CEP subcommittee that reviewed the undergraduate program in Latin American Studies (LAS)

On behalf of the LAS Curriculum Committee (which includes David FitzGerald, Olga Vasquez, Kirstie Dorr and myself) I wish to thank the CEP subcommittee for the valuable observations and recommendations contained in the report.

Together with this response, we are submitting to CEP a proposal to reorganize the Latin American Studies Undergraduate Program. The proposal, elaborated by the LAS Curriculum Committee, seeks to improve the academic quality, functionality, and student appeal of the program. It explicitly addresses the main issues raised by the CEP subcommittee's report. These issues are:

1. The curriculum of the undergraduate program must provide a more structured, coherent academic foundation. Specifically, the CEP subcommittee recommended the creation of a set of required courses providing a firm basis of knowledge on general aspects of Latin America. The reorganization proposal establishes a substantive core of four required courses providing a solid basis of knowledge on Latin America's history, society and politics, culture, and relations with the United States.
2. The present structure of the program does not offer enough opportunities for interaction among the students, which results in the lack of a clear sense of program identity and cohesion. The CEP subcommittee suggested the introduction of features allowing LAS students to meet and work with their peers as a group. The reorganization proposal addresses this issue by establishing discussion sections reserved for the enrollment of LAS students, not only in the introductory course LATI 50, but also attached to the four core courses mentioned above.
3. The CEP subcommittee observed that the program should offer more options for students interested in conducting research. The proposal to reorganize the curriculum incorporates a required research methods course and an elective academic internship course that promotes research through involvement in community and professional environments in the San Diego area. In addition, CEP has recently approved our addition of elective courses LATI 122A/B/C, which allow LAS undergraduate students to participate in a research project on international migration through the Mexican Migration Field Research Program.

In addition to the recommendations for curricular changes, the CEP subcommittee emphasized the need to promote program growth and provide more adequate advising to the students. At present, the LAS program has 19 majors and stands third among the eight area studies programs at UCSD. We consider that, with the existing resources, we can sustain moderate growth up to about 30-35 majors, which would put us roughly on level with the two larger area studies programs (Chinese and Japanese Studies). With CEP's approval of the reorganization proposal, the LAS program will launch a recruitment drive focusing the efforts on the colleges' advisors, the largest courses related to Latin America, and targeted categories of undergraduate students.

Finally, we recognize the validity of the CEP subcommittee observation that student advising has been "rather haphazard". To a large extent the problem is related to the fact that the students are now fulfilling most of the requirements through purely elective courses, which they feel they can simply choose on their own according to their topical interests and schedule availability and convenience. We intend to use the introduction of the new requirements (the four courses of the substantive core and the research methods course) as a basis for systematizing the advising process through a collective orientation event at the beginning of every year and a system of invitations and appointments for individual advice on a quarterly basis.

Leon Zamosc
Director of Latin American Studies

August 31, 2011

**PROFESSOR LEON ZAMOSC, Director
Latin Americans Studies Program**

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review: Latin American Studies Program

Dear Professor Zamosc,

On May 13, 2011, the Committee on Educational Policy and Courses (CEP) considered the review for the Latin American Studies Program, which included the report of the Review Subcommittee that conducted a site visit with the Program and the Program's response. Additionally, the Committee considered the proposal from the Latin American Studies Program (LAS) to fundamentally revise its undergraduate curriculum. We considered both items together, as the curriculum proposal responds to many of the direct concerns outlined in the Review Subcommittee's report.

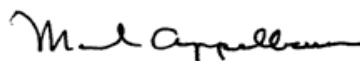
The CEP limited its comments to the issues specific to the LAS and did not consider recommendations to increase funding or disestablish LAS in favor of incorporating the curriculum as part of the International Studies Program. (We note that the International Studies Program is organized across disciplinary fields – Economics, Anthropology, etc. – not regional areas, so the recommendations would constitute a redefinition of that Program, as well.). The CEP endorses the recommendations of the Review Subcommittee, specifically:

1. Continuing efforts to increase the size of the major.
2. Improving advising to students.
3. Improving the structure and coherence of the LAS curriculum.
4. Stabilizing the Program's Directorship.

It should be noted that the Committee was deeply impressed with the Program's serious consideration of the report and the Review Subcommittee's concerns regarding the lack of structure and cohesion in the LAS curriculum. The proposal to revise the curriculum represents considerable effort and reflects the Program's commitment to providing its undergraduates a meaningful academic experience. The Committee thanks the Program faculty for engaging in this endeavor and appreciates its commitment. The CEP believes that the restructured curriculum will address concerns related to advising and provide much needed cohesion to the undergraduate program. Our expectation is that the new major and the Program's planned recruitment drive will lead to greater student interest in the major.

For the Programs' post-review follow up, you will be asked to submit a brief written summary regarding the Program's new curriculum and its impact on the above concerns (number of majors, level of advising required, and student satisfaction with the new curriculum). The Undergraduate Council will coordinate this review, and you may expect to be contacted regarding the review in the next academic year.

Sincerely,



Mark Appelbaum, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy and Courses

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