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Attempting Preventing Reinventing the Wheel: Establishing Chicano/a-Latino/a Studies at a Midwest Urban University

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"This session will focus on the personal observations of three faculty who sought to establish a minor in Chicano/a-Latino/a Studies . . . Follow our graphic accounts as we wrestle with the decision of actually embarking on such a quest amidst our then-current demands of doctoral coursework, research, teaching and tenure."

In the fall semester of 1995, Chicano/a Studies was formally recognized as a "minor" at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Two years previously, three faculty members from the College of Public Affairs and Community Service at UNO diligently worked to gather student and faculty support and put the wheels in motion for establishing such a minor. Following a fairly sure formula successfully developed by Women's Studies and refined by Native American Studies, we very systematically developed a straightforward statement of purpose, governance statement, course schedule and working bibliography of relevant resources. Despite every effort to ensure successfully establishing the minor and working to develop it into a reputable component of the university curricula, which we ultimately did, we still encountered numerous roadblocks—expected and unexpected, simple and complex. In our attempts to avoid re-inventing the wheel, we ultimately acknowledged it as a necessity.

This session will focus on the personal observations of three junior faculty who sought to establish a minor in Chicano/a-Latino/a Studies. At the time we initiated this process, one faculty member was a non-tenured assistant professor and the other two were Chicano/a instructors in the Minority Faculty Development program at UNO. In "Heart of Darkness"-like fashion, we present our journey: examining the object of our academic mission, anticipating the administrative obstacles, encountering the horrifying yet fascinating inter-/intra-ethnic realities, ultimately accomplishing our task, and subsequently anticipating the consequences.

Follow our graphic accounts as we wrestle with the decision of actually embarking on such a quest amidst our then-current demands of doctoral coursework, research, teaching and tenure. Conflicts emerge from the beginning as we study the feasibility of such a venture amidst our tenure-track demands, as well as crossing allegiances between

colleges. (Though we were assigned mainly to CPACS, our only hope to establish the minor would have to be through the College of Arts and Sciences.) Guided by the wise consult of faculty from other "minor" programs, we move forward on a new path in defining the purpose of a new area of study. We hit the tedious snags of having to articulate the specifics of terms—Chicano/a, Latino/a, etc.—to a "seemingly" uninformed academic evaluation committee. We struggle with the logistics of organizing a faculty/staff/student committee to develop the specifics of the curriculum. We then encounter the inevitable but necessary conflicts of how such a program will be identified, namewise and how its curriculum will be constructed, language-wise.
We also reflect on our accomplishments and the implications for the future of Chicano/a-Latino/a Studies, as well as for other ethnic studies programs.

The discussion, though straightforward and personal in design, will also be laden with applications of liberatory pedagogy, symbolic interactionism, and multicultural education. By describing our journey towards program development, we aim to verify previous proven methods, challenge such methods in light of the uniqueness of this program, and solicit guidance as we move forward toward the development of a major and/or department in Chicano/a-Latino/a Studies.

PRESENTERS

Joseph A. Valades is an assistant professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha who received his Ph.D. in 1994. He teaches social sciences courses within the Goodrich Scholarship Program, and his research emphasis is on Latinos in higher education. He is the coordinator of the Chicano/a-Latino/a Studies Program and teaches the introductory course for this minor. He also is the faculty advisor for the Association of Latino American Students (ALAS) on campus.

Theresa Barron-McKeagney is an assistant professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha who received her Ph.D. in 1993. She teaches various courses for the School of Social Work, and her research interests are on Latinas in higher education, family mentoring for Latino / a families, and mental health issues among the Chicano/a-Latino/a community. She serves on the Chicano/aLatino/a Studies Program faculty committee and teaches the introductory course for this minor.

Micheal Carroll is an assistant professor at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in the Goodrich Scholarship Program. Carroll teaches courses in Irish Literature, African American Literature, Native American Humanities, American Multicultural Humanities and English Composition. His research interests are American cultural studies, especially the Jazz-Blues Aesthetic, the African American Novel, and the work of James Baldwin.

Lourdes Gouveia is a professor of Sociology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Gouveia received her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Kansas in 1989. Her research interests are in the areas of Latin American/Latino/a Studies (with emphasis on new immigrant waves); global development and social change (with emphasis on the political economy of agriculture and food). Her publications are in these areas. She teaches courses which relate generally to the "global inequality" area of the graduate

program. She is a Graduate Faculty Fellow.

Lucy Garza is an undergraduate student majoring in Sociology at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.