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Proposal for the Rising Tide Professorships Fall 2018

Abstract (150 words)

The University of Maine undergraduate student body includes 3.5% of Latin American and Hispanic heritage (https://umaine.edu/oir/common-data-sets/), while Latinx students constitute 1.5% of the graduate students on campus (Debra Allen, personal communication 3-8-18) and the professoriate includes 5 Latinx faculty members (slightly under 1%). Our proposed “UMaine Unido” project seeks to support the well being of the undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty of the Latinx community of the University of Maine by creating events with, for, and about Latinxs and Latin American culture. As a way to promote visibility, participation and integration, this project will promote events for the UMaine community to increase awareness and respect for the contributions of Latinxs on our campus and in the United States, both immigrants and those born here. While working to better integrate Latinx and mainstream communities at the university, the project also intends to build a greater sense of identity and support among UMaine Latinxs, an underserved minority on our campus.

Timeline

The present project is intended for four semesters. This period of time will serve to provide a set of different events spreading over two years. We consider this is the minimum timeframe to engage the UMaine community in sharing and cooperating together successfully.
Project Description

Objectives, outcomes and connection to college/units goals.

Objectives:

1. Build greater unity among and identity of Latinx professors and graduate students on campus, extend this community to undergraduates, and work to integrate better the campus Latinx community with the mainstream campus.

2. Increase the visibility of and respect for the Latinx community on campus and locally.

Activities:

To achieve these objectives, we propose to sponsor a series of events and meetings across the four semesters. Each semester, we will:

1. Invite a prominent and successful Latinx living in the United States to visit UMaine each semester, speak on campus, and meet with members of the community. We have already gotten a commitment from the distinguished Peruvian writer Daniel Alarcón [https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/authors/2025125/daniel-alarcon] to visit in Fall 2018, should this proposal be successful. Mr. Alarcón lives in New York City. Across the four semesters, we will seek gender and discipline balance among invitees. We will also seek to leverage the base funding from the professorship with other sources (e.g., Cultural Affairs/Distinguished Lecture Series grants), and we will seek co-sponsorship with units such as Performing Arts (theater, music) to build interest in including Latinx individuals and cultural products in regular programming.

2. Invite a UMaine Latinx faculty member or graduate student each semester to speak about their work and experience as a Latinx member of the community. Latinx faculty members
include Professors Stefano Tijerina from Business, Roberto Lopez-Anido from Civil and Engineering, Sandra de Urioste from School of Forest Resources, and Maria Sandweiss and Carlos Villacorta in Modern Languages and Classics. We will also include Angel Loredo, who was for 10 years was the Associate Dean of Students at UMaine and is now the Maine Department of Education Higher Education Specialist; there hasn't been a senior Latinx administrator since Angel Loredo’s position was eliminated in 2009, and we intend for the UMaine Unido project to help fill that void.

3. Present at least one new film from Latin America each semester and hold a post-showing discussion.

4. Organize occasional meetings of the Latinx members of the UMaine community to discuss common experiences and help refine objectives for enhancing the both the visibility and sense of identity (and identification with the University) of Latinxs on campus.

Outcomes:

All of these events except #4 will be open to the entire community. This will help to create a dialogue about the role and place of Latin Americans faculty contributing in the development of student at UMaine. We will use Qualtrix to survey Latinx and non-Latinx members of the UMaine community at the start and at the end of the project to assess attitudes towards Latinx identity on campus. We expect that by bringing outstanding Latinx individuals to campus and co-sponsoring with other units, UMaine Unido will inspire continued interaction with the Latinx community in the United States.

Connection to college/units goals:
This project will support the CLAS goal of “deepen[ing] our understanding of cultures in Maine and abroad” (CLAS Strategic Plan Mission Statement, http://umaine.edu/las/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2013/01/CLAS_Strategic_Plan_final.pdf). Specifically, “UMaine Unido” fits the “Strategy: Increase students’ understanding of diverse perspectives and the broadly defined human condition through new programs, activities, and curriculum” (ibid.). By creating a more welcoming environment for Latinxs, this project also has the potential to aid in recruiting new students to UMaine, thus supporting the College and University strategic goal of growing enrollment. It is worth noting that at 56 million individuals, Latinxs constitute the largest minority in the United States (https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2016/cb16-ff16.html) and are also the largest minority in the State of Maine (https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ME/PST045216)

**Budget**

Support for Prof. Villacorta: 1 course release per year (2 total) to free time to devote to this project; Professor Sandweiss will volunteer his time as co-leader of the project. Support for visiting speakers, films, and food for meetings: $1000/semester ($4000 total). Total request: $4000, divided evenly across four semesters, plus the cost of 2 course releases for Prof. Villacorta (one per year).