



HLC Accreditation 2020-2021

Evidence Document

Faculty Senate

Proposal for a Faculty Cluster Hire in Latinx Studies

Additional information: The proposal was initiated by a group of faculty and discussed by Faculty Senate in October 2017. See more on this topic in the Sunflower news article: [Latinx cluster hire proposed for “a return in terms of recruitment” along I-35 corridor](#) (Accessed April 20, 2021.)

Proposal for a Faculty Cluster Hire in Latinx Studies DRAFT

Background

Given the realities of national and regional demographics, WSU, like many universities, recognizes how critical recruiting and retaining Latinx (also traditionally called Hispanic or Latino/Latina) students is to our growth. While we have seen our Latinx student population grow and, recently, have made admirable improvements in retaining these students, there are two circumstances on campus that threaten this progress: a lack of Latinx faculty and a lack of Latinx concerns reflected in the curriculum. This proposal for a faculty cluster hire in Latinx studies seeks to change these circumstances and better serve our current and future Latinx students.

According to a September, 2017 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, the Hispanic population of the United States hit an all-time high in 2016, reaching nearly 58 million people, the second largest ethnic group (behind whites) and the group that has seen the largest growth since 2000.ⁱ The Pew study shows that, while growth is slowing, the population is changing in ways that make it a critical—indeed, an essential— population for U.S. colleges and universities to attract and retain. “Among Hispanics,” the study found, “those born in the U.S. and those born in another country differ widely in age. The median age of U.S.-born Hispanics was 19 in 2015, up from 18 years in 2000. Meanwhile, foreign-born Hispanics have a median age of 42 years, up from 33 in 2000.” This age difference is important because, while the foreign-born portion of the population is decreasing, more and more Hispanics are born in the U.S. Not surprisingly, given this fact, more and more Latinx Americans are attending college: in 2000, 30% of Hispanics ages 25 and over had attended some college; in 2015, that number had increased by 10%. The Pew study found that “among U.S.-born Hispanics, 52% reported they had gone to college, an increase from 41% in 2000.” The study also found that, while California remains the state with the largest Latinx population, Texas (a state from which WSU increasingly tries to recruit) has seen a larger growth in this population (38.9 versus 60.4). The same population in Kansas and surrounding states is also growing, of course, albeit more slowly.

Given these demographics, recruiting Latinx students is essential to meeting three of our strategic enrollment management goals: Goal 2, to increase enrollment of degree seeking underserved student populations by 8.5% yearly through Fall 2020, Goal 3, to increase retention rates of degree seeking underserved student populations by 2.5% yearly through Fall 2020, and Goal 4, to increase enrollment along the I-35 corridor by 18% yearly through Fall 2020. In many ways, we are accomplishing these goals. The number of Latinx students at WSU has grown each census year since 1980, from 302 students in that year to 1,656 this year, an increase of 448%, according to the Office of Planning and Analysis. Between 2016 and 2017 alone, the increase in the number of Latinx students at WSU was 13.7%. Latinx students represent 11% of the total student population at WSU. While this growth is substantial, it can be improved upon, particularly given the areas from which we now recruit: in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area, for instance, Hispanics are projected to represent 31% of the total population in the current year, and in the Oklahoma City area, this population has grown by 155% since 2000.ⁱⁱ And while retention rates are up for underrepresented students (we retained 75.5% of these students in 2016), as an institution, we are committed to improving upon that number.

Despite our success in attracting this critical population to WSU and, in most cases, retaining it, the fact remains that Latinx students do not see themselves reflected in the WSU faculty or curriculum, and that their satisfaction with their experiences at this university in large part depend on how we address this lack of representation. Out of 363 tenure-stream faculty members, only 5 are Hispanic, an anemic 1.37% (minorities make up just 3.86% of tenure-stream faculty overall). The largest number of Latinx faculty are in non-tenure-stream positions, but the numbers are still extremely low: 12 out of 161. Only 8 of our 273 lecturers are Latinx. This lack of population results in a lack of curriculum that addresses Latinx issues and culture, especially in the United States. Last year, in an effort to infuse more Latinx studies courses into the curriculum, the Tilford Fellowship competition gave preference to these courses, which resulted in four new courses. Still, with only one course—WOMS 482—to begin with, clearly, more courses are needed. While there are courses in history and other disciplines that focus on the Latin American world (and these are, in some cases, offered rarely or not at all due to the lack of faculty expertise in this area), the curriculum can in no way be said to reflect the culture and concerns of our Latinx students who want to explore their experiences as Americans. While we know there is a demand for Latinx studies courses—for courses in Spanish for the professions, in Latinx literature and culture, in immigration policy for social work practitioners, in online teacher-preparation courses targeted to Hispanics and those who serve them, in alternative-credentials courses that would reach this population and the businesses that want to attract them—we have, at present, very little, and in some cases, no means of meeting them. The lack of expertise in these areas also stymies our ability to better target this population in recruitment and retention and better serve them in instruction, advising, and co-curricular programming.

Proposal

This proposal for a faculty cluster hire in Latinx studies seeks to make a major impact on recruitment and retention of Latinx students by hiring a critical core of faculty committed to Latinx issues and culture. We seek to hire 4-5 new faculty members and one staff person whose expertise in Latinx studies and Spanish-language skills would be combined with proficiency in online learning and/or community outreach (experiential/service learning, etc.) so that the university can better attract Latinx students and those who serve in this community and help these students succeed at WSU.

While new to WSU, faculty cluster hiring was first conducted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the late 1990s, and the practice has since spread to a growing number of universities seeking to do one of two things: to increase a university's capacity for interdisciplinary research, and to increase faculty diversity. A recent report on faculty cluster hiring conducted by the Urban Universities for Health, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, and the Association of American Medical Colleges recognized, on the one hand, the link between cluster hiring and increasing faculty diversity and, on the other, the link between augmenting faculty diversity and improving campus climate.ⁱⁱⁱ The report's authors argue that "hiring a diverse faculty body is the first step toward attaining a desirable climate," and that improving climate has many benefits, including "the academic success of faculty from all backgrounds, an inclusive learning environment, as perceived by students, faculty, and staff, collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds and across disciplines, and community engagement." By diversifying the faculty in an intentional way that is visible to current and future students as well as to the community outside WSU, a cluster hire in Latinx Studies could prove essential to shaping the kind of university Wichita State strives to be: one that is diverse, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of students and the community.

One of the most common demands made by students of color nationally is a professoriate that “looks like them,” a demand WSU students also have made, for instance, in the cultural climate survey administered in the Fall of 2016, or in a Spring 2017 town hall with the Provost. Such students have made clear their dissatisfaction with WSU faculty demographics; as one author on Latinx student success claims, faculty are often the “missing piece” of retention strategies.^{iv} In a study of Latinx students in Los Angeles community colleges published on *Research in Higher Education*, researchers found that “the level of representation of Latino faculty was . . . found to have a significant impact on Latino student success” and that, “overall, results from this research indicate that, as the number of Latino students and faculty on campus increase to a critical mass, academic success increases as well.”^v As the authors of another study on the effects on students of minority faculty representation write:

Students of color understand on the level of lived experience that the paucity of faculty of color diminishes their sense of belonging on predominantly white campuses, eroding their resilience and resolve over time. Academic motivation and persistence among URM students is often undermined by feelings of self-doubt, lack of belongingness, and stereotype threat in classrooms where they are significantly outnumbered by majority students. The presence of faculty of color mitigates against these effects by signaling to students that they need not represent their race in the classroom and that the professor is an embodied counterexample to negative stereotypes about their racial group. As a result, students perform better on tests of ability when a faculty member of color is present.^{vi}

While efforts are being made to ensure that all faculty searches at WSU utilize best-practice strategies to conduct inclusive searches, the benefits of these efforts can only be felt in the long term, as lines are slowly made available and as faculty become more and more aware of those best practices. A cluster hire, on the other hand, can bring dramatic gains in faculty diversity within a very short amount of time, especially given the focus of this particular cluster hire. In the study of cluster-hiring initiatives first cited above, it was found that seven out of ten clusters studied resulted in increasing the diversity of the faculty. This was the case even when the cluster hiring process was not intentional about increasing diversity.

Bringing more Latinx faculty members to campus will also bring much-needed expertise in Latinx studies to bear upon the WSU curriculum. Another call students have made both nationally and locally is for a curriculum that reflects their culture and concerns and one that provides them with opportunities for their futures. But another need we must meet, one that is just as critical, is the need for education for those who work with the Latinx population. Both additional courses and new programs (certificates, etc.) will be necessary to meet these needs.

Benefits to Departments and Colleges

In the liberal arts and sciences, courses and programs in the humanities are desperately needed, as they are in the social-science disciplines of social work and psychology. Regular offerings in Latinx literature would advertise to prospective students our investment in their cultural heritage; as one student simply but poignantly put it in a recent discussion with one of the authors of this proposal, a Latinx literature course “would give me more of my story.”^{vii} Latinx literary studies is an emergent, yet still underrepresented, field at KBOR universities and along the I-35 corridor, which provides WSU the opportunity to become a leader in this field regionally. Only two of our peer and

aspirational institutions offer Latinx coursework in their English departments, although a third is actively seeking to hire in this area. At KBOR universities, the English departments at the University of Kansas and Kansas State both offer regular coursework. Others—Emporia State, Pittsburg State, Fort Hays, and Washburn University—do not. Along the I-35 corridor a similar disparity exists. An English hire in this field would help the department market its degrees to Latinx students while increasing the ability to offer modern and contemporary American literature courses (Latinx literature specialists are also likely to be specialists in cotemporary American literature), probably the most popular subfield among both graduate and undergraduate English students.

Similarly, in the Department of History, there is need for faculty to teach courses related to Mexico, the Latin Caribbean, the American Borderlands, and Latinx issues in the United States. Moreover, the department offers a Geography of Latin America course to which a Latinx studies hire could contribute. The department is in need of full-time faculty who can advise thesis students, engage in community education efforts and local humanities events, and develop courses to help respond to the growing and relevant need to include Latinx history and culture in the department's offerings. Given the growing presence of Latinx in Wichita and the fact that people of this background are now the majority in a number of southwest Kansas counties, a Latinx hire could contribute to the Community History or Great Plains Studies programs. The department recently graduated a student who was studying the Mexican American community in Garden City, and a scholar who specialized in these topics would have been a great asset to them.

The Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures currently offers various versions of Spanish for the professions, such as a course in Spanish for Business, as well as a certificate in Spanish for the Professions, but the interest in these courses on the part of students and other programs at WSU is larger than the department can currently accommodate. MCLL also sees great demand for various Spanish-language and translation services that are difficult to meet given the current size of its faculty. A hire in this cluster would help MCLL develop graduate certificates similar to its certificate in Spanish for the professions, which are likely to have broad appeal. Further, Dean Bibb of Health Professions has affirmed that she, for one, would very much like to see these courses expanded to the extent that a Spanish for Health Professionals course or course series could constitute a consistent foreign language option for the college's students.

In the School of Social Work 2017 program review, the number of minority students graduating and taking classes in the BSW and MSW programs were above the college and university numbers. Although these numbers are not broken down by race, there is an implicit need for a Latinx perspective in the School of Social Work. Some of the courses the school might develop include Social Justice and Social Work Policy, Immigration Rights, Reform, and Policy Practice, Cultural Humility, Social Justice and Diversity, and a version of the introductory course Social Work and Social Welfare offered in Spanish. A Latinx hire would allow the school to produce current and future social work professionals who are competent in Latinx culture.

Meanwhile, the College of Education (CoEd) has launched a new, quite promising teacher preparation program for elementary and special education that is specifically designed to reach paraprofessionals in western Kansas. The first class of 50 students began in Summer 2017. The college is in the midst of developing a second teacher preparation program for high school teachers that will start in Fall 2018; the program now has 100 students, around 25% of whom are from underrepresented minority groups. Having a faculty member with expertise in Latinx culture and language proficiency in Spanish would greatly benefit efforts with this program. A second area of

enrollment growth from underrepresented populations is in Counseling, Educational Leadership, Educational and School Psychology. This department just completed program changes that include new tracks in clinical mental health and school psychology. Students from diverse backgrounds are desperately needed in these career fields, and Hispanic students are one of the subgroups showing an increase in enrollment in the new mental health program. The counseling program is opening a play therapy and mental health clinic at the Harry Street Mall in Fall of 2018. The clinic will serve the needs of community members, especially children who are now underserved. The CLES Department would like to hire a bilingual Latinx counseling faculty member who would be able to do outreach to the community in order to have a meaningful impact on the City of Wichita. This faculty member would also be able to recruit Latinx students to CLES programs to increase enrollment.

Enhancement of Online Education

Because they all have significant online components, these new courses and programs would need support from Instructional Design and Technology, which is why this proposal includes a request for a staff position in IDA. A faculty hire in the English department, for instance, would further expand the department's offerings in online courses, an area of focus especially vital to the literature graduate program. Public high school teachers in concurrent or dual enrollment programs are required by HLC to complete a minimum of 18 graduate credit hours in the discipline they want to teach. Online coursework at the graduate level would help the department target this potential student body—perhaps through the development of an online graduate certificate in literary studies—while also decreasing its reliance on assistantships and fellowships as recruitment tools. In addition, studies have shown that the expansion of “successful dual or concurrent enrollment programs between high schools and colleges” to include underserved populations (instead of “just traditionally ‘college-bound’ students”) increases the likelihood of successful recruitment at the undergraduate level.^{viii}

The programs in clinical mental health and school psychology offer tremendous potential for an entirely new set of online offerings in Latinx culture, family therapy, and counseling Latinx clients. The new teacher preparation program described above has strong appeal to students with a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, particularly Latinx. In western Kansas, many young Latinx individuals are committed to staying in that part of the state but are limited in regard to their employment opportunities. Therefore, many of them gain employment in the school district as paraeducators or similar entry-level positions. This degree program offers a pathway to a higher-paying career.

In addition, a number of our programs and departments (e.g., Curriculum and Instruction, Nursing, Public Affairs, Entrepreneurship, and MCLL) have developed or are working on outreach programs to western Kansas. Faculty (and, in the case of IDT, staff) hired in this cluster would greatly contribute to these efforts and expand the online educational opportunities WSU can offer. These faculty and staff members can also help us expand the alternative credentials we offer to the Latinx community and those who serve them. The website <http://www.westernksjobs.com/> lists a large number of jobs in fields associated with current WSU degrees and certifications—such as medical professionals, social services, business management, criminal justice, K-12 and early childhood education, and many more—that would be well served by a hiring pool with strong Latinx literary, cultural, and professional competency.

Proposed hiring departments include:

- Counseling, Leadership, Educational and School Psychology
- Curriculum and Instruction
- English
- History
- Instructional Design and Technology (staff position)
- Modern and Classical Languages
- Psychology
- Social Work

Desired fields of teaching and research include:

- Clinical mental health and school psychology
- Heritage Spanish
- Latinx History
- Latinx literature and culture
- Spanish for the Professions (health professions, law enforcement, social work, etc.)
- Teacher preparation

Desired pedagogical approaches:

- Online learning
- Service learning
- Applied or experiential learning

Recruitment and Retention Opportunities

Faculty hired in this cluster can provide help with recruitment by partnering with Admissions, Strategic Communications, and other offices on campus to develop more bilingual recruiting materials and provide translator services for prospective students and their parents during campus visits. They can also participate in orientation and other events for new students and their families. In terms of recruitment, these faculty members could prove invaluable. Research has shown that students of color in predominantly white institutions “are more likely to persist toward degree completion when they have faculty members of color as role models.” As one recent study noted, “Latino faculty members benefit higher education by uniquely engaging students in the classroom, improving Latino students’ higher education retention and degree completion rates, enhancing campus pluralism, and conducting academic research on racial/ethnic communities.”^{ix}

Finally, this cluster hire would make a strong statement to our current and future Latinx students and to the greater Latinx community that we have heard their concerns about a lack of representation on campus and we have sought to address the historical imbalances in our faculty. In doing so, it will help us achieve many of our SEM goals, as has already been discussed, as well as the following goals of our strategic plan:

- Capitalize systemically on relevant existing and emerging societal and economic trends that increase quality educational opportunities.
- Accelerate the discovery, creation and transfer of new knowledge.

- Empower students to create a campus culture and experience that meets their changing needs
- Be a campus that reflects—in staff, faculty and students—the evolving diversity of society.

A cluster hire focused on Latinx issues and expertise has tremendous potential for increasing recruitment and retention of this critically-important population. Just as importantly, diversifying our faculty will benefit all of our students, not just Latinx students or underrepresented minority students. Research has consistently shown that exposure to diverse faculty, curriculum, and teaching styles improves students' critical thinking skills and their ability to interact with those who differ from them. These attributes are essential to the success of our students in their professional, personal, and social lives.^x To that end, a Latinx cluster hire would be in keeping with the vision of Wichita State University: "To be an essential educational, cultural, and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good."

ⁱ "How the U.S. Hispanic population is changing," by Antonio Flores. The Pew Research Center <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/18/how-the-u-s-hispanic-population-is-changing/>.

ⁱⁱ Texas Department of Health and Human Services, <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/chs/popdat/ST2017.shtm>; Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewhispanic.org/states/state/ok/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Faculty Cluster Hiring For Diversity and Institutional Climate," Urban Universities for Health, the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities, the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities, and the Association of American Medical Colleges, April 2015.

^{iv} Luis Ponjuan, "Recruiting and Retaining Latino Faculty Members: The Missing Piece to Latino Student Success." *Thought and Action: The NEA Higher Education Journal* (Fall 2011): 99-110.

^v Linda Serra Hagedorn, Winny (YanFang) Chi, Rita M. Cepeda, and Melissa McLain, "An Investigation of Critical Mass: The Role of Latino Representation in the Success of Urban Community College Students," *Research in Higher Education* 48.1 (February 2007): 73-91.

^{vi} "Someone Who Looks Like Me': Promoting the Success of Students of Color by Promoting the Success of Faculty of Color," by Michael Benitez, Mary James, Kazi Joshua, Lisa Perfetti and S. Brooke Vick <http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation/2017/spring/benitez>. See also Luis Ponjuan, who writes that "Latino faculty members benefit higher education by uniquely engaging students in the classroom, improving Latino students' higher education retention and degree completion rates, enhancing campus pluralism, and conducting academic research on racial/ethnic communities."

^{vii} Conversation between Dr. Jean Griffith, Associate Professor of English and Director of Faculty and Curricular Diversity in Academic Affairs, and Savana Servantez, WSU philosophy major and President of Kappa Delta Chi Sorority, September 15, 2017.

^{viii} Josie Danini Cortez and Albert Cortez, "Effective Higher Education Recruitment Strategies." Intercultural Development Research Association. (2004)

^{ix} Ponjuan.

^x According to Tabbye M. Chavous, a professor of education and psychology and director of the National Center for Institutional Diversity at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, "Faculty of color provide students with diverse role models and help provide more effective mentoring to students of color. Exposure in college to a diverse faculty along with diversified curricula and teaching methods produces students who are more complex thinkers, more confident in traversing cultural differences, and more likely to seek to remedy inequities after graduation." Quoted in "How

Faculty Diversity Can Impact the College Years,” by Delece Smith-Barrow, *U.S. News and World Report* Oct. 4, 2017, <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2017-10-04/research-faculty-diversity-during-the-college-search-process>.