

**ACADEMIC REVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF CHICANO AND CHICANA
STUDIES**

AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

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EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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I. Introduction

On Monday, March 9, 2015, the External Review component of the Program Performance Review was conducted for the Department of Chicano and Chicana Studies (CHIC) at the California State University, Fullerton. The External Review Team was composed of Dr. Ernesto Chávez (UTEP), Dr. Dionne Espinoza (Cal State L.A.), and Dr. Eliza Noh (CSUF). During the day, we met with the Dean Sheryl Fontaine, Interim Associate Dean Lynn Sargeant, Chicano and Chicana Studies faculty members, including Chair Alexandro Gradilla, Patricia Pérez, Gabriela Nuñez, and Monica Hanna, and students who are minoring in Chicano and Chicana Studies or double majoring. We reviewed the report of the Department for the PPR that was shared with us prior to the visit as well as additional materials provided upon our visit. We also observed a seminar and had a chance to tour the main administrative office of Ethnic Studies and the offices of faculty along with the student lounge on the third floor.

The Department of Chicano and Chicana Studies is located in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and, clustered with the other Ethnic Studies units (Asian American Studies and African American Studies), offers a B.A. degree in Ethnic Studies with an Option in Chicano Studies. There are currently five tenured or tenure-track faculty in the program. The department has undergone a major generational turnover within the last seven years and therefore is in what might be described as a period of transition or recovery that involves charting a new path for growth in the area of faculty hires, student majors, and expanded curriculum around GE courses.

Given a variety of institutional challenges, the department is doing its best to maneuver and to negotiate their space on campus and in the curriculum. Students in the major are showing high levels of engagement with the field of Chicano and Chicana studies. Finally, while the

department has been heavily weighted toward the social sciences over the years, the revisioning of the curriculum includes a more truly interdisciplinary mix that integrates more humanities content.

II. Leadership

The Chicano and Chicana Studies Department faces several challenges related to leadership, but many of the challenges seem to be inherited from the department's prior state of instability since its last program performance review. Faculty leadership since 2007 was inconsistent due to a pattern of losing faculty, whether to retirement, resignation, reassignment, or non-retention due to denial of tenure. Dr. Gradilla became departmental chair in 2010, while he was still a probationary faculty member. He has done an outstanding job of stabilizing the department after a challenging period of change. Dr. Pérez became the first tenured woman faculty member in the department in 2012. In the same year, Drs. Hanna and Nuñez joined the faculty, and in 2013, Dr. González achieved tenure. Therefore, the current CHIC leadership is relatively new. Due to an early transition into the departmental chair role—perhaps without sufficient time for mentoring into the position—and a desire to stabilize a struggling department, Dr. Gradilla self-admittedly chose a leadership style that involved protecting junior faculty so that they could become positioned to achieve tenure and promotion. Therefore, Dr. Gradilla took on the bulk of departmental responsibilities that, in other departments, are normally shared among the departmental faculty; for example, Dr. Gradilla took on most of the undergraduate advising and led most of the department's supervision courses (CHIC 496, 499, and 599). While the department has now become more stable in terms of retaining and promoting faculty, due in large part to Dr. Gradilla's leadership, there is a need to engage shared governance, communication and transparency in decision-making, opportunities for broadening leadership

development among the faculty, and the department chair's capacity to carry major departmental duties along with the university requirements related to his own career advancement. Now that the junior faculty members are entering into their fourth probationary year, the faculty members are progressively adopting more leadership roles, such as in the areas of curriculum development and assessment, and there is more expressed desire among all the faculty to share the departmental workload. Finally, the department already has a "succession plan" that will enable a smooth transition to a new department chair at the end of Dr. Gradilla's term.

III. Faculty

The review team had several opportunities to meet with the CHIC full-time faculty. Based on information from the meetings and the department's self-study, the team observed that the faculty as a whole has made great strides since the last program performance review. A key issue identified by former chair, Dr. Dagoberto Fuentes, was the department's ability to stabilize and retain faculty. Now, CHIC has three tenured faculty and two tenure-track faculty going into their fourth probationary year, as well as plans to conduct a search for a sixth faculty member in the coming year. The department also has several adjunct faculty, who carry 70% of the teaching load. However, this proportion is bound to become more balanced with the hiring of a sixth full-time faculty member. The combined faculty teaches across a range of disciplines and fields. The full-time faculty members are a stellar group of teacher-scholars. Several of them have won awards for teaching, research, or service. For example, Dr. Pérez has won both teaching and research awards; Dr. Gradilla has recently won an award for outstanding service contributions to the department and to the college; and Dr. González has been recognized by the Center for Internships and Civic Engagement for developing an innovative service-learning course. The CHIC faculty models high-impact practices in their teaching, curricular, and co-curricular

efforts; of note are Dr. González's Barrio Studies and Barrios and Health service-learning courses, Dr. Pérez's project on migrant education involving student research collaboration, and the department's Emerging Scholars Program, which provides research and conference presentation opportunities for CHIC students. The faculty also exhibits cutting-edge and socially relevant research profiles across a range of topics, from food, community health, and bioethics to migrant education and trans-American cultural studies. The assistant professors seem well on their way to meeting their publication requirements for tenure; Dr. Hanna has secured a book contract with Duke University Press along with eventually publishing three peer-reviewed articles/chapters, and Dr. Nuñez has two peer-reviewed publications.

Given this highly motivated, high-achieving, and committed core faculty, several key issues are apparent, which are connected to sustaining the faculty's work. A primary area of concern is the need to maintain a balanced teaching load and the availability of assigned time for faculty to develop innovative curricula and teaching methods and to carry out their research agendas. Incorporating high impact practices is a fundamental feature of the CHIC faculty's way of teaching and doing research, but they lack systematic institutional support for the time that such work entails. Another issue is the lack of consistent and sufficient funds to support professional development and research. For example, the amounts of intramural research grants and professional development funds are small and are not sufficiently available to faculty in terms of the number of grants awarded. These factors make international research travel or more than one domestic conference trip impossible to cover without faculty having to use their personal funds. Moreover, the inconsistent availability of research funds negatively impacts faculty members' ability to plan future research projects. For instance, oftentimes the only opportunity that faculty members have to engage in international research travel is during the summer, but faculty

members have not been able to count on the availability of international travel grants, and if they become available, they are announced during the fall after summer research opportunities have passed. Sabbatical leaves have also diminished significantly, making it more difficult for associate professors to pursue their research agendas and to advance in their careers. Overall, the faculty receives the message that research is an expectation of the university, but there is not enough material support for faculty to carry it out without incurring significant personal expense. A final key issue is the lack of a technologically-equipped space where faculty can engage and collaborate with students on research and multimedia projects. The room that CHIC currently uses for student engagement is not equipped or large enough to accommodate HIPs-centered curricular or co-curricular collaborations.

IV. Curriculum

The CHIC curriculum consists of lower- and upper-division courses and graduate level classes. The undergraduate courses seek to interrogate broad aspects of Chicano/a –Latino/a experiences, while the MA offerings are more focused and support a graduate concentration in the field in partnership with the History and Modern Languages and Literatures/Spanish departments' MA programs. In addition to the traditional brick and mortar classes, the department also has an online presence.

These courses support the department's major, which, due to the small number of CHIC faculty members and its relationship to a larger Ethnic Studies major, are offered sporadically and by definition must cover general topics in the field. Two of the lower-division courses, CHIC 101: Introduction to Ethnic Studies and CHIC 106: Introduction to Chicano Studies, are required for

the major. Another lower-division course, CHIC 102: Communication Skills, satisfies a GE requirement.

In addition, the department offers a number of upper-division courses that have been developed over the years. These are: CHIC 220: Chicana/o Identities, CHIC 302: Ancient Mexican Culture, CHIC 303: Chicano/Mexican Cultures, CHIC 304: Music of Mexico, CHIC 305: The Chicano Family, CHIC 306: Barrio Studies, CHIC 307: Research and Writing in Ethnic Studies, CHIC 313: La Chicana, CHIC 315: Chicano/Latino Theater, CHIC 316: The Chicano Music Experience, CHIC 325: Latinos in Education, CHIC 331: The Chicano Child, CHIC 332: The Chicano Adolescent, CHIC 333: Mexican Literature Since 1940, CHIC 336: Main Trends in Spanish-American Literature, CHIC 337: Contemporary Chicano Literature, CHIC 340: Mexican/Chicano Intellectual Thought, CHIC 345: History of the Chicano, CHIC 350: Mexican Life and Culture, CHIC 353: Mexico Since 1906, CHIC 360: Chicanos and the Law, CHIC 367: Latino/a Spirituality and Religion, CHIC 450: The Chicano and Contemporary Issues (which it is trying convert into a course that can be taken three times for credit), CHIC 460: The Chicano and Politics, CHIC 480: Chicanas/os and Immigrants, CHIC 496: Student to Student Tutorial, and CHIC 499: Independent Study.

In the last four years, the department has introduced new courses to boost the students' knowledge and interest in Chicano Studies. These courses include revising CHIC 325 by changing the title from Chicano and Chicana Education to Latinos and Education, CHIC/HESC 338: Barrios and Health, and its first graduate course, CHIC 500: Paradigms and Traditions in Chicano Studies. Currently, Dr. Monica Hanna, an assistant professor, is developing a new course CHIC/RTVF 369: Border Cinema, with a colleague in Radio, TV, and Film. Another course that Drs. Hanna and Nuñez are developing, along with Dr. Natalie Graham in AFAM, is

an ETHN course focused on Multi-Ethnic Literature in the United States. This class will be cross-listed among all the ES units.

The curriculum increasingly reflects a more multi- and interdisciplinary mix of social science and humanities areas of study and, with increased cross-listing with departments such as English, Modern Languages, and History, will also attract more students with these scholarly interests. Additionally, the comparative Ethnic Studies component is a developing area in the curriculum.

V. Students

The review team had the opportunity to meet with four students: One student was a minor in Chicano Studies with a major in Human Services and the other three students were double majors in Chicano and Chicana Studies. (This group held second majors in Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology). The students shared their deep enthusiasm for the knowledge base of the field as presented through the curriculum. Each noted that their connection to the department came through an influential course that they took in Chicano and Chicana Studies. They also spoke eloquently about how their interests in immigration, culture, and community mental health issues were addressed in these courses, thereby demonstrating how the CHIC emphasis in the major in Ethnic Studies connected to their overall career and educational goals. Students also stated that the idea of different perspectives and epistemological bases was fundamental to their deep interest in pursuing research in the field and in working with faculty in the department to develop their research.

Students also hoped for more engagement in the area of faculty mentoring, office hours, and co-curricular programming that would highlight faculty research (including visiting speakers), as

well as student research. Along these lines, they also identified the need for a lab space, computers, and a conference room that would continue to build a dynamic culture of undergraduate research and mentoring (which is a high impact practice). They also suggested stronger ties between the department and the Chicano Resource Center on campus to develop more programming based in the field. Students also shared a sense that the department was not as institutionally supported in its access to resources, such as student research funding, conference funding, and space. They would like to see more support from the college and university in this area.

Two members of the external review team had the opportunity to observe Dr. Alexandro Gradilla's CHIC 500 Seminar for about twenty minutes. The CHIC 500 Seminar is a graduate level course that is open to advanced undergraduates. There were a number of undergraduates in the course, and they all expressed that their choice of enrolling in the seminar was related to their interest in graduate studies. Graduate students and undergraduates both participated in the discussion.

VI. Recommendations for the Department

1. Review the curriculum path for assessment in relation to the department learning outcomes and work to ensure that there is clear scaffolding for majors toward preparation for the capstone course, currently listed as Ethnic Studies 490.
2. Involve all department faculty in advisement as a means of increasing student exposure to faculty outside of instruction and building a sense of community in the department.
3. Develop more transparency in curriculum around the disciplinary and interdisciplinary content, methods, and theories throughout the path of the major.

4. Identify recruitment opportunities for the major in the new first-year class so that students can take that first “influential” CHIC course sooner in their college career.
5. Involve all department faculty in a discussion of how cross-listed and comparative ethnic studies courses fit into CHIC curriculum development goals.
6. Create by-laws to clarify expectations, roles, responsibilities, decision-making, policies, and procedures related to departmental administration and governance.
7. Implement a systematic method of sharing information and communicating among the faculty.

VII. Recommendations for the College and University

1. Support more cross listing of CHIC courses with other departments in the college such as English, History, Modern Languages and Literatures, and American Studies.
2. Fund assigned time for faculty to do HIPs-related curriculum development and to conduct research.
3. Provide consistent and sufficient funds to support faculty research travel and sabbatical leaves.
4. Provide a multimedia space for student-faculty engagement and research collaborations.
5. Fund student research and creative activities and student involvement in HIPs activities, such as conference travel, departmental speaker series, alumni and professional mentoring, and collaborative research projects.