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The History of Latino Students at the University of Kentucky, 1865-2019

Daniela Gamez Salgado
University of Kentucky

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The History of Latino Students at the University of Kentucky, 1865-2019 Oswald Research and Creativity Competition 2019

I. Introduction

It began with the simple question: *Who was the first Latino student enrolled at the University of Kentucky?* This question then inspired the broad purpose of understanding how the history of Latino students at the University of Kentucky has evolved between 1865 and 2019 by identifying students of Latin American descent with significant contributions to the University, collective Latino student efforts, and the University's influence on the development of the Latino community. Archival research, participant observation, and interviews conducted with past and present Latino students molded a more comprehensive view into the past that would assure that this historically underserved community would have a legitimate space in the University of Kentucky's overarching history. In addition to providing greater visibility to the presence and history of Latinos at the University, this research also acknowledges the power of the spaces in history that are left unknown, either because they were never recorded or because the records have not yet been found. As the first official collection of the history of Latino students at the University of Kentucky, this timeline serves as a tool for empowerment and as a marker to reference back to as the Latino student community at the University of Kentucky continues to grow.

II. Literature Review & Methodology

Until 2019, there has been no evidence to suggest that an official research project on the history of Latino students at the University of Kentucky was conducted beforehand. While there are similar research projects focused on the collection of history of underrepresented minority populations at the University of Kentucky, there is no direct literature to be compared. Other universities across the United States, such as Indiana University and the University of Florida, have compiled the history of their Latino students into timelines that have served as a source of inspiration for this research. The chronological division of the timeline, display of the information, and the purpose of the timeline serves for future endeavours are all ways that those sources of inspiration manifested themselves into this research.

In terms of the methodology used to approach the creation of a first draft of this history, archival research was the primary source of collecting data for this research project. Resources provided by the University of Kentucky to conduct archival research were utilized for this process. Initially, ExploreUK was used to set a foundation for the research project because of the website's unrestricted accessibility to 530,000+ digitized yearbooks, collections, photographs, and more from UK Libraries and the UK Special Collections Research Center. The keywords Latin-American, Latin America, Latino, Spanish, Refugee, Immigrant, Emigrant, Migrant, Hispanic, Diversity, MLK Center, Hispanic Heritage Month, Hispanic Heritage Week, foreign, and foreign student/students were input into the search bar of ExploreUK to narrow down the available data to aid this research project. Individual countries from Latin America and the most common surnames and first names were also used to search the extensive data. Yearbooks were especially useful for basic information on students of Latin American descent with significant contributions to the University.

Once the digitized data on the history of Latino students at the University of Kentucky had been extracted and there was no longer relevant information, the physical archival data from the Special Collections Research Center in relation to the Latino community was studied. The

General Reference Subject Files consisted of the majority of the archival data analyzed. Boxes 264, 247, 266, 193, 192, 133, 253, 176, and 261 of the General Reference Subject Files were utilized during this process. The wide variety of data from email threads to photographs were incorporated into this research project. The Chester Grundy papers was another archival collection in the Special Collections Research Center that was thoroughly utilized to make connections of students at UK who identify as Latino utilizing spaces that have been transformed to make the University of Kentucky campus more welcoming and inclusive for Latino students.

Interviews were conducted last to collect personal accounts from former and current students, staff, and faculty on their experiences while at the University of Kentucky. Although the sample size of interviews was lower than intended - finishing at fifteen interviews - the interviews conducted gave the project insight on personal experiences at UK, reasoning behind the founding of multiple Latino-student serving organizations, the state of resources for Latino students throughout the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, etc. My own personal involvement in the Latino community has contributed to the participant observation portion of this research project. Through my involvement in Latino Student Union, Sigma Lambda Gamma, and Leading Latinas I was able to understand logistics and intentions behind contemporary Latino-student serving organizations. The methodologies of archival research, personal interviews, and participant observation provided the research mechanisms for this research project.

III. Timeline

1865 - 1895:

Three students from Latin America were identified to have matriculated into the Agricultural and Mechanical College during the first ten years of its existence, however there were also two other students from Latin America enrolled into the greater Kentucky University. These two students were Antonio Richard from Sonora, Mexico was enrolled as a senior at the College of Law in 1866-1867 and Frederico Lleras from Bogota, Colombia attended the College of Arts in 1868-1869. The College of Law and College of Arts of Kentucky University evolved into an extension of the pre-existing Transylvania University. Only students from the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Kentucky University were ultimately considered in the early history of the timeline because of the direct history that ties the evolution of the University of Kentucky to the A&M College.

The first two students identified to be from Latin America to attend the A&M College were Moses Salvador Cole and Gerard Canton in 1874-1875. The following academic year, 1875-1876, Joaquin de Arrigunaga from Campeachy, Mexico (believed to be a typo of Campeche, Mexico) entered the A&M College. These three students served as the sole representation of Latin America during a time when there was less than one hundred total students. Cole and Canton are recorded to be from the same hometown of Rivas, Nicaragua, but their connection is unknown. Their faces and involvement on campus also remains a mystery since the Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Kentucky University, Volume 2 (1875-1876) was focused on tracking enrollment and general academic information about each college. However, it is known that Gerard Canton enrolled into the Commercial College while in the A&M College in 1875, which was a common occurrence for students at the overarching Kentucky University. In terms of graduation, Canton and Arrigunaga's graduation information is unlisted, while Cole is listed as a graduate from the Agricultural and Mechanical College in

1878, thus making Moses Salvador Cole the first student from Latin America to graduate from what is now known as the University of Kentucky.

1896 - 1926:



Cosmopolitan Club 1945

While analyzing history of the University after the first ten years of its inception, the focus on the first students of Latin American descent at the University of Kentucky shifted to collective student efforts. The Cosmopolitan Club provided a space for students from the United States and international students to gather and learn from one another. The organization's presence throughout the twentieth century, existing as early as 1912 but being officially founded in 1921, held a strong influence on the infrastructure of culturally-based student organizations at the University of Kentucky. The long-lived student organization catered to meet the needs of international students throughout their endeavours navigating the University of Kentucky. While their presence tapered off in the early twenty-first century, the Cosmopolitan Club's student-led efforts to showcase underrepresented communities and encourage cross-cultural relations continue to exemplify the unity through diversity Latino-student serving organizations emphasize today.

In the context of students from Latin America, the Cosmopolitan Club also served as a space to celebrate Latin American cultures and as an opportunity for these students to explore leadership roles greater accessibility to leadership experience. This photo of the Cosmopolitan Club in 1945 is an example of a time when both President Huguette Balzola from Ciudad de México, Mexico and Vice President Raul Lardizabal from Juticalpa, Honduras, held influential leadership roles (Balzola is first from the right in the first row and Lardizabal is third from the right in the first row).

1917 - 1947:

1948 - 1978:

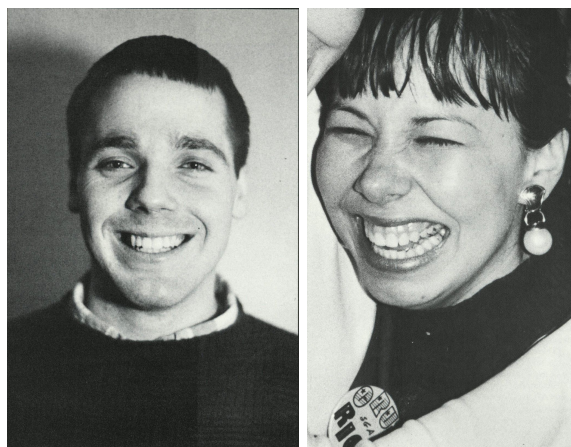


Left: "Thirteen students from Chile came to the University of Kentucky in February 1962 for a two week stay under the auspices of the Experiment in International Living Program"; Right: "Students from Monterrey, Mexico in a classroom with a professor in 1964."

These two photographs depicting students on exchange programs visiting the University note a specific set of the Latino student demographic that represented the overall Latino student population in 1962 and 1964. Prior to the 1990s, international students on exchange programs comprised the majority of the Latino population at the University of Kentucky. Since these students were expected to return to the communities they were raised in outside of the United States, their needs reflected a different reality compared to their domestically raised counterparts. Students born in the United States from parents of Latin American descent would begin to comprise the majority of Latinos at UK in the 1990s-2000s.

Within the same decade as the photographs displayed above was the earliest recorded Latino-student-serving organization at the University of Kentucky was the Latin American Students Association (LASA), whose existence at UK is recorded to be as early as 1969. The president of LASA during this time was Enrique Hoyos (from Colombia) and the vice president of LASA was Roberto Nogales (from Bolivia). It was initially presumed that the creation of LASA was inspired by President Lyndon Johnson signing of a bill to create Hispanic Heritage Week on September 17th, 1968, however there is no direct evidence to correlate these two events. LASA found support through a faculty-led UK Latin American Council that would work closely in efforts of celebrating Latin American cultures. Cultural awareness programming ranged from free screening of films from Latin America to a meet and greet with an ambassador from Ecuador. LASA was active until the early 1970s and was the last known Latino student-serving organization on campus until the founding of Latin Students Association in 1994/1995.

1979 - 2009:

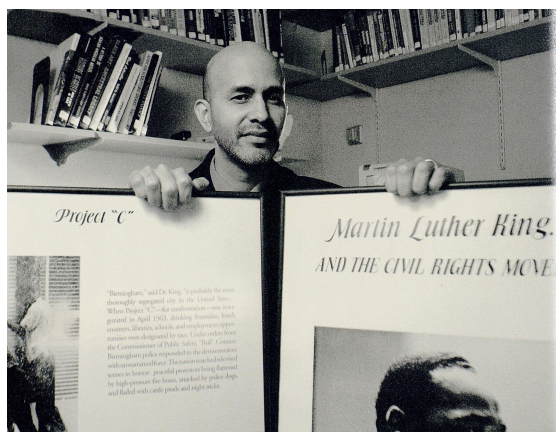


Left: Alan Aja; Right: Melanie Cruz

The 1990s are characterized as a decade of change within this timeline. The Latin Students Association was the second Latino-student serving organization, although the organization claimed to be the first of its kind. LSA was found in 1994/1995. Melanie Cruz, a founding member of LSA, recounted that a small group of graduate students organized LSA & put an ad in the Kentucky Kernel. Francie Chassen-Lopez was one of the primary faculty advisors that would help with the recruitment and retainment of members. LSA is described to

have had a mix of international and domestic Latino students, but with a predominantly international student membership.

In terms of students of Latin American descent with significant contributions to the University, Alan Aja was the first student of an ethnic minority to be elected as president of the Student Government Association for the 1996-1997 academic year. He hoped to bridge communication between the administration and students through his platform that highlighted student rights, services, and safety. He also proudly claimed his Cuban heritage. Melanie Cruz proudly claimed her Mexican heritage as the second student of an ethnic minority to be elected as president of the Student Government Association following Alan Aja's term. She was also the second female student to hold this position. Before serving her term as president for the 1997-1998 academic year, she was a founding member of the Latin Students Association.



Ricardo Nazario y Colón at the Martin Luther King Center

Ricardo Nazario y Colón transferred to UK in 1988 to complete his undergraduate studies in Spanish and Latin American Studies. In his interview with the exhibit curator he offered a unique perspective to the University of Kentucky as a Puerto Rican non-traditional student raised in New York. During his time as a student, he was elected as the president of Black Student Union and is also a brother of Phi Beta Sigma, a historically-black fraternity that is still active on the University of Kentucky's campus. Ricardo Nazario y Colón was later named director of the UK Martin Luther King Center from 2004-2005, after serving as interim and assistant director from 2002-2004. As the first Latino director at the MLK Center, Ricardo advocated for the emerging Latino student population and as a result, more Latino students found comfort in the center. It is vital to note that the Martin Luther King Center was established in 1987 with the original intent to affirm and nurture the culture of African-American students as they navigated the University of Kentucky, according to Chester Grundy, a former director of the center. Programming in the twentieth century served as a triple purpose by connecting the African diaspora to its roots, educating the student body through new interactions and new experiences, and increasing recruitment and retention rates for African-American students. In the context of Latino student history, the MLK Center has played a vital role in the twenty-first century in supporting Latino students at the University by providing resources, cultural awareness, and acting as a catalyst for diversity and inclusion. Brief conversations between Latino students in the MLK center have evolved into registered student organizations, such as in the case of Latino-American Student Organization and Latino Student Union.

2010 - 2019



Ruth González Jiménez

Between the turn of the century and present-day, the percentage of Latino students the University of Kentucky increased from less than 1% to 4.5% of the total student body. The increasing presence of Latino students at the University of Kentucky can be attributed to shifting migration trends in Kentucky during the 1990s, which has resulted in a growing pursuit of higher education by Latino high school students in the 2010s. In response to the increased presence of Latino students at the University, the Latino Student Community Specialist position was created through the petitioning from Ely Medina, Ruth González Jiménez, Kahlil Baker, and others to the Office for Institutional Diversity in the summer of 2017. The position is housed in the Martin Luther King Center.

Ruth González Jiménez has served as the Latino Student Community Specialist since its inception. As an undergraduate, she was a founding member of both Latino Student Union and the University of Kentucky Associate Chapter of Sigma Lambda Gamma, a historically Latina sorority with a multicultural membership. As the Latino Student Community Specialist, Ruth leads various initiatives to support Latino students through a variety of academic support, cultural, and social programs. The creation of a Latino Student Community Specialist position through the MLK Center has allowed for greater support. In the years since this position was founded the University has seen an increase in programming and support services for Latino students, greater stability and sustainability for Latino student-serving organizations, and an increasing number of Latino student-serving organizations on campus.

Registered Latino student-serving organizations and student-led programs in the twenty-first century include (* represents organizations that are no longer active at UK):

Latino-American Student Organization* - 2003

Delta Phi Mu, Gamma Chapter* - 2008

Kentucky Dream Coalition* - 2009/2010

Latino Student Union - 2014

Theta Nu Xi, Alpha Omicron Chapter - 2016

Sigma Lambda Gamma, University of Kentucky Associate Chapter - 2016

Sigma Lambda Beta, University of Kentucky Colony - 2016

Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers, University of Kentucky Chapter - 2017

Leading Latinas: A Mentorship Program - 2017

Hay Que Hablar - 2019

Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science - 2019

IV. Conclusion

The initial question was answered in this first draft of the history of Latino students at the University of Kentucky. Moses Salvador Cole and Gerard Canton of Rivas, Nicaragua were the first Latino students enrolled at UK, followed by Joaquin de Arrigunaga of Campeche, Mexico. These three students are recognized as students of Latin American descent with significant contributions to the University along with all the founders of all Latino-student serving organizations at UK and with Alan Aja and Melanie Cruz through their representation in the Student Government Association. SGA representation was set aside and highlighted because of the SGA President's direct access to the Board of Trustees as the voice of the students. In regards to their time as SGA Presidents in the mid-late 1990s, Aja expressed his feelings of being tokenized in the process as feeling "used as cover by the university to ignore Black/Latinx faculty hiring (and retention) as well as diversifying admissions," (Aja, 2018) while Cruz recognized that "the scope of diversity and inclusion in terms of services did not really include Latinos/Latinx in most diversity conversations" (Cruz, 2019). While it is the individual students and their experiences that are capable of representing easily recognizable symbols for change, it was not sustainable to create a comprehensive history based on only significant individuals and their experiences. Collective student efforts were focused on after the preliminary research of significant individuals.

Latino-student serving organizations at the University of Kentucky can be categorized as social, professional-academic, civic-political organizations, and Fraternity and Sorority Life organizations. Under social organizations, the first recorded Latino-student serving organization at the University of Kentucky was the Latin American Students Association in 1969 until at least 1971. There is a 20-year gap that follows the existence of LASA that is not accounted for in relation to organizations of this kind. LSA, or Latin Students Association, was present at UK in 1994/1995 until at least 1997. Nearly a decade passed since the inception of LSA and the Latino-American Student Organization was present in 2003-2007. Once again, another decade passed since the inception of a Latino-student serving organization of this kind and then Latino Student Union (LSU) was founded in the year 2014 and has remained established into the present of 2019. These four organizations of slightly varying names served the same vital purpose as umbrella organizations for the Latino community with similar intentions.

Professional-academic Latino-student serving organization include the Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers, Hay Que Hablar, and the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science which were founded in 2017, 2019, and 2019 respectively. SHPE and SACNAS are both STEM-based, but SACNAS serves the needs of a broader science-related community and SHPE focuses on engineering. On the other side of the academic spectrum, Hay Que Hablar emphasizes the humanities by creating a space for students both of Latino and non-Latino identity to improve their Spanish skills. Civic-political Latino-student serving organizations include Kentucky Dream Coalition and Leading Latinas. KDC focused specifically on the needs of undocumented members of the Latino community

(until the organization expanded its needs and transformed into Latino Student Union) and LL focuses specifically on the needs of Latina high school students in the surrounding Lexington area. Fraternity and Sorority Life Latino-student serving organizations include Delta Phi Mu, Theta Nu Xi, Sigma Lambda Gamma, and Sigma Lambda Beta, however none of these four organizations were/are exclusive to just Latino students because their emphasis on multicultural membership. These organizations were chosen because of their significant dedication to spread cultural awareness on Latin America and provide a metaphorical home for a number of Latino students. Each organization fits a different need, especially in the case of contemporary Latino-student serving organizations. The proliferation of Latino-student serving organizations servicing different needs follow a trend potentially indicating that there cannot be an expansion of needs until the primary need is fulfilled. This primary need is an overarching Latino-student serving organization that is synonymously described as an umbrella organization, “catch-all” organization, or the glue that holds the Latino student community together. This is supported by the list provided above which only includes overarching Latino-student serving organizations until there is an expansion of organizations formally beginning in 2016, the overlap in membership between all organizations, and the use of Latino Student Union as a connection to all Latino-student serving organizations.

The fluctuating periods of representation and lack of representation of these social Latino-student serving organizations at the University of Kentucky indicate unrecorded instability. Informally referred to as the glue of the Latino student community at UK in this research, these umbrella organizations under the social category are required for a united sense of community. Although the reasoning behind the disbandment of LASA, LSA, and LASO in less than ten years of their founding was not recorded, the concluding interviews and participant observation offered context to explain the conditions that may lead to disbandment of any Latino-student serving organization. These conditions include stable population of interested Latinos not being present at the time, leadership of an organization graduating without training next leadership, lack of faculty and staff support, lack of dissemination of information, and institutional needs not reflecting student needs.

The University’s influence on the development of the Latino community can be reflected through direct institutional support. Arguably the most vital institutional support was in the creation of the Latino Student Community Specialist position under the Office for Institutional Diversity in the summer of 2017 as a position directly tied to the general Latino community. The structure of the position has been criticized based on the fact that only one person is responsible for nearly 1,400 students and several Latino-student serving organizations, thus proving to be too heavy of a workload for one person. This stark limitation places a question on what the state of the Latino student community would look like in the absence of the Latino Student Community Specialist position. This position, currently held by Ruth González Jiménez, has visibly benefited the Latino student community by encouraging for a higher chance of sustainability and proliferation for the future of Latino-student serving organizations at the University of Kentucky. Since this position is housed under the Martin Luther King Center, the Center has also increased its programming of Latin America and the Latin American diaspora. The William C. Parker Scholarship and Bilal ibn Rabah Scholarship are scholarships at UK that relieve financial pressures for Latino students. There have also been increased Latino student recruitment efforts and increased Latino faculty hiring in the twenty-first century, however the sense of a disconnect between Latino student needs and administrators is still present in 2019.

The increasing presence of Latino students at the University of Kentucky can be attributed to shifting migration trends in Kentucky during the 1990s, which has resulted in a growing pursuit of higher education by Latino high school students in the late 2010s. Whereas international students who identified as Latino were present in small, but significant numbers throughout the earlier history at UK, domestic students who identified as of Latin American descent are now the majority of Latino students at UK. The latter population is responsible for contributing to the most recent history as we enter a paramount period of growth and sustainability. This research on the history of Latino students at UK was bound to be created and as the first draft of this history, there are some clear limitations that need to be addressed. This research is predominantly on the history of undergraduate Latino students although similar motifs are shared between the undergraduate and graduate Latino student populations in terms of finding a sense of community. A number of Latinos that may not be accounted for because they did not outright identify as someone of Latin American descent for different reasons such as fear, institutional discrimination, and changes in accessibility based on claiming one's heritage. There is also the unknown discrepancy if whether the decision to search common first names and surnames would overlap with students from Spain, the Philippines, or other countries with Romance languages that are similar to Spanish, thus it would not be a true known factor linked to Latin American heritage. The previous situation was avoided by not fully claiming a person has Latin American heritage unless there is evidence of their hometown within their statement. This research was also heavily dependent on qualitative data. The future of this research should expand methodologies to include surveys and more quantitative styles of collecting data Overall, time was the main limitation since this research internship began in November 2018 and officially ended in May 2019.

This research ensures that the history of Latino students at the University of Kentucky is legitimate under the overarching University of Kentucky history and that there is a strong infrastructure set to guide Latino students to fulfill evolving contemporary needs. For the former Latino students at UK, this research signifies acknowledgement and appreciation from the current generation. For the current Latino student community, this research signifies empowerment, knowledge that there was no quick access to beforehand, and a way to measure progress. For the University of Kentucky, this research signifies a historical recording depicting advancement in belonging and inclusion and a new perspective enhancing what it means to be a Wildcat.

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