

Gaceta Latina

A Semesterly Glance at UHD's Center for Latino Studies

What's Inside

CLS Welcomes First Annual Distinguished Scholar in Latino Studies Pg 1-2

Feature Story: Latinas on the Move..... Pg 2-3

Partnership with FLAMART Brings Afro-Latin Fest to UHD for Second Year.... Pg 4

Inaugural Cohort of the Emerging Scholars of Color Arrives..... Pg 5

Meet the Inaugural Cohort of Color Pg 6-7

Honoring Faculty Accomplishments..... Pg 8

Spanish Program Celebrates Día de los Muertos Pg 8

Center for Latino Studies to Develop New Latino Studies Curriculum..... Pg 9

UHD to Host XV Annual Recovery Conference in February Pg 9

Dr. Sonia Lee Explores Latino-African American Coalitions at Reflecting Black Conference..... Pg 10

Students Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month By Creating Art..... Pg 11

Photo Gallery: UHD Latinos in the Community..... Pg 12



From Left: Drs. Liza Alonzo, Bonnie A. Lucero, Yolanda Chávez Leyva, and Monica Perales, at Holocaust Museum Houston, Sept 26

Center for Latino Studies Welcomes First Annual Distinguished Scholar in Latino Studies

In honor of Hispanic Heritage Month, the Center for Latino Studies welcomed Dr. Yolanda Chávez Leyva, a Chicana historian and writer, specializing in border history, public history, and Chicana history as the First Annual Distinguished Scholar in Latino Studies. Her current work focuses on documenting the experiences of migrants affected by current immigration policies, including children detained in militarized deten-

tion camps, such as Tornillo. Her powerful deployment of academic tools such as oral history to document injustice makes Dr. Leyva one of the most important scholar-activists working on the family separation crisis on the US-Mexico border.

Dr. Leyva, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Institute of Oral History at the University of Texas-El Paso led a series of academic lectures and workshops at UHD (Cont. on pg. 4)

Latina Professionals Invest in the Next Generation of Leaders

On October 3, Latinas Achieve kicked off the 2019-2020 academic year with its Second Annual Mentor-Mentee Mixer. The event offered current UHD students the opportunity to meet professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders in their field of interest. Guests in attendance heard from political candidate and non-profit professional Michele Leal, who shared her family legacy of community service, and multi-passionate entrepreneur and thought leader Valentina Gómez Bravo, who offered students the opportunity to learn the art of branding through a new social media internship. The program also featured presentations by the new student leaders of Latinas Achieve, who shared their work developing a mentorship program for Latina high school students.

Among the mentors in attendance were Houston's first Latina City Councilperson, Graciela Saenz; award-winning international finance professional Soledad Tanner; City of Houston's Deputy Assistant Director for Public Services, Melody Barr; Founder and CEO of Power on Heels Network, Ivette Mayo, and more than a dozen other of Houston's most inspirational Latina leaders. Students eagerly connected with mentors based on education and career interests. Ms. Torres, an aspiring teacher, met educational consultant Brenda De la Rosa, whose career entails innovative professional development for teachers.



Mentor Brenda de la Rosa shares professional experience with students at Latinas Achieve Mentor-Mentee Mixer, Oct 2019

Program Gains Growing Recognition

The successes of the program's second year arrive on the heels of growing recognition for the program, both locally and nationally. Thanks to the leadership of Regent Paula Mendoza, Latinas Achieve garnered system-wide honors at the May Board of Regents of the University of Houston System meeting. As an exemplar of the kind of student success the program fosters, Latinas Achieve alum Selena García Palacios shared the vital role of mentors like Graciela Saenz, Soledad Tanner, and



Renu Khator
@UHpres

Congratulations to UHD and Latinas Achieve program for receiving special recognition at Board of Regents meeting today! @uhdowntown @TilmanJFertitta @CoogReeg



Tweet by Chancellor Renu Khator congratulating Latinas Achieve after Selena García Palacios shared her story with the Board of Regents, May 2019

Mary Helen Cavazos, in empowering her to achieve academic success and pursue graduate studies in social work and law.

This Fall, President Juan Sánchez Muñoz recognized the program as a core pillar of University of Houston-Downtown's commitment to inclusive excellence. In fact, UHD received *Insight into Diversity's* prestigious Higher Education Excellence in Diversity (HEED) Award based on an application that featured several of the Center for Latino Studies' Signature Programs. Among the featured programs were Latinas Achieve, and Emerging Scholars of Color, an initiative launched by the Center for Latino Studies in collaboration with the Center for Critical Race Studies.

Latinas Achieve is a mentorship experience specially designed to empower Latina students at the University of Houston-Downtown. The Center for Latino Studies, in collaboration with the Office of Alumni Relations, launched the program in Fall 2018 to cultivate the talents of Houston's next generation of Latina leaders. Towards that end, Latinas Achieve partnered (**Cont. on Pg. 12**)

UHD Latinos in the Community

From Top: UHD President Juan Sánchez Muñoz, Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce CEO Laura Murillo, and UHD Alumnus John Hernandez at the Hispanic Impact Summit, Sept 2019; Students Partner with Community Organization to Advocate for Immigrant Rights, Center for Latino Studies, April 2019; Latinas Achieve leadership attends Latin women's Initiative Luncheon, Oct. 2019; UHD awards Randy Torres Best History Student Award before sending him off to University of Connecticut for graduate studies in Latin American History.

(Cont. from Pg. 9) largely neglecting the cultural heritages of the majority of its students. Only eight courses in our entire university curriculum directly engage Latino perspectives, making it nearly impossible for students to complete our Latino Studies Concentration.

However, the institution is working to address this challenge. Over the last three years, UHD has made two key investments in diversifying our curriculum: the creation of the Center for Latino Studies, a humanities-focused academic unit whose mission is to create learning experiences inclusive of Latino students; and the approval of a new Latino Studies Concentration of our Bachelor's Degree in Humanities, after which Latino student enrollment in the Humanities major nearly doubled from 26% in 2016 to 48% in 2018. This initiative to develop the Latino Studies curriculum builds on these institutional investments that to fulfill a mandate that Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, and African American students made over a half century ago, when they mobilized to demand a more inclusive curriculum. By bringing our curriculum into line with the identities of our student population, these new courses will provide culturally-relevant content that supports their retention and graduation, thereby advancing our mission as a Hispanic-serving and Minority-serving institution.

(Cont. from Pg. 3) with some of Houston's most influential Latina professionals, community leaders, and entrepreneurs to inspire our students to dream big, while equipping them with the tools they need to reach their goals.

Each semester, Latinas Achieve offers the UHD community a full calendar of experiences that encourage Latina students to learn, build relationships, and develop their academic and professional trajectories in a supportive, culturally-sensitive environment. Among the program's signature events are the Mentor-Mentee Mixer, hosted every Fall, and the Ice Cream Social, offered in the Spring. Students interested in joining Latinas Achieve can apply by scanning the QR code at right. Latina professionals, entrepreneurs, and community leaders interested in becoming a mentor can email lucero-bo@uhd.edu.



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