

2023 CLLAS YEAR IN REVIEW



GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR

As 2023 comes to close, once again we take stock of the important work of the **Wayne State University Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies** and eagerly look forward to building on the successes attained.

The hard-driven members of our dedicated recruitment, retention and graduation team, working collaboratively with advisers, peer mentors, office assistants and social work interns, welcomed another cohort of students on campus and helped them stay on track with their personal and academic goals, while simultaneously supporting those who were farther along in the educational pipeline.

Our core faculty members and part-time instructors secured grants, hosted films, organized cultural exhibits and art displays, presented in public and academic settings, published or worked on research projects, served on key campus and external committees and organizations, and volunteered their time in numerous opportunities. And if that was not enough, together they taught 16 classes to about 200+ students!

Needless to say, many of these pivotal achievements are made possible by several interrelated major factors:

- our collective goal of making a personal investment and commitment to preserve and expand the Center's longstanding mission to fostering diversity, student self-empowerment, leadership development and community engagement;
- the support of our key university partners, including members of the upper administration, Board of Governors, and professional groups like the Latinx Faculty and Staff Association, Amigos Médicos and the Latinx Law Students Association;
- and the enthusiastic and steadfast backing of our alumni and growing community stakeholders, who year after year have provided their wise counsel, timely assistance, mentorship, connections, service-learning opportunities, and financial sponsorships that support much of our work. To all of them, we extend our deepest gratitude.

In closing, on behalf of everyone at CLLAS, we wish you a joyous holiday season and health, wealth and blessings in the New Year.

Jorge L. Chinea, Ph.D.

Distinguished Service Professor of History & Director, CLLAS



CLLAS Facts & Figures

Fall 2023 Census Date

215 Students
in CLLAS programs
All cohorts

NEW Fall 2023 cohort: **65**

81%
First to second-year
retention rate
Fall 2022 cohort



85%

First-generation college students

Fall 2023 cohort



69%

Fourth-year retention rate

Fall 2022 cohort

70% from
Detroit high schools

Fall 2023 cohort



43%

Four-year graduation rate

2019 cohort

Our recruitment and retention rates remain strong and steady. We have made major gains in graduation rates with more than 40% of our 2019 cohort graduating in just four years, nearly 10 points higher than the national percentage for Hispanic college students at public institutions, according to the [latest figures](#) from the National Center for Education Statistics.

GRANTS AND GIFTS

- \$25,000 - **DTE Energy Foundation**
- \$10,000 - **Ford Hispanic Latino Network**
- \$10,000 - **Myron P. Leven Foundation**
- More than \$30,000 raised at the CLLAS 52nd Anniversary Awards Dinner (View full list of dinner sponsors [here](#))

Thank you to **ALL** of our 2023 donors!

Support our important work in 2024

Make a gift to support our annual programming and student scholarships.

las.wayne.edu/donate

Give to the **Jorge L. Chinae Endowed Scholarship Fund:**

giving.wayne.edu/donate/chinea



WAYNE STATE
UNIVERSITY

Center for Latino/a and
Latin American Studies



On March 8, the **Wayne State University Board of Governors** voted unanimously to approve the renewal of the Center's charter through January 31, 2029.

The Center's faculty and staff submitted a strong self-study documenting the positive impact it has had with respect to the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students, particularly those from Southwest Detroit and surrounding communities.

The re-chartering process also included a rigorous evaluation by an external committee, whose final report stated, "CLLAS is a model program for successful work with under-represented students as well as high-level scholarship in Latino/a and Latin American studies."

The final report, endorsed by both the President and Provost, also included recommendations for additional resources to support the Center's four-part mission.



Also in March came the publication of a special issue of *Diálogo*, an interdisciplinary academic journal on diverse Latin American and U.S. Latino/a topics. This issue, volume 24, number 2: ***Building Latina/o/x Studies: Case Samples from the Midwest*** prominently features our beloved CLLAS.

Dr. China is interviewed by the issue's guest editor about the Center's past and present. Dr. José Cuello, former CLLAS director and associate professor emeritus of history, has an essay with a comprehensive history of our program going back to the late 1960s when the Detroit community was mobilizing to help Latina/o/x youth gain access to higher education.

PDF copies of both features are available by emailing mmorse@wayne.edu.





Congratulations to Ida Martinez, Research Support Librarian, and official liaison librarian to CLLAS, for her **promotion to Librarian III** effective August 2023. Since joining Wayne State in 2019, Ida has been an outstanding campus partner who has brought new life into the Center’s relationship with the WSU Libraries.

For the past three years, Ida has served as an embedded librarian for LAS 1420: Introduction to Latino/a and Latin American Studies Interdisciplinary Research. Designed for first-year students, LAS 1420 introduces core concepts from a variety of disciplines. The course, which culminates in an academic conference where students present research posters as their final projects, is the Center’s most popular class with enrollment steady at more than 60 students each winter.

In addition to consulting with the instructor on the syllabus, participating in class sessions, creating research guides, and meeting with students individually, Ida delivers an in-depth lecture on misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda. She discusses both English and Spanish language traditional and social media—highly beneficial because many of our students and their families rely on Spanish media. This is just one of the many ways that Ida supports CLLAS students, faculty, and staff with expert guidance throughout the year.



We are delighted to announce the **promotion of Melissa Miranda Morse to Associate Director of Student Services and Program Administration** at CLLAS as of October 2023.

Melissa has served as the Assistant Director since January 2017 and in that time has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to the Center, its students, the community, and other stakeholders. Under Melissa’s leadership, all critical student services are run efficiently and on time, and key components have been significantly enhanced.

The results are evident in the sharp increase in recruitment, retention, and graduation rates of CLLAS students, as well as an increase in students declaring a minor in Latino/a Studies and participating in numerous Center activities. Her readiness to step in wherever needed and innovative thinking have enabled CLLAS to have a bigger footprint than resources would allow. Melissa has also played a big role in the creation and launch of the Crockett-Lumumba Scholars Program, an academic learning community rooted in Black/African American Studies in Detroit.

As Associate Director, Melissa will work with the CLLAS Director and other stakeholders on strategic initiatives to build on the momentum of the past several years and grow programs rooted in our mission. *¡Gracias por tus esfuerzos, Melissa!*

In November, **CLLAS Academic Advisor Estenia Gomez Elisevich and Peer Mentors Sabrina Stahlberger and Juan Zavala presented at the 2023 National Learning Communities Conference** in Corpus Christi, Texas. Entitled “The Strengths of a Summer Enrichment Program,” the session provided an overview of the Center’s long-standing pre-college summer program and discussed its impact on the success rates of students in their first year of college.

Thank you to Amy Cooper, the WSU Learning Communities Office, and the WSU Office of the Registrar for sponsoring all expenses related to the conference, and thank you to the DTE Energy Foundation, which has provided critical funding for the summer program since 2014.



Estenia also earned her Level 1 Advisor Certification through the WSU Advisor Training Academy and the Office of the Provost. Level 1 is designed for new advisors with a focus on understanding Wayne State University, the role of academic advising at the University, and essential advising skills and competencies. To earn Level 1, advisors must complete a rigorous curriculum consisting of articles, exercises, and online modules throughout the year.

Estenia was presented with a certificate from Cheryl Kollin, Senior Director, and Kate Bernas, Associate Director, of the University Advising Center at the 2023 Advisor Recognition and Awards Program in December.



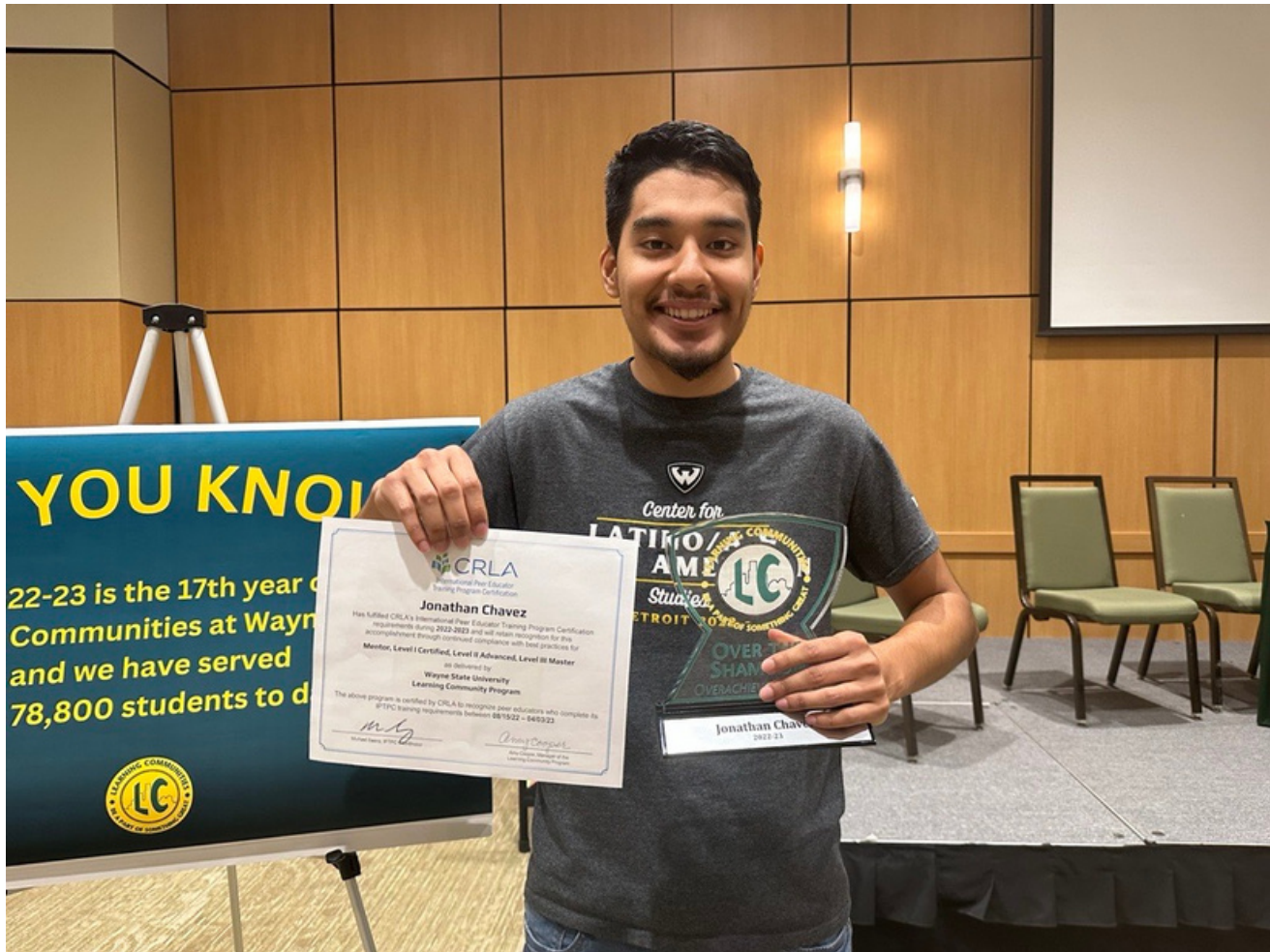
CLLAS Academic Advisor Micheline Silva was appointed to the **WSU President's Commission on the Status of Women (COSW)** for the 2023-24 term. The COSW advises Wayne State University's Office of the President and the larger campus community on issues facing women students, staff, faculty, and alumni including gender equity and equality, social justice, and intersectionality.

Micheline completed her first full year as a CLLAS advisor, during which she made a number of contributions, including leading the planning of the 2023 Academia del Pueblo research conference and El Nuevo Comienzo celebration, hosting professional development

opportunities for students, and building connections with the internal and external communities. She was also published in the Eugene Applebaum College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences newsletter sharing mental health tips for students.

In April, **CLLAS hosted its 14th Annual Academia del Pueblo Latino/a and Latin American Studies Research Conference**. Centered around the theme “Navigating Violence: Resistance and Radical Potentials for Healing Within Latinx and Latin American Communities,” this year’s conference featured 39 student posters, 10 panelists representing a mix of students and community partners, and 150 attendees. We were honored to have **Dr. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez** serve as conference keynote speaker. Her talk, “Reparation of the Imagination: Imagining Latinx Futures Beyond Violence,” featured archival research she conducted on the Puerto Rican community in her hometown of Hoboken, New Jersey for her upcoming book. Then an Associate Professor at Michigan State University, Dr. Figueroa-Vásquez was appointed Director of the prestigious Center for Puerto Rican Studies (CENTRO) and Professor of Africana, Puerto Rican and Latino Studies at Hunter College in New York City, effective fall 2023. Congratulations!





Felicitaciones to CLLAS peer mentor Jonathan Chavez for receiving the 2023 “Over the Shamoun” Overachiever Award from the WSU Learning Communities Office. The annual award goes to a peer mentor who consistently goes above and beyond for their students and learning community.

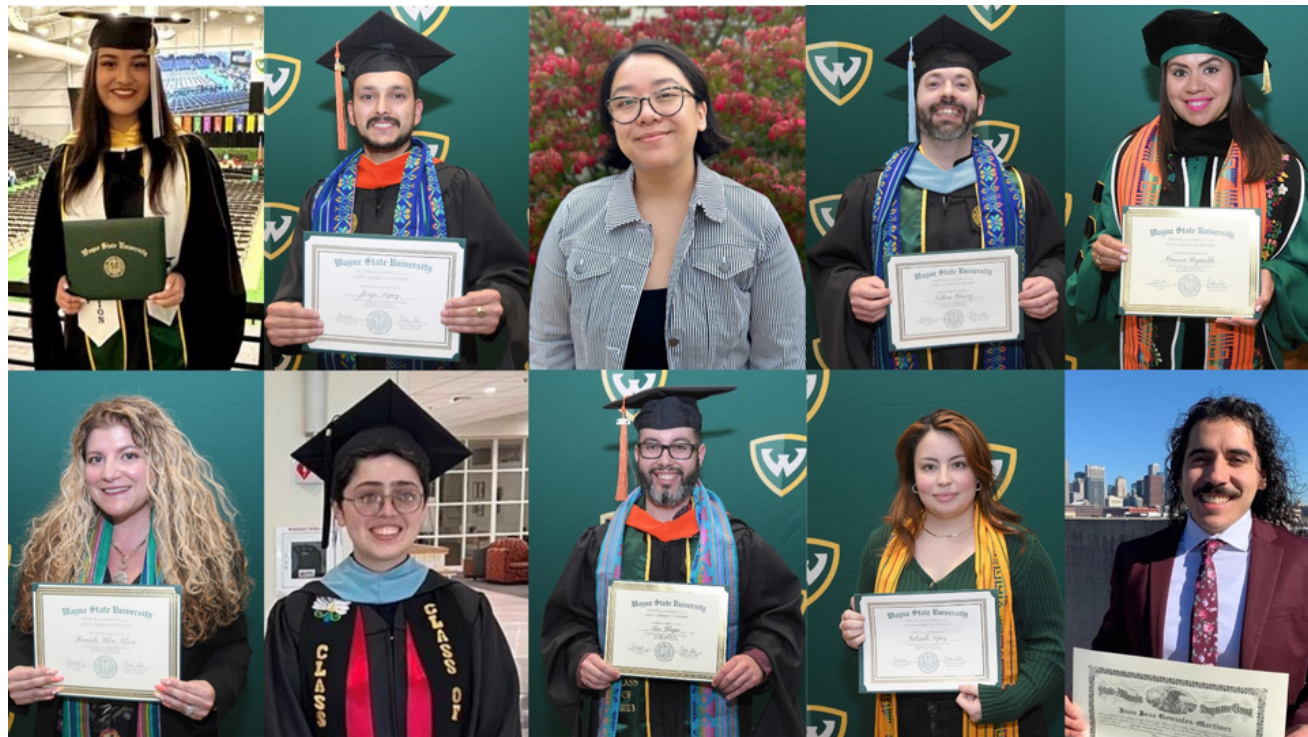
Jonathan served as a mentor for two programs: CLLAS and the College of Education Upward Bound. He has a passion for both, as they serve students with similar backgrounds as him. In addition to mentoring, Jonathan helps out at the Center's front office, volunteers at recruitment events, participates in student panels, and is the first person to raise his hand whenever faculty or staff need help with anything. He maintains a positive attitude whether he is meeting with his mentees, lugging a cart of supplies across campus in the rain, or speaking to community leaders on a panel.

A first-generation college student and graduate of Cesar Chavez Academy High School, Jonathan, now in his senior year, takes his academics and goal of becoming a physical therapist seriously. He has maintained a high GPA while balancing mentoring duties, internship requirements for his major and minor, and numerous responsibilities at home. Perhaps all of the time spent participating in classes and other activities (including the CLLAS summer program and academic conference) virtually due to the pandemic has inspired Jonathan to push himself far beyond his comfort zone at WSU.

This coming winter term he will be serving as a teaching assistant to Alicia Díaz in LAS 1420 as well as beginning his prerequisite courses for the Doctor of Physical Therapy Program. We are so proud of his growth as a student, mentor, and individual, and appreciate all that he does.

CLLAS alumni are enrolling in graduate and professional programs in greater numbers than ever before. **Felicitaciones to the following alumni who earned graduate degrees in 2023.**

From left to right (*top row*): **Paulina Yllescas-Rosales**, M.S., Criminal Justice (WSU); **Jorge Lopez**, M.S., Manufacturing Engineering (WSU); **Noribeth Mariscal**, M.S., Environmental & Sustainability Engineering (WSU); **Nathan Chavez**, M. Ed., Learning Design & Technology; **Vanessa Reynolds**, Ed.D., Educational Leadership & Policy Studies; (*bottom row*): **Daniela Silva Tilson**, Ed.D., Educational Leadership & Policy Studies; **Mayra Torres**, M.Ed, Student Affairs (University of Maryland); **Luis Chapa**, M.S., Mechanical Engineering (WSU); **Gabrielle Lopez**, M.B.A. - Finance & Entrepreneurship (WSU); **Juan Jose Gonzalez-Martinez**, J.D. (Loyola University Chicago).



On May 2nd, a record **71 students** participated in **El Nuevo Comienzo Latina/o/x and Native Student Graduation Celebration**. Now in its 15th year, the event highlights achievements of Latina/o/x and Native graduates and provide a space for honoring the support and contributions of family, friends, mentors, and the community.



This fall, **CLLAS** had an *ofrenda* displayed at the Detroit Institute of Arts "Ofrendas: Celebrating el Día de Muertos" exhibition (September 23 through November 5).

Led by alumna and instructor Alicia Díaz, the installation, titled "El Fuego Se Equivocó/The Fire Was Mistaken" (see first photo, right) paid tribute to individuals across the Americas who voiced resistance but were silenced.

Many CLLAS students contributed to the altar, including first-year students participating in the Summer Enrichment Program cultural studies workshops. We were pleased to offer custom tours of the exhibit to 11 groups from classes and units across campus, such as Spanish classes, Student Disability Services, and the Center for Gender and Sexuality.

This is the second time that CLLAS had an altar featured at the DIA.



The first time was in 2019. CLLAS student **Jojo Díaz-Orsi** was part of the student team who worked on the 2019 altar. This year, Jojo (now a graduate) had their own altar "La Última Casa/The Last House" (second photo, above) featured. It told the story of how families mourn

when they are unable to return to their home countries to attend funerals due to immigration status.

According to the DIA, more than 40,000 people visited the Ofrendas exhibit this year.



As customary in Latino/a communities across the U.S., **CLLAS is defining its space by installing art** that tells its rich and complex story. This year, we commissioned a mural for our front office. Painted by recent alumna and former peer mentor **Diana García Rivera** (BFA, Design; LAS minor), the nearly 11- by 8-foot piece titled "El Viaje a la Sabiduría" (A Journey Toward Knowledge) pays tribute to the diverse community that makes up the CLLAS student body.

Additionally, Dr. José Cuello has generously gifted several pieces from his personal art collection to CLLAS. These pieces reflect a wide range of styles, media, and time periods, but all represent an aspect of Latinidad. We are curating the pieces to create several gallery walls in and around the CLLAS offices and anticipate formally unveiling the mural and galleries in the spring of 2024.



Jorge L. Chinaea



Nicole Trujillo-Pagán



Reyna Esquivel-King



Carlos R. Hernández

Osvaldo "Ozzie"
Rivera

Alicia Díaz

Dr. Jorge L. Chinaea

- Promoted to Distinguished Service Professor of History, August 2023
- Served on the doctoral committee of Erik Noren, who successfully completed his dissertation, "Elite Creole Culture: Planter Identity Formation in Antigua, 1750-1840," Department of History, July 2023.
- Has a forthcoming chapter, "A Tradition of Contraband: Secreting and Silencing the Illegal Importation and Exploitation of Enslaved Africans in Spanish Colonial Puerto Rico," in Lissette Acosta Corniel, ed., *Transatlantic Bondage: Slavery and Freedom in Spain, Santo Domingo, and Puerto Rico*. New York: SUNY Press.
- Interviewed in the Facebook-held "Conversatorio sobre la [barca negra] Majestad/In Conversation about the [slave ship] Majesty," *10th Bomba Research Conference*, September 3, 2023.
- Presented a series of webinars on the Latin@ Labor Rights Movement, *Teaching Comprehensive History Initiative*, Michigan Department of Education, May 2023.

Dr. Nicole Trujillo-Pagán

- Continuing to work on manuscript: *If Detroit Could Talk: How Black Space, White Borders and Latino Crossings Shape the American Dream*. The book is under contract with New York University Press.
- Awards:
 - College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Wayne State University, Social Justice and Teaching Development Fund Award.
 - Humanities Center, Wayne State University, Resident Scholar.
- Professional Development Program Award, Wayne State University.

- Presented paper at a national conference: "From Motown to Diversity: How Bordering and Crossing Practices Produced a New Detroit," American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, August.
- Public presentation: "What Does it Mean to Be a Detroit? Why Does It Matter?," WDET Radio.
- Service to Profession:
 - (2024). National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Public Scholar Award, Reviewer.
 - American Sociological Association, Community and Urban section, Publications Committee
 - American Sociological Association, Community and Urban section, Jane Addams Best Article Award Committee
 - American Sociological Association, Community and Urban section, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee
 - Editorial Board, Journal of Undergraduate Ethnography, 2016-
- University Service:
 - Director, Undergraduate Committee, Sociology Department, 2023-
 - Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program, Reviewer, 2023.
 - Union Representative to Sociology Department, 2021-

Dr. Reyna Esquivel-King

- Presented a talk for Hispanic Heritage Month at Commonwealth McCann, a global advertising agency and leading supplier for General Motors.
- Invited to write a review for the *Michigan Historical Review* on the book *Building Sustainable Worlds: Latinx Placemaking in the Midwest*.



Dr. Reyna Esquivel-King (cont.)

- Awarded a Fraser Labor Educational Development Grant to create the course “Labor in Latin America.”
- Union Representative to History Department.
- Appointed to Wayne State University Press Editorial Board.

Dr. Carlos R. Hernández

- Awarded Faculty Fellowship from the Humanities Center to support the completion of book manuscript.
- Invited to present at a conference hosted by John’s Hopkins University this past September, where participants discussed and debated new directions in the history of development. Participant scholars are now finalizing a special issue dossier for *Humanity*, an interdisciplinary and peer-reviewed journal. Dr. Hernández’s article contribution, “Rethinking Tourism and Development in Mexico: Cancún, the Riviera Maya, and Beyond,” will be published sometime next year.
- Commissioned to review Rob McKenzie and Patrick Dunn’s *El Golpe: US Labor, the CIA, and the Coup at Ford Mexico* (Pluto Press, 2022) in *Labour/Le Travail*, a Canadian peer-reviewed journal. The review will likely be published in early fall.

Oswaldo "Ozzie" Rivera

(Founding alumnus and instructor)

- Appointed by the Detroit City Council to the Detroit Historical Advisory Board, July 2023. Nominated by City Council Member Gabriela Santiago-Romero.
- Coordinating a celebration of Afro-Latino/a history and culture for the WSU campus community in partnership with CLLAS, the Department of African American Studies and the Graduate School in commemoration of Black History Month (2024). The event will feature world-renowned percussionist Mario "Machito Jr." Grillo, son of legendary Afro-Cuban Latin Jazz artist, Frank "Machito" Grillo.

Alicia Díaz

(Alumna and instructor)

- Interviewed live on air by Fox 2 Detroit at the Detroit Institute of Arts discussing the history and meaning of Día de Muertos.
- Leading a team of students and alumni working on a series of videos documenting the impact of CLLAS on the lives of students, alumni, faculty and staff.
- Completed the Encore Transition Program at Union Theological Seminary for individuals looking to make a difference in their community post retirement. This competitive program engages a highly diverse group of eight to ten adults from across the world in a four-month program of discernment, dialogue, personal discovery, and personal design. After completing the program, Alicia was able to audit courses at Union, including “Race, Religion and the United States Crisis,” co-taught by Dr. Cornel West and other leading scholars.

NEW LAS COURSES

Our Latino/a and Latin American Studies curriculum is expanding and reflecting the expertise of our new faculty members.

Revolutionary Movements in Latin America

- Taught by Dr. Carlos R. Hernández
- Officially approved in 2023 and added to WSU Bulletin as LAS 3431, cross-listed with History

Gender and Sexuality in Latin American History

- Taught by Dr. Reyna Esquivel-King
- Currently offered as a Special Topics course and seeking approval in 2024 for inclusion in the bulletin with History and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies cross-listings

Latin American History through Film

- Taught by Dr. Reyna Esquivel-King
- Currently offered as a Special Topics course and seeking approval in 2024 for inclusion in the bulletin with History cross-listing





Pictured clockwise from top left: CLLAS student **Michael Ramirez** (center) with his great uncle **Benny Esquivel** (left) and great aunt **Beatrice Esquivel**, who are both WSU graduates and founding alumni of CLLAS (they joined the first class of Latino en Marcha in 1971); WSU faculty, staff and students with new **Wayne State President Kimberly Andrews Espy** at a meet and greet in Southwest Detroit hosted by LA SED in October; **Director Dr. Jorge L. Chinea** live on WXYZ Channel 7 Detroit discussing the history of Cinco de Mayo; **Esteria Elisevich** (left) and alumna **Dr. Vanessa Reynolds** of the WSU Office of Undergraduate Admissions with incoming WSU students at Warrior Day (a recruitment event) at Western International High School.

From live faculty interviews to detailed profiles of members of our *familia*, CLLAS was frequently featured in the local press. Thank you to El Central Hispanic News, Dr. José Cuello, Melissa Miranda-Morse, CLLAS alumna Andrea Meza, the team at Today@Wayne and the many others who helped tell our story in 2023. View all of our coverage at las.wayne.edu/news.

COMING IN 2024

Save the date! Full details will be added to our website las.wayne.edu in early January as they become available.

- **Black History Month Celebration** featuring Mario “Machito Jr.” Grillo, February 21st
- **La Academia del Pueblo Latino/a and Latin American Studies Research Conference**, April 19th
- **El Nuevo Comienzo Latina/o/x and Native Student Graduation Celebration**, April 29th



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WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR LATINO/A AND
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

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