Proposal for a Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence

Submitted by Blanca Anderson

Rationale:

Loyola University New Orleans, as a Jesuit University with a firm commitment to social justice, and located in a city with strong cultural and historical ties to the Caribbean and Latin America, is the ideal place for a Latin American & Caribbean Center (LACC). This center will help Loyola’s vision of repositioning itself as a leading comprehensive university in the southern tier of the country, and it will contribute to the strengthening of Loyola’s mission, vision, and goals as stated in the Pathways documents of 2006 and 2007.

The Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence, a comprehensive effort to enhance Loyola’s position in the city, region, and hemisphere, will effectively work at different levels: from the support of scholarly and academic excellence to grassroots initiatives within the city of New Orleans. Building upon existing academic programs and department and college initiatives, the center will strengthen and expand these efforts, while creating new possibilities of action. It will bring together the different aspects of the Jesuit vision of higher education, constituting itself in a center of coordination, resources, and funding within the university.

Latin America is an area of twenty independent countries, with four main western languages (Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese) and hundreds of non-western indigenous languages and cultures. The Caribbean region is divided into three main groups: the Bahamas (30 inhabited islands), the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico & Hispaniola, comprised of Haiti and the Dominican Republic), and the Lesser Antilles (a group of 38 islands with ties to the United States, Britain, Venezuela, France, and the Netherlands). A region of immense cultural, political, and economical diversity, Latin America and the Caribbean have more people than Europe, a huge economy, and a history deeply intertwined with the United States. For centuries the city of New Orleans has been an open gateway between the United States and Latin America, specially the Caribbean, stimulating trading as well as political and cultural exchange. The city's influence is palpable not only throughout the Gulf of Mexico but also along the Yucatán Peninsula and Northern Central America. New Orleans' key cultural role can be found in places as diverse as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti, and Honduras. In addition, it is a region rich in the Jesuit presence. It stands to reason then, that a Jesuit University in New Orleans, that strives to educate globally literate citizens rooted in inter-cultural awareness and with a deep commitment to social justice, should aspire to become a significant educational presence and model. This center will bring together the mission, vision, and goals of the university in this part of the world, contributing to strengthen Loyola University New Orleans.

Description:

What follows is a specific vision for the center, as it relates to the goals of Loyola stated in the recent Pathways documents.
1. The Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence will contribute to the enhancement of the international and interdisciplinary educational experience of Loyola students.

Working with existing programs of study (i.e. Latin American Studies, International Business, Music, Women Studies, Environmental Studies, Nursing, Pre-Med, Pre-Law, and others) the center will provide resources and support for program development and expansion. Some possibilities include:

- Establishing and managing a visiting scholars program. Bring visiting professors from the region to teach courses to our students, in a variety of disciplines. This is a cost-effective initiative, which will provide students with the opportunity to study and undertake research with scholars from the region. (i.e., in the Spring semester of 08, through the efforts of Professor Josefa Salmón, the Mexican scholar Jorge Aguilar Mora taught an interactive course on Mexican Film and Fiction in the Foreign Language Department, as part of the Spanish and Latin American Studies programs. The course consisted of a series of on-campus lectures with an on-line component. This was a valuable and unique learning experience for our students. Having a center responsible for managing and coordinating these type of courses would help all disciplines, departments, and colleges, and set the pattern for a fruitful and constant intellectual exchange between scholars from Latin America and the Caribbean and our students).

- Work with Monroe library to create a technological database of lectures, information, films, etc, to be easily accessed by students and faculty alike.

- Coordinate the filming of lectures and talks given by the visiting scholars.

- Assist visiting scholars with online course coordination, as needed.

- Work with the Center for International Education to evaluate, develop, and offer more possibilities of study abroad to Latin America and the Caribbean across all disciplines.

- Develop opportunities for students to study non-western languages spoken in the region.

- Develop a plan of action to better serve students from Latin America & the Caribbean while helping them integrate into the overall culture of the university. (Any given semester we have several hundred students from the region. The center can coordinate with other offices to make “use” of this international presence, and create fruitful exchanges between Loyola students).

- Explore and develop programs that address the growing Latino (or Spanish Heritage) student population of the university and city.
2. The Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence will promote and support active engagement with the New Orleans community.

The growing Hispanic population of New Orleans presents a series of challenges and opportunities for Loyola to make a positive contribution to the city. There are several outreach initiatives and programs (i.e. the Law School program of workers’ rights, internships that involve local schools and others). The center would work with the different academic programs and their needs, and coordinate accordingly. Specifically, the center would:

- Work with existing programs to create new possibilities of service learning. *(i.e., coordinate internships of Spanish students with the outreach programs of the Law School.)*
- Explore and support the needs of the Law School to teach Spanish to the law profession.
- Explore and support the needs of pre-med students and the medical profession in New Orleans to learn Spanish.
- Explore and support initiatives and needs in the Nursing School to learn Spanish.
- Explore the need for initiatives to promote cultural awareness and understanding.
- Explore and support the needs of the law-enforcing agencies in the New Orleans area.
- Explore and develop programs for K-12 teachers, to accommodate the growing influx of Hispanic students.
- Design workshops on how to incorporate area studies into the school curriculum.
- Assist teachers of foreign languages in teaching methodologies development.
- Provide teachers with programs to enhance cultural awareness in school curriculums.
- Assist the Language Department in their endeavors to prepare their students for teaching foreign languages in area schools.
- Establish firm and lasting partnership with the Hispanic Apostolate, thus avoiding situations like the ESL program of the Hispanic Apostolate now being housed at Tulane because of a lack of continuity at Loyola.
- Establish firm and lasting partnerships with local groups such as the newly formed LatiNola, Casa Argentina, Club de Puerto Rico, and others.
- Support faculty and student's initiatives to create organizations devoted to improve the quality of life of the Latino community in the New Orleans area. *(i.e., the initiative submitted in Spring 08 by students in the Business School and HuNs, "The Loyola Microfinance Initiative")*
- Support faculty-student research projects on topics related to the Latino community in the New Orleans area.
- Work with the Jesuit Social Research Institute in their outreach efforts with the Latino community of New Orleans.
3. The Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence will support faculty and staff development.

The center will play an important role in supporting interdisciplinary and international dialogue between academics, scholars and artists of Latin American, the Caribbean and New Orleans, helping Loyola achieve its goal of an internationalized campus as stated in Pathways. Specifically, the center will

- Coordinate faculty panels, exchanges, exhibits, conferences, film and video festivals, etc.
- Establish a partnership with AUSJAL (the Association of Jesuit Universities of Latin America, a group of 29 universities)
- Establish a partnership with UDUAL (Association of Universities of Latin America, whose main site is located in Mexico City, in the UNAM, the National Autonomous University of Mexico)
- Explore partnerships with the University of the West Indies, with branches in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Barbados, and 12 other nations and territories.
- Help secure funds for academic and outreach activities for faculty across the region. Work with the Office of Grants and Leaves.
- Work with existing faculty development programs and offices to bring focus to the region.

4. Needs for the creation of the Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence:

- **Director of the Center:** Hire a full-time tenure-track faculty in the Latin American/Spanish section of the Classical and Modern Foreign Languages & Cultures Department. The new faculty will also be hired as a director of the center, with one course release per semester.

  ✓ **Rationale:** Since the department has a new major in Latin American Studies (beginning Fall 08), and is intrinsically involved in the Latin American Studies minor, it seems a logical (and cost-effective) move. This faculty member will be able to teach all types of courses (language, literature, culture) helping to build up the major, and undertaking the duties of director.

  ✓ **Specifics:**
  
  - **Budget:** $55,000 base salary + stipend for being director (to be determined by Dean and Provost).
  - Initial contract for stipend should be for 5 years. Assessment of center will determine future possible changes.

  ✓ **Proposed advertisement:** The Department of Classical & Modern Foreign Languages & Cultures seeks a full-time tenured or tenure-track candidate in Spanish, with a specialized area of expertise in Latin America. The candidate will also hold the title of Director of the Latin
American & Caribbean Center of Excellence. Teaching load will be 2 classes per semester within the Latin American section of the department, plus the administrative duties required from the director of the center. This position requires policy development and implementation capabilities, as well as the ability to work in collaboration with faculty and administrators across the university and other institutions within New Orleans to promote international research, education, outreach, and service programs. Specific duties include the development of strategic partnerships with institutions of higher learning throughout Latin America and the Caribbean to advance research and teaching, including establishing and maintaining a visiting scholars program at Loyola University; fostering collaborative relationships with other programs and disciplines within the university, as well as other institutions in the city, such as K-12 schools; contributing proposals to secure funds for Center and university programs related to Latin America. Candidates are expected to have administrative skills and ability to secure external funding from diverse sources, both public and private.

- **Space for the Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence**
  - House the center in Bobet 113. *This is the ideal place for the center, located in a prominent building, next to the Ross Foreign Language Center, and facing the Writing Across the Curriculum Center, (in what used to be a lab/center).*

5. **National recognition of the Latin American & Caribbean Center of Excellence**

- The center will be recognized as a center for area and language resource by the U. S. Department of Education, thus securing relevant funding.
- The director will develop a realistic plan with this goal on mind.