

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT - AY20-21

Year of Reflection

A year of reflection allows the department/program to review the totality of your assessment practices and results, and to consider how to work towards bettering your program and/or assessment plan. This could result in changes to PLOs, assessment strategies, curriculum, or other assessment activities. Your faculty might consider where they envision the program going next. Or, perhaps, there is some goal the faculty would like to approach or some question relevant to student learning they would like to answer. A year of reflection emphasizes the true meaning of assessment, allowing for continuous improvement of your program.

Report Structure

Name(s) of program(s) and degree type(s)

Latin American Studies (Major and Minor Joint Report)

Names and contact information of the faculty coordinating the assessment

Roberto Varea, Program Director (varea@usfca.edu)

Your Mission Statement; note any changes since last report

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR MISSION STATEMENT:

The Latin American Studies Program embodies the University of San Francisco's mission to provide a rigorous, world-class education to a new generation of leaders, who will work to create a more humane and just world. The Latin American Studies major prepares students for a global and transnational "America" by providing sophisticated, hands-on, innovative courses. With its emphasis on interdisciplinary studies, immersion experiences, and second-language proficiency, the Program enables students to understand the historical, cultural, economic, political and social conditions that shape contemporary Latin America.

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES MINOR MISSION STATEMENT (also covered by the MAJOR's PROGRAM statement):

The Latin American Studies Minor is designed for students interested in combining an understanding and appreciation of Latin America with another discipline or major. The minor enhances students' professional training as it offers regional focus, direction, and coherence to complement their undergraduate education.

There were no changes made to either (Major and Minor's) mission statement since last report.

Your PLOs; note any changes since last report

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES MAJOR PLOs:

- 1a. Students can describe and contrast patterns of geographic and sociocultural diversity in the region.
- 2a. Students can identify, classify and analyze the main historical periods of Latin American development.

- 2b. Students can define, differentiate and assess the central economic and political models that have been used in the region, including their impact on the social relations of power.
- 2c. Students can describe and analyze the complex relationships between the United States and Latin America, including how Latin Americans and Latin@s have influenced different aspects of American society and culture.
- 3a. Students can read advanced texts; write about daily activities; and communicate with native speakers about everyday topics and personal opinions.
- 3b. Students can describe, appraise and criticize major literary and other cultural works from the region, including how they reflect their historical period and illuminate systemic inequalities.
- 4a. Students can craft a well-organized and clearly written multi-page essay.
- 4b. Students can express themselves clearly, coherently and thoughtfully in discussions and presentations.
- 4c. Students can demonstrate the research skills necessary to make original contributions to the study of Latin America.
- 5a. Students can summarize and critically assess current social, political, and economic issues in the region.
- 5b. Students can describe and critically appraise their academic and extra-curricular experiences in Latin America.
- 5c. Students can promote understanding of Latin America in educational, service, social, or employment contexts.

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES MINOR PLOs:

- 1. Students can describe and critically analyze the major historical, social, political, and economic processes that have shaped the lives of Latin Americans.
- 2. Students can individually and comparatively describe and analyze the diversity of the Latin American region and its peoples from at least two perspectives (social, **cultural**, historical, and/or religious and philosophical).
- 3. Students can read and write academic texts and express information in Spanish and/or Portuguese, and demonstrate familiarity with the region's cultural and/or literary production.

There were no changes made to either (Major and Minor's) PLOs since last report.

Your current Curricular Map; note any changes since last report.

Please see attached: *LASPLOxCoursesCurricularMap.xlsx*

There were no changes made to either (Major and Minor's) Curricular Map since last report.

Your assessment schedule between APRs: a year-by-year list of PLOs assessed since your last APR and those to be assessed before your next APR. Contact your FDCD for clarification if needed.

<u>2016-17:</u>	PLOs 4a and 4b
<u>2017-18:</u>	MAJOR's PLO 3b., with an emphasis on <i>performance</i> MINOR's PLO 2, with an emphasis on the <i>cultural</i> perspective
<u>2018-19:</u>	MAJOR's PLO 2a., with an emphasis on <i>Latin American History</i> MINOR's PLO 1, with an emphasis on the <i>historical processes</i>
<u>2019-20:</u>	We Focused on assessing Remote/Distance Learning
<u>2020-21:</u>	Year of Reflection
<u>2021-22:</u>	(projected) 5a and 5b

Description of the methodology including rubrics or other instruments for the required and/or alternative assessment process

The methodologies previously used were based on previous practice, including **rubrics** (see attached for PLO 2a from year 2018-19).

For this **Year of Reflection**, the primary methodology included discussions with LAS board, LAS professors, as well as data from HR.

Description of your results noting any significant findings from the data or assessment process

The most critical point that emerges from this past Year of Reflection, is that the Latin American Studies program (LAS) finds itself at a crossroads. As program director, it is my assessment that continuing on this path is not sustainable. There is a very promising way forward in the projected merger with the Chicana-Latinx Studies Minor (CLS) and the start of the exploration of a "4 + 1" path for LAS students to obtain a Master in Migration Studies (MIMS). However, that will definitely entail establishing more formal conversations with the program directors, the CAS Dean's office and, eventually, the Office of the Provost (who, most encouragingly, is already meeting with Latinx faculty), where support and resources need to be identified and made available.

It is important to clarify here that the CAS Dean's office is aware of this effort, has been following how it plays out, but that resources were not formally requested by me. As program director, I am assuming the responsibility for not creating the context for formal conversations between stakeholders to take place. In part this is due to the hope on my part that I could get it done in draft form to be able to then sit down with the Dean's office to work it out. It is clear to me that, on the one hand, I grossly underestimated the toll that these two covid-19 impacted years would take on me. On the other hand, my home department, Performing Arts (PA), necessitated my support in ways that were not anticipated when then Dean Balls-Organista and I articulated a way for me to devote my attention to LAS, where I explicitly requested (and was granted) agreed upon need to be relieved from major service tasks related to PA. First, an unexpected leave of absence by key faculty at PA necessitated that I again took on the role of coordinator of the Theater Area while simultaneously running LAS. Then, PA required more attention with additional covid-19 related issues (in a department where live performance is central a space that needed to be

reimagined), and finally, the major drain of time and attention took the form of countless hours of anti-racist training and restorative meetings within the disheartening context of racism accusations from former students towards PA faculty. As one of only two FT Tenure track professors of color in the PA department, I had to assume additional responsibilities (and this has taken a big toll).

I do not want this to come across as a litany of excuses. I do want to call attention to the fact that this situation lays bare some of the most difficult structural problems faced by LAS. First, it is a program, not a department, and in my experience, the great disparity of resources between these two makes it very hard for LAS to compete. I would be most open to go over these in a formal meeting, such as the total loss of any physical space or office to call our own, where faculty but critically, students, could go to or gather. As LAS director I experience both diminished support and also accountability mechanisms on the part of LAS faculty who, like me, are overstretched, and need to primarily respond to their respective departments. I have had faculty meetings where only one faculty member could attend.

Faculty represent then, another central space in this Year of Reflection. Some examples: our board, curricular workings, CLS merger planning, and program morale, suffered a big blow with the denial of tenure to Professor Dany Gascón, who was a major contributor to LAS in all these areas, and who was being groomed as future LAS director (and resulting in extending my tenure as director past the original agreed upon time). His position was not replaced by a similar Latinx, FT Tenure professor with a corresponding level of service expectation. Key LAS faculty had to take on leadership roles in their respective programs. Former board members with expertise of being former LAS directors took an early retirement, or are on sabbatical. Other important faculty are now on leave, or became less available for understandable reasons. It should be noted that often the courses that these professors taught left along with them. A meaningful, but small group of professors are still at the table.

As long as we remain a Program, a situation which made LAS thrive when it started, but that greatly deteriorated with deep reductions of support –such as, to name a few, director’s course relief, a dedicated Program Assistant (I count 6 different PAs in the span of 4 years), significant faculty attrition rather than growth, the loss of a dedicated space or office, and a continuous dependency on other departments for course offerings and course staffing– the LAS Program’s future, in my opinion will be bleak. We have no way to play a role on when a given course would be offered by a given department, or if they would want to continue to offer such course even when our Latinx students ask for it (i.e. Latin American Philosophy) once the professor who taught it left for whatever reason. There is little time and few resources to revamp the program, to aggressively recruit, to maintain spaces, virtual or physical, of engagement with each other and with our students.

Our last two APRs greatly lauded the LAS program but also urged the administration to make it a full department. We seem to be stuck there, but no longer even in a sustainable manner. We are shrinking, faculty are leaving, and so are students, sustaining this year the worse attrition of in the numbers of new LAS majors since I took on the directorship four years ago.

As I stated earlier, we are at a crossroads, which means that there is another, hopeful path. The Latinx student population is growing exponentially, so much so that the administration is exploring obtaining the status of an “Hispanic Serving Institution.” In such scenario (or any) these students will not

only be hungry for, but should be presented with a robust LAS/CLS merged curriculum, a clear path for a MIMS “4 + 1” graduate option and its corresponding career opportunities, and the necessary resources to grow and thrive. There should be more hiring of Latinx-identified faculty to go along with it and to share the load of work with us, mostly ageing faculty, to bump the current numbers (per Human Resources data for the whole university) of 11% FT Tenured, 8% FT Tenure Track, 9% FT Term, and 10% PT/Adjunct. There should also be a physical space that we can call “home.”

In my assessment, central to this space of hope is the delivery of resources to support the LAS/CLS merger into a “Latin American and Chicanx-Latinx Studies Major” (examples from other universities abound) and part of a Latin American and Chicanx-Latinx Studies Department, or something even larger and equally needed, like a Department of Critical Diversity or Ethnic Studies, *as none of the ethnic-based university programs raises to the departmental level*. This merger would be able to concentrate resources, as already the same faculty teach in both programs and serve on both boards but are pulled in many directions, afford us the needed dedicated PA, boost our chance to get at minimum one dedicated office space and become more visible to the growing Latinx student population who are already hungry for courses that we cannot promise. It would also address the central academic questions posed by the transnational reality of Latinx USA and Latin American geopolitics, culture, and demographics.

Description of how the results were shared with faculty and how your department/program responded to the results. This is where you should lay out any plans for future improvement or assessment of your program indicated by the results

While this is addressed above, I want to add here that the above points have been an ongoing part of our faculty meetings and conversations for the past three years.

Discussion of any significant feedback from your previous year’s report and how your department/program responded to that feedback.

The LAS Program Report for AY2019-20 focused on assessing remote/distance learning. Faculty responded positively in that it was well evaluated by the administration, and it was noted that we had made the transition to remote/distance learning successfully.

Additional documents submitted, LAS Curricular Map, and Rubric sample.