

# The Rutgers Latino Studies Research Initiative

09/17/2017

Dear colleague,

Rutgers recently hired Professor Lilia Fernandez as one of its first [Henry Rutgers Term Chairs](#), an appointment shared by the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies and the Department of History. Fernandez has a mandate (and the initial resources) to help stimulate research and advanced discussions about Latino Studies and Latino History at Rutgers. The Rutgers Latino Studies Research Initiative (R-LSRI) will promote Latino Studies research at Rutgers through various means and we expect to build out of it a permanent Institute or Center with a strong focus on supporting faculty research and building relationships with New Jersey's Latino communities.

This is an effort that is overdue at the flagship University of a state that has 1.7 million Latinos (the largest minority, 20% of the population), where 25% of all K-12 students are Latinos and a student body that is 13% Latino. But our motivation goes well beyond demographics. Latino studies and research on Latinos have exploded in visibility and productivity in the scholarly world of US higher education. Programs, centers, departments and initiatives that promote research and teaching on Latinos have multiplied the original core of undergraduate programs in Puerto Rican and Mexican-American studies built during the 1970s. And in 2014 scholars organized the first professional association dedicated to the study of Latinos across disciplines and national origin identities. Many of our peer institutions have had research centers dedicated to Latino Studies for decades. Rutgers is the only major public university to have a nationally recognized faculty in Latino and Caribbean Studies and large Latino demographics yet no infrastructure that supports and promotes faculty research and community engagement in this area.

The current crisis over citizenship and immigration concatenated with the still lingering effects of the Great Recession make this the time for this effort.

The Initiative looks to be guided by these core ideas drawn from the best scholarship on Latinos:

- Diverse intellectual, theoretical and methodological approaches and practice.
- Consistent and collaborative communication among scholars.
- Commitment to developing the capacity of our undergraduate and graduate students.
- Commitment to the community and political ramifications and context of our research process and product.

The work will develop with the help and participation of a Faculty Coordinating Committee which will provide organizational and intellectual advice as well as form the core of participants as we organize a larger Working Group on Latino Research.

## The Rutgers Latino Studies Research Initiative

Lilia Fernandez will be serving as Coordinator for this Initiative and Aldo Lauria Santiago will assist as Chair of the Faculty Committee. The Initiative looks forward to developing these specific and general goals over the next three years, some of which will be managed by Lilia Fernandez and our project coordinator (a graduate assistant):

- Host presentations by cutting edge scholars in Latino Studies who will present research in progress or masterful interpretations of the field
- Develop initial support for Rutgers faculty research on Latinos.
- Advise colleagues pursuing research and community based projects
- Organize a Latino History workshop, the fourth iteration of the Puerto Rican/Latino History Working group, scheduled for May 2017.
- Develop fundraising opportunities for the Initiative's efforts, especially towards Faculty research and community-oriented programs.
- Incorporate graduate students and advanced undergraduates in our planning of events, training, research and community projects.
- Develop systematic support for and collaborations with the New Jersey Hispanic Research and Information Center and the Puerto Rican Community Archives, both at the Newark Public Library.
- Develop an oral history project and needs surveys of Latinos in New Jersey
- Develop digital information projects for public and teaching use in the humanities and social sciences
- Gather and make available and more visible past and ongoing research on Latinos in New Jersey
- Assist scholars and students inside and outside of Rutgers to develop Latino-related projects

We encourage Rutgers Faculty to consider establishing a dialogue with us and the Coordinating Committee as a way to:

- Seek advice and guidance in support of projects that the Initiative can adopt or support
- Develop Latino-related programs or research
- Introduce Latino-related themes into your research
- Apply for research resources
- Help us develop grant and fundraising proposals to support your work
- Provide a supportive framework for work with the New Jersey's communities

Ultimately, we hope that the work of the Initiative will lay the foundation for a proposal to the Rutgers administration for a permanent research center that will allow us to extend our support for both faculty research and programs in the New Jersey communities.

Please be in touch with us if you have any questions about this Initiative and join our Sakai group ([Latino Research Initiative](#)) where we will share event and other information (or ask us to add you to the group). We will soon have an office in Lucy Stone Hall.

## The Rutgers Latino Studies Research Initiative

We are attaching a selective list of research on Latinos already carried by faculty at Rutgers to illustrate the diversity, quality and relevance of faculty work in this area. We also included some basic demographic data on Latinos and a list of existing research centers.

The Initiative will be housed in and have a close relationship with the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies (SAS-NB) but it aims to provide a University-wide presence. We believe firmly that this is a worthwhile initiative worthy of support and participation by faculty, administrators and students.

Thank you,

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## 2014

### New Jersey

1,730,000 Latinos

7<sup>th</sup> largest state Latino population

Between 2000 and 2010 the Latino population of NJ grew by 33%

Latinos make up 19% of the state population

They have a 29% poverty rate in NJ

NJ Counties where Latinos are 20-40% of the population: 6

24% of K-12 students in NJ are Latino

48% of Latinos in NJ are eligible to vote (831,000 Latino voters)

Largest national origin of migrants/immigrants or their families: Puerto Rico, Mexico, Dominican Republic, El Salvador

## 2014

### United States

55,250,000 Latinos

17.3% of the total US population

34.9% are foreign born

23.5% poverty rate

### States

Texas: 10,405,000 (40% of total)

California: 14,991,000 (40%)

New York: 3,668,000 (20%)

New Mexico: 994,000 (48%)

Florida: 4,790,000 (24%)

Arizona: 2,056,000 (31%).