

THE DEPARTMENT OF LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINO STUDIES



2023-2024 SELF-STUDY REPORT

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Mission and Goals of the Department

1. Mission

The Department of Latin American and Latino Studies strives to provide students with the skills of critical analysis and clarity of expression that permit them to become lifelong learners.

The Department offers two majors, in Latin American Studies and Latino Studies, and three minors, in Latin American Studies, Latino Studies, and Mexican and Mexican American Studies. Many of our basic courses fulfill both major and minor and CUNY's General Education Program (Pathways) requirements.

Both of the Department's majors are approved for students training to be teachers in New York State and can be pursued fully online, in a hybrid, or in-person format.

In addition, our faculty participates in synergistic activities in ethnic studies and disciplines across the university including the BRESI Program (Black, Race and Ethnic Studies Initiative), the CUNY Institute of Mexican Studies, and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies at the Graduate Center. Our faculty teaches across several different programs at Lehman and the University: the LEH curriculum, Macaulay and Lehman Honors Programs, the Freshman Year Initiative Program, anchored in the Liberal Arts (ATLAS) program funded by the Teagle Foundation, the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, the Masters in Liberal Studies, and doctoral programs in History, Political Science and Anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center.

Many courses are cross listed with Africana Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, History, Spanish, Sociology, Anthropology, Politics and Economics. Our interdisciplinary Latin American Studies (LAC) major describes and analyzes the vital role of Latin America and its diasporas within the context of the 21st-century and historically. Our Latino Studies major (LTS) centers the experience of migration as a key analytic in a globally-minded study of the US-Latin American and the Caribbean relationships as well as the important role Latino communities have played in US history and in the present.

The Department contributes to the College's mission of providing a liberal arts education to all Lehman students.

2. Goals

To fulfill this mission, the Department has pursued several goals:

- a. To provide major programs for all Lehman students, including those who may wish to pursue further study in graduate programs.
- b. To provide minor programs that enhance students' educations in other disciplines.

- c. To provide all Lehman students with general education classes within CUNY's shared, Flexible Common Core.
- d. To support Lehman's "College option" general education requirements by helping to staff upper-level, general education courses through the LEH program.
- e. To support special programs within Lehman—particularly the Macaulay Honors, College Now and Freshman Year Initiative programs.
- f. To support the requirements of other major or minor programs throughout the College by offering courses required for those majors and minors.
- g. To promote innovation in teaching, including developing new courses and innovative approaches to classroom presentation.

2. Department's History

Lehman's Department of Puerto Rican Studies was founded in 1969 and was the first and ONLY separate department of Puerto Rican studies established by CUNY. Along with the California State University system, it was one of the first two ethnic studies programs established in the United States. In 1969 all the other PRS units were either programs (Brooklyn and Queens College), ethnic studies departments (City College) or mixed Black and Puerto Rican studies departments (Baruch and Hunter College).

The Department developed an interdisciplinary curriculum on the Puerto Rican experience on the island and on the mainland focusing on history, anthropology, literature, political science, the arts, and sociology courses. Initially there was only one major, in Puerto Rican Studies; and one minor, also in Puerto Rican Studies.

According to CUNY enrollment data for Lehman, in 1969 5.1% of all students enrolled at the College were of 'Hispanic' origin.¹ This increased to 28.6% in 1980.² By 1992 when data are available, 66% of all Lehman students were classified as 'Hispanic.'³ In the Fall 2019 semester, when the latest data on race/ethnicity are available, about 51% of all undergraduates at

¹ CUNY, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 1970 – 1971 Data Book, Table 2, p. 4 "Ethnic Distribution of CUNY Undergraduates Expressed in Percentages, 1967 – 1970.

² CUNY, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 1980 – 1981 Data Book, Table 2, p. 103.

³ CUNY, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, CUNY Student Data Book, Fall 1992, Table 31, p.94

Lehman were of 'Hispanic' origin. This was the highest percentage in CUNY, followed by John Jay at 42%.⁴

There is little question that the founding of the Department of Puerto Rican Studies in 1969 contributed to the dramatic percentage increase in the College's Hispanic student body during the 1970s and after.

By the early 1980s it became apparent that the national-origin composition of the Latino student body had shifted significantly from the late 1960s and 1970s when the vast majority of the campuses' Latino students were of Puerto Rican origin. The demographic structure of the Bronx had changed because of the increasing Dominican population, as well as the growth of other non-Puerto Rican nationalities. In 1990 there were about 94,000 Dominicans living in the Bronx according to the U.S. Census Bureau compared with 337,000 Puerto Ricans. By 2020 there were 339,000 Dominicans in the Bronx and 266,000 Puerto Ricans.

These demographic data for the Bronx resulted in a steady growth of the Dominican student population at Lehman, although precise data on national origins at the College are not available historically. These Dominican, and other Latino national-origin groups were enrolling in courses on Puerto Rican history to fulfill a 3-credit requirement, because there were few other courses on Latin America and the Caribbean offered at the College.

This transformation in the national origins of Lehman's student body was clearly recognized by the Department's faculty and led to a series of transformations in the academic focus of the Department. This was most recently reflected in the change in departmental name from "Latin American, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies" to "Latin American and Latino Studies" which went into effect in the fall 2018. The rationale for the change was based on several interlocking factors. The major in Latino/Puerto Rican Studies was academically confusing for many students —comprising of general Latino courses with required courses on Puerto Rican studies, and other elective courses in Latino studies. Furthermore, the major had very few students specializing in it. The consensus, after surveying the students and faculty, was that a change in the major from Latino/Puerto Rican to Latino Studies would be more academically honest with the current demographic situation in the College, the Bronx, New York City and the nation, and the current research interests of the faculty. The change streamlined the course requirements by dividing them into general Latino courses (i.e., History of Latinos, Latino Communities in the US, Family and Gender Relations among Latinos, Latino Literature, Latino Health, etc.) and specific courses on the different Latino national groups (Puerto Rican culture, Dominican culture, Puerto Rican Communities in the US, Dominicans in the US, Puerto Rican Literature, Dominican-American Literature, Mexican-Chicano Literature, Mexican Migration and

⁴ CUNY, Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, Total Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity and College, Percentages, Fall 2019.

https://www.cuny.edu/irdatabook/rpts2_AY_current/ENRL_0026_RACE_TOT_PCT_HIST.rpt.pdf

Communities in the US, etc.). Finally, the belief was that the change would attract more students to major in Latino Studies.

This change in the Department's name and course offerings was the end process of the long particular history of our department that has always been a beacon for Lehman's Latino students. The history of this special relationship was cemented in 1970, when with the inauguration of Hostos as a bilingual community college in the Bronx, the administration at Bronx Community College decided to abolish their bilingual program. The Departments' faculty and students successfully lobbied the Lehman administration to bring Bronx's Bilingual Program to Lehman College. The bilingual program allowed Spanish-dominant students to take the College's core curriculum courses in Spanish, or bilingually, while learning English in ESL courses. Puerto Rican studies core curriculum courses were added to the Bilingual Program offerings. All of the bilingual core curriculum courses, as well as the faculty who taught them, were housed in PRS. The program serviced around 800 students per semester. Initially most of the students were of Puerto Rican heritage, but by the early 1980s with Puerto Ricans moving out of New York City and migration from Puerto Rico declining, and with the demographic changes brought about by the massive migrations from other countries in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, as well as Latin America including Brazil, Puerto Ricans in the bilingual program became a minute component. In 1997 the New York City Board of Higher Education mandated CUNY senior colleges (4-year colleges) not to teach "remedial" (a characterization of ESL to which the experts in the Department objected on the grounds that fluency in a language other than English should not be considered a pathology) for credit courses. With the prohibition on teaching ESL courses at the College, the Bilingual Program ceased to exist.

Throughout the years the Department shifted its intellectual framework and course offerings to accommodate the demands of the changing Latino student body at Lehman, which came to represent a diversity of origins throughout the Americas and the diaspora, as well as the significant decrease in the percentage of Puerto Rican students at the College.

The Department created an interdisciplinary Latin American and Caribbean Studies program, a 30-credit major, and a 12-credit minor, housed in the Department during the mid-1980s. The Department's name was changed to Latin American and Puerto Rican Studies in 1991.⁵

With the Department's changing focus course offerings were expanded to service more Latino students and to recruit more faculty, the department incorporated the existing interdisciplinary Latin American Studies Program. Inside the Department there were now 2 majors/minors, Latin American Studies and Puerto Rican Studies, with minors in each (later on, a minor in Mexican and Mexican-American Studies was created). While the major in Latin American studies had healthy enrollments, the Puerto Rican studies one had trouble filling 300-level and above

⁵ See https://www.lehman.cuny.edu/lehman/depts/latinampuertorican/laacs_program.html

courses. In fact, with College deans enforcing sometimes 12 and other times 15-student minimum in courses, the few students majoring PRS had problems completing the major's requirements and graduating in time.

In 2012 to revive the PRS major and to formally incorporate all courses on Latino studies taught at the College the Department changed its name to Department of Latin American, Latino and Puerto Rican Studies and the PRS major was changed to Latino/PRS. The major in Latin American Studies remained the same. Yet, the restructuring of PRS into Latino/Puerto Rican failed to attract new majors and had trouble filling the upper-level classes. In 2018, after long discussions and consultations with students the Department's name was changed to the current one.

Department faculty have developed a series of new courses designed to attract student interest including courses on Latino Media, Latino Health, Black Feminisms, Black Brazil, and Haitian-Dominican Border.

The development of new and innovative courses at the College is important for our students. The English Department recently radically revamped their curriculum, now requiring Latinx Literature and Africana Literature of all their majors and created a popular course in Latinx Literature. However, most departments have not similarly updated their curriculum and LALS remains one of the most important ways that students in all majors are exposed to non-Eurocentric perspectives, histories and cultures in their Lehman educations.

Although the Department is committed to moving in new academic and intellectual directions in our course offerings, it must be noted that our efforts to grow the major have been stymied by a lack of growth in our faculty given the demand upon our faculty in service roles throughout CUNY. Often, LALS has difficulty in ensuring that enough of our core courses are taught by full time faculty.

3. The Department's Faculty

For complete curricula vitae for the department's full time faculty, please click [here](#). For complete curricula of the part time faculty, please click [here](#).

The Department's faculty has, without question, one of the most distinguished records of scholarship and publication at Lehman. The significant academic production of the Department's faculty brings added value to the College's academic prestige. To date, current faculty members in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies have published over 25 academic books, almost all by recognized and prestigious university presses.

Members of the Department are also active in CUNY-wide institutes and programs. Laird W. Bergad organized Lehman's first Puerto Rico focused international conference in 1982 titled "New Approaches to Puerto Rican History" (La Nueva Historiografía) which brought scholars from Puerto Rico, Spain, and the U.S. to consider the new turn in Puerto Rican historical writing of the 1970s. He is both the current and founding director of CUNY's Center for Latin American,

Caribbean and Latino Studies at the Graduate Center. Under the auspices of CUNY-Cuba Scholarly Exchange Program Prof. Bergad took 13 Lehman students to Cuba for archival research in 1988, and Lehman hosted 6 University of Havana students in 1992. The research resulted in the publication of Bergad's book *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880* (Cambridge University Press, 1995). Alyshia Gálvez is the founding director of CUNY's Mexican Studies Institute at Lehman College and has been the recipient of Lehman's Professors of Excellence Award. Laird W. Bergad, Forrest Colburn, Alyshia Gálvez, Teresita Levy and Mila Burns are faculty members at CUNY's Graduate Center. Mila Burns is the Associate Director of the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies at the Graduate Center, and an award-winning journalist who developed and directed "Globo Noticias Américas." She is the first individual ever to receive the Golden Press Award from ABI Inter/Brazilian International Press Association and Focus Brasil Foundation. Prof. Burns received the Golden Press Award on June 11, 2019 at the annual Brazilian Press Awards ceremony held in Boston. In the prior 22 years, the award has been given only to media outlets with more than two decades of activity in the U.S.

At Lehman College, the "Lehman in the Provinces" program, an exchange with universities in Cuba was designed and implemented by Teresita Levy and won a 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund award from the Partners of the Americas program in 2017. From 1987 to 1996 Xavier Totti (retired) was the director of Lehman's Bilingual Program, and in 2011 was selected "Outstanding Teacher" at the College. He also revamped and served as the editor of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, the CENTRO Journal.

Outside of CUNY, the recognition and awards received and won by members of the Department have brought further prestige to the Department, the College and to CUNY. For example, for current members of the Department: Laird W. Bergad received a Guggenheim Fellowship, 2 Fulbright Fellowships, and a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship; Forrest Colburn was selected as Member of the prestigious Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton; and Sarah Ohmer is both past and current winner of the Fulbright Fellowship, and is on the editorial board of the academic journal *Women's Studies Quarterly*.

- a. **David Badillo** (Associate Professor) is a historian and a former chair of the Department. He specializes in Latino history, Latino religion and the Latino civil rights movement. David is the author of two books: *Latinos and the New Immigrant Church* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006) and *Latinos in Michigan* (Michigan State University Press, 2003). He has also published extensively in journals such as: *Norteamérica: Revista Académica del CISAN/UNAM*; *The Bronx County Historical Society Journal*; *Research in Urban Sociology*; *Journal of Urban History*; *U.S. Catholic Historian*; *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*; *Journal of American Ethnic History*; *Relaciones: estudios de historia y sociedad*.

- b. **Laird W. Bergad** (Distinguished Professor) is a historian. He is the founding and current Executive Director of CUNY's Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies. He also founded and directed Lehman's interdisciplinary Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program in the mid-1980s. A world-recognized expert on the comparative study of slavery in the Americas, Prof. Bergad is also a public intellectual, appearing regularly in network news programs, and serving as a commentator on CNN en Español. Prof. Bergad is the author of seven books: *Agrarian Puerto Rico: Reconsidering Rural Economy and Society, 1899–1940*, coauthored with César Ayala (Cambridge University Press, 2020) 2021 winner of the Manuel Moreno Fraginals Prize for the Best Book on Caribbean Economic History, awarded by The Association of Caribbean Economic Historians; *The Comparative Histories of Slavery in Brazil, Cuba, and the United States* (Cambridge University Press, 2007); *Hispanics in the United States: A Demographic, Social, and Economic History 1980-2005*, coauthored with Herbert Klein (Cambridge University Press, 2010); *The Demographic and Economic History of Slavery in Minas Gerais, Brazil, 1720-1888* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); *The Cuban Slave Market, 1790-1880*, co-authored with Fe Iglesias García and María del Carmen Barcia (Cambridge University Press, 1995); *Cuban Rural Society in the Nineteenth Century: The Social and Economic History of Monoculture in Matanzas* (Princeton University Press, 1990); *Coffee and the Growth of Agrarian Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (Princeton University Press, 1983).
- c. **Mila Burns** (Associate Professor), a historian, anthropologist and journalist, specializes in Latin American history, with a focus on military dictatorships, as well as the relations among military dictatorships in the region, especially Brazil and Chile. She has also published on gender and media studies and is the author of *Dona Ivone Lara's Sorriso Negro* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), *Sorriso Negro* (Editora Cobogó, Forthcoming), and *Nasci Para Sonhar e Cantar. Dona Ivone Lara: a Mulher no Samba* (Ed. Record, 2009). Mila has also published in several journals, including *The Latin Americanist*, *Revista História e Cultura* (Universidade Estadual Paulista), *Nuevo Mundo*, *Mundo Nuevos* and *Revista Estudios de Seguridad y Defensa* (Academia Nacional de Estudios Políticos y Estratégicos de Chile). She is also a prominent journalist in New York and Brazil, and is currently the anchor and editor-in-chief of *Globo Notícia Américas*—a weekly newscast dedicated to the Latino community broadcast at TV Globo International. From New York, she contributed to several publications, including *The Economist*, *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*, and *Marie Claire*.
- d. **Forrest Colburn** (Professor), a political scientist by training, is a recognized scholar on Central American politics and economics. He is the author of seven books on politics and development: *Colonialism, Independence, and the Construction of Nation-States* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020); *Varieties of Liberalism in Central America: Nation-States as Works in Progress* co-authored with Arturo Cruz (University of Texas Press, 2007); *Latin*

America at the End of Politics (Princeton University Press, 2002); *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries* (Princeton University Press, 1994); *My Car in Managua* (University of Texas Press, 1991); *Managing the Commanding Heights: Nicaragua's State Enterprises* (University of California Press, 1990); *Post-Revolutionary Nicaragua: State, Class, and the Dilemmas of Agrarian Policy* (University of California Press, 1986). Forrest has published essays in *Journal of Democracy*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, *Perspectives in Politics*, and is also a regular contributor to *Dissent*.

- e. **Alyshia Gálvez** (Professor) is a cultural anthropologist who specializes in migration, health, food policy and Mexican communities in the United States. Gálvez is the founding director of CUNY's Mexican Studies Institute at Lehman College. She is the author of three books, including the influential *Eating NAFTA: Trade, Food Policies and the Destruction of Mexico* (University of California Press, 2018); *Patient Citizens, Immigrant Mothers: Mexican Women, Public Prenatal Care and the Birth Weight Paradox* (Rutgers University Press, 2011); and *Guadalupe in New York: Devotion and the Struggle for Citizenship Rights among Mexican Immigrants* (NYU Press, 2009, translated and published in Spanish as *Guadalupe en Nueva York on Iberoamericana*, 2012).
- f. **Teresita Levy** (Associate Professor) is a historian and the current chair of the Department. She is also acting Dean of Arts and Sciences. Her academic interests center on the histories of Puerto Rico, Cuba, Dominican Republic and Haiti. Prof. Levy is the author of *Puerto Ricans in the Empire: Tobacco Growers and U.S. Colonialism* (Rutgers University Press, 2014). She was also the Executive Director of Lehman's Office of International Programs and Community Engagement, which includes the award-winning program "Lehman in the Provinces" an exchange with universities in Cuba.
- g. **Sarah Ohmer** (Associate Professor), her research focuses on the intersection of gender, race, class and trauma in literature by Black Women from Cuba, Brazil, in comparison with US African American, Afro-Latinx and Latinx communities. Her interdisciplinary work includes trauma studies, critical ethnic studies, literary analysis and cultural studies. She has published in the following journals: *Evoke: A Historical, Theoretical, and Cultural Analysis of Africana Dance and Theatre*; *Zora Neale Hurston Forum*; *InterFACES*; and *Confluencia*. Sarah has also published a chapter in the edited collections *Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity* (University of Texas Press, 2018) and *La Verdad: A Reader of Hip Hop Latinidades* (Ohio State University Press, 2017).

4. Current challenges:

At a time when a liberal arts education is undervalued and threatened by the actions of policy makers the challenges to the Department are substantial. These include:

- a. Increase the number of students we reach.
- b. Increase the number of majors.
- c. Continue to update its research interests to reflect the wider demographic changes of the U.S. Latino community.
- d. Remain vigilant so that our courses are always included in CUNY's Pathways Curriculum, or in any changes to it.
- e. To continue to promote the faculty's academic excellence in teaching and publications.
- f. Increase activism and the public presence of the Department.
- g. To respond to the changing needs of our students.
- h. Replace retired faculty members.
- i. Develop courses on Afro/Latin American and Latino Studies, and Indigenous Latin America/Caribbean.
- j. Develop Certificate Programs in Latin American Business; Latino Health; and Latin American and Latino Arts and Cultural Production.

5. The Program's Use of Assessment for Continuous Improvement.

The Department has productively made use of assessments to improve teaching and examples from 2021 and 2022 are being provided as examples.

Academic Program Assessment 2020-2021, Latin American and Latino Studies

This academic year was unique. Given the novel coronavirus pandemic, the Lehman College campus was closed, and all classes were held online. There were many consequences of the campus being closed, of classes being online, and of New York City being disrupted by both the pandemic and by measures to contain the spread of the virus. Faculty members in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies were well aware that the academic year posed challenges to students. At the same time, just as it was more difficult to be a student this academic year, so it was more difficult to be a professor. CUNY offered short seminars to help the faculty prepare for teaching online, and a number of us in the Department benefited from these seminars. Faculty members also benefited from the support offered by the IT Department at the College, in particular from Mr. Stephen Castellano who provided help with the online learning platform, Blackboard. At the same time, the College did not provide guidance on just what to expect from the abrupt transition to online learning. For all, it was a leap into the unknown.

There were many ways in which instruction differed this academic year. A few examples can be given. Even with Zoom classes, students inevitably had less interaction with instructors. The faculty interacted less with each other, and so there was less sharing of information (including about student performance). With the closure of the Lehman College Library, student research was restricted to whatever was available through the internet. For all practical purposes, all tests became “open-book.” Ensuring the academic integrity of student work became more difficult. For most, learning and teaching became more solitary and so less rewarding. Still, members of the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies strived to do the best they could under the circumstances.

At the suggestion of Associate Dean, Karin Beck, this academic year the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies began a new assessment cycle, focusing on two goals of our mission that have yet to be “assessed.” These two goals are drawn from our Department’s statement: Goals and Learning Outcomes. This statement was last updated in the spring of 2014. Members of the Department remain committed to this statement.

One goal is: Explain the major development in Latin American history and culture, from the pre-Columbian period to the present. (Three learning outcomes are defined.) The second goal is: Conduct original research on a current important issue facing Latin America and the Caribbean. (Four learning outcomes are defined.) The plan for the assessment of the academic year was presented to the College’s steward of assessment, Professor Devrim Yavuz, and approved by him on November 30, 2020.

For this academic year, three courses were selected for assessment, all taught by full-time members of the Department. The courses were selected for assessment. One was LAC/ANT 210, Women in Latin America, taught by Alyshia Gálvez. It was a fully asynchronous course. A second course selected for assessment was LAC 360/LEH354, Empires and Imperialism, taught by Professor David Badillo. It had seven synchronous meetings, and so could be said to be a hybrid between asynchronous and synchronous. The third course was LAC/POL 332, Political Systems of Latin America, taught by Professor Forrest Colburn. It was synchronous, with Zoom classes held every week at the established hour for class meetings.

The plan was to collect final projects submitted at the end of the spring semester, read, and evaluate them using as rubrics “desired learning outcomes.” The second goal of assessment was employed this academic year: Conduct original research on a current important issue facing Latin America and the Caribbean. The four learning outcomes developed by the Department were used as rubrics.

Assessment Findings:

Two of the three classes selected for assessment, LAC 360 and LAC 332, had traditional, end-of-the-semester writing projects. These were reviewed and “graded” for the four learning outcomes identified by the Department as integral to the success of: Conduct original research on a current important issue facing Latin America and the Caribbean. Grades are from one to four, with higher numbers being desirable. (The values are from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, with 1 being “benchmark,” 2 and 3 being “milestones,” and 4 being “capstone.”)

Here is a matrix showing the assessment of student written work at the end of the spring semester for the two classes. There were 30 students whose work was reviewed: 14 in LAC 360 and 16 in LAC 332.

Evaluation of Student Work in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies

	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)
Use of sources	27	17	33	23
Thesis	6	10	57	27
Analysis of views	3	30	43	23
Support/Evidence for Argument	20	30	33	16

The results shown in the matrix are consistent with the views of faculty members that online classes have resulted in a noted bifurcation in student performance. There is always, of course, a continuum in the quality of student work, including the writing of essays and research papers. However, there is a sense in the Department that student work has become even more uneven. Being a successful college student requires self-discipline. Taking online college classes requires, perhaps, even more self-discipline. Some students meet the many challenges of online classes, others may find it difficult to stay focused and to work without the peer pressure that exists in a classroom.

The results also show that students fare better doing research than they do developing their own analyses. Many papers were well informed, drawing on research from sources as varied as the statistical data base of the World Bank to foreign newspapers. However, students were not always able to develop a true thesis, an argument. Consequently, many papers were more descriptive than

analytical. Faculty members in the Department need to discuss in a meeting how more effort can be made to teach students to develop—and assert—their own argument.

Though this year’s assessment does not focus on writing skills (as was the case in the last few years), the student written work this year was more polished, suggesting success in department-wide efforts to demand that students proofread drafts before submitting their final work.

The student work for the third class assessed this year, LAC 210, consisted of students preparing biographies, offering two profiles of women, one historical and the second contemporary. For the contemporary biographies, each student (and there were 19) interviewed a woman. A photograph and a short narrative statement, often with extended quotations, was posted on CUNY Academic Commons. This assignment is novel, exciting, and worthwhile, but the results do not lend themselves to being evaluated in the same way as a research paper. For example, “support/evidence for argument” is not a relevant rubric for evaluating an interview with a distinguished individual recounting her life story and sharing what she believes are the lessons for others.

The 19 profiles of contemporary women were read. Those interviewed are most impressive, ranging from doctors (a pediatric oncologist at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center) to artists, activists, journalists, to professors. The interviews are informative, engaging, and inspiring. They are “posted” in a professional fashion. This assignment draws on new technologies, and it suggests that the assessment of student work is going to have to be more encompassing, not just built on the assumption that students are writing essays and research papers. Appropriate rubrics for this assignment could include depth, balance, care of presentation, and potential for audience engagement. Using these rubrics, student work for the class was just as impressive as the work done in the other two classes with more traditional end-of-the-semester assignments.

Planned next steps based on the assessment findings:

Faculty in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies will continue to:

- 1) offer research and writing assignments.
- 2) use evidence discussed in class to explain the role of arguments (theses), evidence, and conclusions.
- 3) take time from the subject at hand to discuss writing conventions.

- 4) encourage students to proofread their essays before submitting them.
- 5) offer comments on difficulties in writing (especially on preliminary writing assignments).
- 6) discuss the differences among sources, highlight how certain sources of information are better than other sources.
- 7) ensure that syllabi and writing assignments clearly specify expectations.
- 8) incorporate into teaching practices lessons learned from this year of teaching online; and
- 9) begin to think of how we broaden our concept of assessment to evaluate new kinds of student work.

Planned assessment of the next steps to determine their impact:

At faculty meetings in 2021, the department's assessment coordinator (Professor Forrest Colburn) was asked to convey the Department's disappointment about: 1) the lack of feedback from the administration about our annual reports, and 2) the lack of an institutional sharing of the results of reports about assessment from other departments at Lehman College. At a meeting, held via Zoom, this past fall, these views of members of the Department were shared with Professor Devrim Yavuz and Mr. Donald Sutherland, who manage assessment efforts for Lehman College.

Academic Program Assessment 2022-2023, Latin American and Latino Studies

Identify learning outcome(s), goal(s), objective(s) to be assessed:

At the suggestion of Associate Dean, Karin Beck, in the 2020-2021 academic year (last year) the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies began a new assessment cycle, focusing on two goals of our mission that have yet to be "assessed." These two goals are drawn from our department's statement: Goals and Learning Outcomes. This statement was last updated in the spring of 2014. Members of the Department remain committed to this statement.

One goal is: Explain the major development in Latin American history and culture, from the pre-Columbian period to the present. (Three learning outcomes are defined.) The second goal is: Conduct original research on a current important issue facing Latin America and the Caribbean. (Four learning outcomes are defined.)

Determine the criteria for measuring success:

For this academic year, four courses were selected for assessment, all taught by full-time members of the Department. The courses selected were LAC/POL 332, Political Systems of Latin America, taught by Professor Forrest Colburn; LAC/HIS 266 I, History of Latin America and the Caribbean I, taught by Professor David Badillo; LAC/ANT 238, Societies of Latin America, taught by Professor Alyshia Gálvez; and LAC 267/HIS 267, Introduction to Latin America and the Caribbean II, taught by Professor Mila Burns. In addition, all faculty members were canvassed about their views of teaching this academic year.

Identify the method and measures:

The plan was to collect final projects submitted at the end of the spring semester, read, and evaluate them using as rubrics “desired learning outcomes.” The second goal of assessment was employed this academic year: conduct original research on a current important issue facing Latin America and the Caribbean. The four learning outcomes developed by the department were used as rubrics: 1) use of sources, 2) thesis, 3) analysis of views, and 4) support/evidence for argument.

The timetable for the collection and analysis of data:

The data for this assessment report was collected and analyzed at the end of the spring semester. However, there have been periodic conversations throughout the academic year about our teaching and this year’s assessment report. While four classes were included for assessment, the views about teaching this academic year were solicited from all faculty members. Every member of the department is aware of assessment, and the first department meeting of every academic year begins with a review of the report prepared and presented at the end of the previous academic year.

Assessment findings:

Two of the four classes selected for assessment, LAC 332 and LAC 266, had traditional, end-of-the-semester writing projects. These were reviewed and “graded” for the four learning outcomes identified by the Department as integral to the success of the stated goal: conduct original research on a current important issue facing Latin America and the Caribbean. Grades are from one to four, with higher numbers being desirable. (The values are from the Association of American Colleges and Universities, with 1 being “benchmark,” 2 and 3 being “milestones,” and 4 being “capstone.”)

Here is a matrix showing the assessment of student written work at the end of the spring semester for the two classes. There were 31 students whose work was reviewed: 14 in LAC 266 and 16 in LAC 332.

Evaluation of Student Work in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies				
	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)
Use of sources	27	17	33	23
Thesis	7	23	55	16
Analysis of views	3	32	32	32
Support/Evidence for Argument	27	17	33	23

The results shown in the matrix are consistent with the views of faculty members that the pandemic (which resulted in an extended period of online instruction) has led, today, to a noted bifurcation in student performance. There has always been, of course, a continuum in the quality of student work, including the writing of essays and research papers. However, there is a sense in the department that student work has become even more uneven. Being a successful college student requires self-discipline. Taking online college classes requires even more self-discipline. Some students meet the many challenges of online classes and were able to learn—and maintain a focus and self-discipline. Other students, however, appear to have “lost their way.”

The results also show that many students, including good students, fare better doing research than they do developing their own analyses. Many papers were well informed, drawing on research from sources as varied as the statistical data base of the World Bank to videos posted on YouTube to foreign newspapers. However, students were not always able to develop a true thesis, an argument. Consequently, many papers were more descriptive than analytical. Faculty members in the Department need to discuss in a meeting how more effort can be made to teach students to develop—and assert—their own argument. Not surprising, conclusions were often also weak, or better put, underdeveloped, in student essays.

The other two classes being evaluated, LAC 238 and LAC 267, did not conclude with a traditional research paper. Instead, students made presentations as if they were participating in an academic conference. The aspiration was to make learning more collaborative. (Students did have writing assignments in both classes.). While it is not possible to retrospectively “assess” the presentations,

the comments—and grades—of Professors Gálvez and Burns suggest the same outcome of “bifurcation.” Some students did well, demonstrating success in meeting goals of the classes (and so of the department), and others were disappointing. Professor Gálvez noted, in an email: “Thirty students began the course. Eleven dropped it, of those only three or four were present for most of the semester.” For those who finished the course, Professor Gálvez gave: 1 F, 1 C, 4 Bs, and 13 As. No one in our department would be surprised by this outcome.

At the beginning of the academic year, and at our first department meeting, the dominant question was: What is the difference in learning between online classes and in-person classes? At the end of this academic year, however, the question has shifted: Why is student performance so bifurcated? Most faculty members suspect that students are not quite as well prepared for university work as before the pandemic. However, the most pronounced difference is in student commitment and discipline. As Professor Milagros Ricourt, put it (in an email): “I have never had so many excuses for not attending classes and for not submitting assignments.” Again, Professor Gálvez is worth quoting: “Students were about equally well prepared for the ideas of the course as in past years, but significantly less prepared for the basics: attending class, taking notes, keeping up with reading, planning ahead for projects, and completing projects.” Professor Mila Burns noted, too, that students are not good at communicating with faculty members. All of us in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies are willing to help students who request assistance, but students do need to reach out to us—and to respond when we attempt to contact them.

Planned next steps based on the assessment findings:

This coming academic year, 2022-2023, the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies will have a new assessment coordinator, Professor Sarah Ohmer. She surely will be given latitude by the department to take assessment in a new direction. However, for some time faculty members have desired more information about what other department at Lehman College are doing. No one in the department has seen the assessment report of another department. In addition, the pandemic has curtailed the normal (and healthy) interactions among faculty members in other departments. Classes offered by the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies draw on students from nearly all departments at Lehman College. The pronounced bifurcation in student commitment and performance is really a college-wide issue, and members of the department would welcome more guidance on how to address it this coming academic year from the leadership of Lehman College.

Planned assessment of the next steps to determine their impact:

Just how assessment evolves in the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies will depend in large part on guidance from the leadership of Lehman College. However, all faculty members of the department are committed to being good teachers, and there is a belief that assessment has a useful role in pushing us to improve.

6. Future Directions

In addition, to strengthening both majors and to recruit more students to them, we plan to request three more faculty lines from the administration (to replace Prof. Totti and Prof. Ricourt, recently retired) and compensate for the high level of reassignment to service. One line is currently approved, and a search is underway, one more needed immediately, and one or two more in the next 3 years.

For students in each major (Latin American Studies and Latino Studies) the Department is planning to formally add areas of specialization (i.e., Dominican Republic, Central America, México, Puerto Rico, South America, etc. for Latin American Studies; Dominicans, Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, etc. for Latino Studies). We have also created a fully asynchronous online certificate program in Latino Studies (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese) as part of the Continuing Education Certificate Programs.⁶ This certificate program targets students in the health sciences, social work, business and education.

Finally, we have to continue to find more ways to support our students and the communities they live in. We seek to add more certificates in the near future, allowing students to continue to customize their education to their research interests and career goals. We expect to add a certificate in Latinx Arts and Cultural Administration, Latino Health and Latin American Business. The first of these three is a result of a pilot we have been conducting for the last three semesters, experimenting with a new teaching modality: HyField, in which courses are comprised of 6-8 field site visits and then the remainder of the course is online asynchronous. Magdalena Sagardía Jiménez has been serving in the capacity of substitute full time lecturer and adapted the course Latino Popular Cultures to the Hyfield modality, taking students to see exhibitions and performances at the Whitney Museum, the New Museum, The Museum of the City of New York, Pregones Theater, and more. Students are given tours or lectures by curators, education department professionals, directors, development directors, etc. In Jan. 2024, she will offer this course as a study abroad course in collaboration with Humanidades Puerto Rico. The extremely enthusiastic response to this has led us to believe that there is a student demand for courses that illuminate career pathways that combine an interest in Latin American and Latino Studies with professional roles in arts and cultural administration. This is consonant with

⁶ See <https://www.lehman.edu/academics/continuing-education/learn-more/latino-studies/>

the School of Arts and Humanities investment in the CUNY Inclusive Economy Arts and Humanities Pilot Program for paid internships and career guidance.

We are also considering changes to our major and minor requirements. We have learned that our majors include more credits overall (36) than comparable majors at the College (of the 28 majors offered in the School of Arts and Humanities, 10 of them require fewer than 36 credits, with 9 requiring 30 and 1 requiring only 27). We have initiated the process to reduce the number of electives in both of our majors and are considering adding new regional and professional tracks and minors (in collaboration with the Schools of Business and Health Sciences Human Services and Nursing), as well as an optional honors capstone.