



University of Connecticut
School of Social Work
Puerto Rican and Latin@ Studies Project



Strategic Plan

University of Connecticut
School of Social Work
2016

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Letter from the Project Faculty

The Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Project (PRLSP or Project) has a long and rich history at the School of Social Work at the University of Connecticut. We will briefly give an overview of the history of the Project, and then comment on the institutional commitment, supports and resources necessary to support the Project. We will conclude by giving the vision of the new Project Director and conclude with the outline for the strategic plan.

History of the Project

The Project is unique because of its mission to advance the well-being of Latin@s through education, research and community engagement on local, national and global levels. It is one of the few Projects of its nature in schools of social work in the United States. The PRLSP has been referenced and used as a model in various arenas such as the Council on Social Work Education and different social work programs throughout the nation. We are currently comprised of *five Latina* tenured faculty, Dr. Cristina Wilson (Director), Dr. Antonia Cordero, Dr. Catherine Medina, Dr. Lirio K. Negroni, and Dr. Lisa Werkmeister Rozas.

In the early 1980s, a group of Latin@ faculty and alumni, concerned with the lack of Latin@ representation in social work, developed the Project. The Project, initially funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), provided financial support for 10 student scholarships, 2 faculty positions, and clerical support. After the NIMH funding ended, the University institutionalized the Project by funding the two faculty positions and increasing financial aid support for Latin@ students in the graduate social work program. In addition to the traditional academic responsibilities, the Project's faculty is involved in Latin@ leadership development in education and health and working with Latin@ communities in relationship to their well-being in as part of its commitment to the profession's mission.

Historically, most of the school's Latin@ students have been born and/or raised in the United States. The rest have emigrated from Latin American countries or migrated from Puerto Rico to pursue graduate education. In the last 10 years, an estimated 300 Latin@ students graduated, creating a local and national difference in the Latin@ workforce of Master level Social Workers. In addition, within the School of Social Work's doctoral program, who just celebrated its 10th anniversary, there have been three Latin@ Ph.D. graduates.

Over 30 years, as a result of the Project's efforts, many graduates, particularly Latin@ graduates, have gone on to serve in leadership roles promoting collective collaboration with Latino communities and organizations. Project Latin@ graduates, acting in the capacity of practitioners, administrators, policy makers, researchers, educators, deans, judges, commissioners, CBO executives, and elected public officers, including a Hartford CT mayor, have had leadership impact in institutions, organizations, and agencies serving Latino communities, thus contributing to community self-determination. Their contributions have influenced the well-being and community capacity building for Latin@ populations.

Institutional Commitment, Supports and Resources

The School of Social Work and the University of Connecticut have always been committed to leadership development and to the PRLSP. This commitment has been reflected by the presence of a supportive infrastructure that promotes leadership development opportunities for faculty and students within the PRLSP, and involvement in community partnerships that promote community self-determination. For example, it is only through the school's sustained commitment that the Project faculty continues to grow in its leadership development objectives, particularly in difficult and challenging economic times. The Project has increased from two to five faculty members, five full-time tenured Latina members. Through the years, the School's cultural commitment and support has been a key to the Project's success in student and faculty recruitment, retention, and faculty tenure attainment. In addition, as the Project has expanded, the school's administration has supplied an equipped office, a web page, and staff support to help with annual and special program events. Also, the school provides funding for the Project to annually host various student and community events that foster leadership encounters and networks. This support is essential for the continued development of the PRLSP and for efforts to be implemented in the community to advance PRLSP mission.

Vision for 2015-2017

Capitalizing on the changes in priorities the Project has developed over the past few years, the new Director, Dr. Wilson announced her vision at the first Project meeting on September 17, 2015. Her vision was welcomed and supported by the entire Project faculty. The vision is about the dissemination of knowledge and research regarding Puerto Rican and Latin@ matters to our community that would allow the PRLSP more exposure. To accomplish this goal of heightened outreach efforts, Dr. Wilson proposed a heightened website and Facebook presence. In addition to using and enhancing our logo and colors for the PRLSP, the plan is to utilize the PRLSP's email system and create a list serve of relevant individual contacts and agency contacts. In addition a new initiative of a semiannual newsletter from the PRLSP will be distributed via email/Facebook and posting to the website. A new initiative to create and disseminate five research, policy or practice briefs annually that will add to the knowledgebase for community providers. In addition to the vision, our newest initiative will include the development and creation a curriculum for training MSWs who can work with Spanish speaking populations.

Conclusion

The mission of the PRLSP is to help prepare social workers to competently serve individuals, groups, families, and organizations within Latin@ communities through research, teaching, and service; to increase the advancement of knowledge and research regarding Puerto Rican and Latin@ matters. We have three main goals in meeting our mission (1)

research and innovation, (2) teaching and learning, and (3) outreach and engagement. The following objectives and initiatives will be discussed in this strategic plan.

We are excited about what we have detailed in our strategic plan, and we hope to continue to serve the University and School mission and goals.

Sincerely,



The Puerto Rican and Latino Studies Project, University of Connecticut, School of Social Work
Dr. Cristina Wilson (Project Director), Associate Professor (Signed)
Dr. Antonia Cordero, Associate Professor
Dr. Catherine Medina, Associate Professor
Dr. Lirio K. Negroni, Associate Professor
Dr. Lisa Werkmeister Rozas, Associate Professor

Overview of the Puerto Rican and Latin@ Studies Project (PRLSP)

Mission

The Puerto Rican and Latin@ Studies Project (PRLSP) helps prepare social workers to competently serve individuals, groups, families, and organizations within Latin@ communities through research, teaching, and service; and to increase the advancement of knowledge and research regarding Puerto Rican and Latin@ matters.

Goals and Objectives

Goal #1: Research and Innovation: To create distinctive and internationally recognized contributions to scholarship; and to address solutions for pressing issues affecting Puerto Ricans and Latin@s in Connecticut and globally.

Objectives for Goal #1:

- Engage in research and evaluation of issues related to Puerto Rican and Latin@s
- Disseminate information about micro and macro issues related to Puerto Rican and Latin@s through national and global research, presentations, and publications
- Support and enhance inter/trans-disciplinary research within UConn as well as trans institutional research efforts affecting Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations

Goal #2: Teaching and Learning: To increase Puerto Rican and Latin@s recruitment, retention, and MSW and PhD degree completion. To train social workers and service providers.

Objectives for Goal #2:

- Collaborate with the Office of Student Services in initiatives geared at the recruitment of Puerto Rican and Latin@ students
- Maintain and enhance courses on Puerto Rican/Latin@ Studies as part of the School of Social Work curriculum
- Create a learning environment for students as field work interns, work study students, and mentees in the PRLSP and across the social work and larger University community
- Promote leadership development for students, faculty and within Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities
- Develop and implement global collaborations and educational programs focusing on Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations

Goal #3: Outreach and Engagement: To establish mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations with the Connecticut residents and agencies or institutions within Connecticut, and

globally. Participate in community and interprofessional partnerships in order to promote the well-being and quality of life of Puerto Rican and Latin@ individuals, families and communities. To engage with the PRLSP Advisory Board in an exchange of knowledge and in the collaboration of efforts on current issues affecting Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities.

Objectives for Goal #3:

- Participate in community and interprofessional partnerships in order to promote the well-being and quality of life of Puerto Rican and Latin@ individuals, families and communities
- Provide social service agencies with consultation on Latin@ client systems
- Advocate on behalf of the Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities and other immigrant populations to ensure social, economic, and human justice

Strategic Planning at the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work, Puerto Rican and Latin@ Studies Project (PRLSP)
Succeeding in Our Strategic Focused Areas

The following is a description of the strategies that the PRLSP will take to succeed in the strategic focused areas. The strategies are aligned with the university and school's core goals. Each of the four core goals, describe our strategies for contributing to the university and school's reputation and visibility. Included is a bulleted list of the initiatives that will implement these strategies.

1. **Research and Innovation:** To create distinctive and internationally recognized contributions to scholarship; and to address solutions for pressing issues affecting Puerto Ricans and Latin@s in Connecticut and globally.

The initiatives/strategies to meet these goals are:

- Engage in research and evaluation of issues related to Puerto Rican and Latin@s
 - Research issues related to Latin@ families, parenting, Latino fathers, substance use treatment and prevention in adults and adolescents, leadership and mentoring in Latin@ communities, health disparities, the effects of Racism and Discrimination on Access to Health/Mental Health Care, Cultural Competence/Systems of Service Delivery, Cross-racial Dialogue, Cultural Competence in Latin@ Studies and Practice, Latino/a elders' physical and mental health and support networks, Predictors of HIV Testing for Low-income Women of Color, Enhancing Cultural Competencies in Mental Health Policy/Practice and recruitment and retention of Latin@s in social work education
- Disseminate information about micro and macro issues related to Puerto Rican and Latin@s through national and global research, presentations, and publications
 - Peer reviewed publications: collectively five peer reviewed publications a year that disseminate and advance knowledge on Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations
 - Research/Practice/Policy Briefs: create 5 briefs a year that focus on disseminating the knowledge generated in PRLSP to practice arenas, disseminate on Facebook, website, and list serve
 - Presentations: continue doing presentations at local, state, national and international conferences on Puerto Rican and Latin@ issues
 - Continue to support student and faculty collaborations on publications and presentations resulting from Puerto Rico travel research Projects
 - Continue to co-publish with Latin@ PhD students (for example: Dr. Wilson with Reinaldo Rojas)
- Pursue support for our mission and goals of the PRLSP via external funds (federal and state)

- We have a new initiative to collaborate with Dr. Vincent Guilamo-Ramos at NYU School of Social Work on the involvement of family with Latin@s that are HIV/ADIS positive in medication adherence in a NIMH R21 grant
- Support Dr. Wilson's grant submission for an R15 to NIDA on male Hispanic substance users on increasing father involvement
- To look for external support for the initiative around training practitioners in working with Spanish speaking populations
- Support and enhance within discipline and interdisciplinary as well as trans institutional research efforts affecting Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations
 - To continue to enhance and create collaborations with other disciplines within and outside UConn that further the research agenda of the PRLSP
 - Continue to support student fellowships in research that involves the Puerto Rican travel course
 - Continue Dr. Werkmeister Rozas work with CHIP that collaborates with nursing and the local Hartford churches on diabetes prevention and self-care management with only Latin@s, which includes a grant submission
 - Continue Dr. Medina's "Got Care" grant that is a HRSA interprofessional collaboration with Middlesex Hospital and UConn schools of nursing, physical therapy, dental medicine, pharmacy and public health with older adults and veteran populations which may include Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations
 - Continue Dr. Cordero's grant the "National Child Welfare Workforce Initiative", which partners with DCF is designed to train and develop a competent child welfare workforce that targets Latin@s
 - Continue Dr. Wilson's DHHS grant working with the TRIPP center at UCHC and the Village community agency on father involvement of young African America and Latinos in pregnancy prevention

2. **Teaching and Learning:** To increase Puerto Rican and Latin@s recruitment, retention, and MSW and PhD degree completion. To train social workers and service providers.

The following initiatives/strategies meet these objectives are:

- Collaborate with the Office of Student Services in initiatives geared at the recruitment of Puerto Rican and Latin@ students
 - Support the Office of Student Services in recruitment efforts
 - Provide feedback/support to the Field Education Office
 - Develop the Project's brochure and Project's logo that will assist in recruitment and outreach efforts
- Maintain and enhance courses on Puerto Rican/Latin@ Studies as part of the School of Social Work curriculum

- One of our core missions and goals is focused on teaching and learning, particularly educating MSW students in Puerto Rican and Latin@ issues. It is an essential component of our PRLSP, and foundational to our unit. The courses associated with our Project (there are 4 listed below) are currently part of a focused area of study, however they are part of the PRLSP's educational mission. So, the courses stand independent of a focused area of study. If the focused area of study disappears, they would still need to be offered once a year (or about that) in order to maintain the integrity of the PRLSP.
- Maintain courses as part of the Social Work curriculum:
 - HBEL 5367: Culture and Health/Mental Health Disparities: A Micro and Macro Perspective (3 credits) offered in the spring term
 - HBEL 5328: Ethnic Minorities and Social Work Practice: The Puerto Rican/Latin@ Experience (3 credits) offered in the fall term
 - HBEL 5376: Puerto Rican/Latina Women and their Reality (3 credits) offered every other spring term
 - SWEL 5333: Travel and Study for Social Work in Puerto Rico (3 credits) offered every two years
- Maintain connections with field and community agencies so that students have access to a year-long field placement working with Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations
- Develop and create a curriculum for training MSWs who can work with Spanish speaking populations
 - Develop collaboration with Child Welfare (DCF) and other community agencies in relation to the new initiative on MSWs working with Spanish speaking populations
- Create a learning environment for students as field work interns, work study students, and mentees in the PRLSP and across the social work and larger University community
 - Continue the student-driven experiences such as the Latin@ Student Organization (LASO)
 - Having field practice opportunities in the PRLSP for macro students (policy, administration, community organization) that involve faculty mentorship.
 - Experiences may involve policy advocacy at the legislative level within the Project.
- Promote leadership development for students, faculty, and within Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities
 - Having past students and community members lead the Puerto Rican Exchange in an effort to promote leadership

- Develop and implement global collaborations and educational programs focusing on Puerto Rican and Latin@ populations.
 - Under the exchange agreement with the University of Puerto Rico and its School of Social Work we have an educational program that involves an educational exchange of teaching and research around implications for social work practice.

3. Goal #3: Outreach and Engagement: To establish mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations with the Connecticut residents and agencies or institutions within Connecticut, and globally. Participate in community and interprofessional partnerships in order to promote the well-being and quality of life of Puerto Rican and Latin@ individuals, families and communities. To engage with the PRLSP Advisory Board in an exchange of knowledge and in the collaboration of efforts on current issues affecting Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities.

The initiatives/strategies to meet these goals are:

- Participate in community and interprofessional partnerships in order to promote the well-being and quality of life of Latin@ individuals, families and communities
 - Collaborative work with the PRLSP's Advisory Board
 - Engage with the PRLSP's Advisory Board in an exchange of knowledge and in the collaboration of efforts on current issues affecting Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities. Board members will become involved in increasing funding opportunities, and strengthening public engagement.
 - Maintain two meetings a year for the Advisory Board: Discuss most relevant work the PRLSP is doing and engage members in active discussion on moving forward
 - Recruit new members that will add diversity to the Advisory Board
 - Serve on advisory boards and committees in community agencies such as the Hispanic Health Council and the Institute for the Hispanic Family.
 - Serve on local and national leadership boards, such as the National Association of Social Workers, National Hispanic Science Network Early Career Leaders, and the Council on Social Work Education
- Provide social service agencies with consultation on Latin@ client systems
 - Disseminate the work of the PRLSP to a wide variety of interest groups through our website and outreach efforts.
 - Create and disseminate Annual Project Briefs that focus on research, practice or policy for use by social service agencies or individuals
 - Create and disseminate twice an Annual Newsletter to be disseminated on Facebook, webpage, and our listserve that highlights the activities of the Project
 - Train students to make changes to the website, to keep material timely and updated
 - Train students on updating Facebook page, increase number of likes and views

- Advocate on behalf of the Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities and other immigrant populations to ensure social, economic, and human justice
 - Be involved with the planning and organization of conferences that are important to our community, for example past conference “De eso no se habla”
 - Be involved in an upcoming conference in April, 2016 of the Latino Social Workers Organization in New York. We have submitted an abstract to present about our innovative Project. We are highly engaged in the planning of this conference.
 - Organize and create the signature event for the school of social work and the UCONN Hartford campus on Hispanic Heritage Month
 - Maintain an advisory board representation on the State’s Office of Victim Services to advocate for policies serving Puerto Rican and Latin@ communities and other immigrant populations