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Spring 2008

## **Enlaces Latinos: Newsletter of the New York Latino Research and Resources Network**

New York Latino Research and Resources Network

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## UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY

State University of New York

# Enlaces Latinos

Newsletter of the New York Latino Research and Resources Network

## CUNY Dominican Studies Institute Joins NYLARNet



Dr. Ramona Hernández, Director of the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute and Dr. José E. Cruz, August 2007.

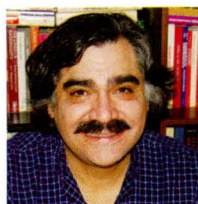
On August 2007, the CUNY Dominican Studies Institute became the most recent member of NYLARNet's growing network of research centers in the state. The Institute is an interdisciplinary research unit of the City University of New York devoted to the study of Dominicans in the United States, in the Dominican Republic, and other parts of the world. Housed at The City College of New York in Upper Manhattan, the Institute sponsors academic research projects in the areas of education, migration, language, literature, history, economics, women's issues, politics, youth, cultural identity, sports, performance and visual arts, among many others. The Institute began as a pilot project in August 1992 funded by a development grant provided by CUNY's chancellor. In February 1994, it was officially approved by the Board of Trustees and soon thereafter it became an integral component of the City University of New York.

For more information go to  
[www1.cuny.edu/ci/dsi/index.cfm](http://www1.cuny.edu/ci/dsi/index.cfm)

## NYLARNet Testifies Before State Assembly Committee on Higher Education

On February 8, 2008 NYLARNet was represented before the New York State Assembly Committee on Higher Education, chaired by Assembly-woman Deborah Glick (D – 66th AD, Manhattan), by Professors Felipe Pimentel, a sociologist at Hostos Community College-CUNY and Abbe Herzig, from the Department of Educational Theory and Practice at the University at Albany, State University of New York. Pimentel and Herzig offered testimony commenting on the preliminary report of the New York State Higher Education Commission on how to improve higher education in the state. Edited versions of their presentations follow.

\* \* \* \* \*



Professor Felipe Pimentel

In the Commission's preliminary report the issue of racial and ethnic diversity has been addressed in a very general form. The Commission acknowledges the diversity and complexity of the state's institutions of higher education making explicit its commitment to encouraging diversity in a broad sense. Regarding institutions of higher education the report states:

*Past leaders would be proud of the diversity of these institutions—student and faculty racial, ethnic and gender diversity, as well as academic program diversity. New York has made a wide range of higher education opportunities broadly available (page 9).*

However, after mentioning the question of diversity a few times, the report does not address this important issue in a systematic way. The report makes interesting recommendations regarding the importance of public support for students in their pursuit of higher education, how college education should promote a more diverse labor force, and the need that both CUNY and SUNY have for a more stable and expanded full-time faculty. But very little is said about other important issues such as the underrepresentation of minority groups among full-time faculty and the importance of expanding faculty diversity at CUNY and SUNY.

I understand that both public institutions of higher education have a strong commitment regarding faculty diversity and the importance of expanding the representation of Latino faculty among their teaching staff. Regarding CUNY, the university has established a Chancellor's initiative to recruit and expand Puerto Rican and Latino full-time faculty. At SUNY, the administration recently hired Dr. Pedro Cabán as Vice-Provost for Diversity and Educational Equity. Dr. Cabán is a committed Latino scholar who wants to expand academic and professional opportunities for Latino and other racial and ethnic minorities at SUNY.

At this point of my testimony I would like to summarize some of the findings of the report *The Decline of Puerto Rican*

(continued onto page 2)

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*Full-Time Faculty at the City University of New York (CUNY) from 1981-2002* which I prepared with the support of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College-CUNY and the New York Latino Research and Resources Network.

Data about full-time faculty suggest that CUNY has made significant progress during the past three decades regarding faculty diversity. At this institution federally protected groups constitute almost 30 percent of the full-time faculty today, a number significantly higher than most public universities. However, Latino and Puerto Rican academics are still underrepresented among the ranks of the full-time faculty. Puerto Rican full-time faculty declined during the 1980s and 1990s and has not made significant advancement during this decade. This trend continues as data on the racial and ethnic composition of the full-time faculty at CUNY up to Fall 2006 clearly indicates.

In general, I have found that Puerto Rican full-time faculty members declined because not enough new hires replaced those who had retired or left CUNY. And this happened during a period in which the number of qualified potential candidates for academic positions had increased.

Based on my experience researching issues related to Puerto Rican and Latino faculty at CUNY I would offer the following recommendations:

- Though the Commission on Higher Education's report suggests the importance of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in higher education institutions, it does not examine the question deeply enough. This issue must be addressed more thoughtfully in the final report.
- Regarding the expansion of the full-time faculty at CUNY and SUNY the Commission should include the need for increasing the representation of underrepresented minority groups among the ranks of the full-time faculty.
- Finally, the Commission on Higher Education should make more explicit its public commitment to the principle of racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in academia and its support of innovative institutional policies in this area. The Commission should stress that institutions of higher education can have a strong commitment to academic excellence while implementing the socially and ethically relevant goal of diversity.

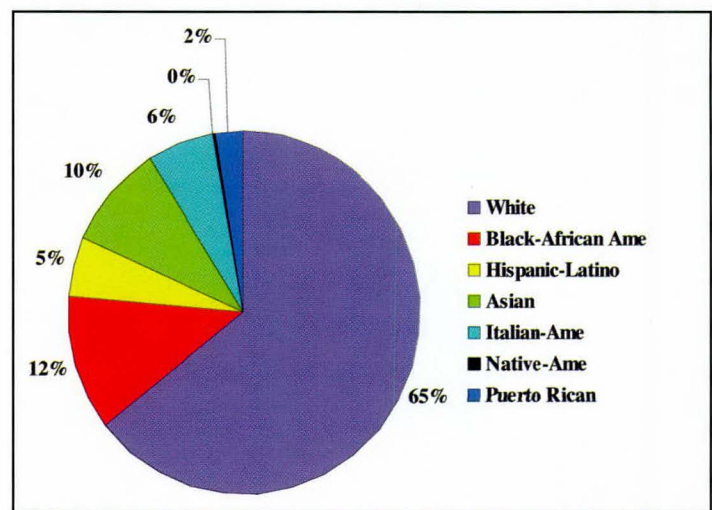
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**Table 1.**  
**Evolution of Puerto Rican Fulltime Faculty at CUNY (1970-2006)**

Rank	1970	1974	1981	1991	1998	2002	2005	2006
Distinguished Prof.	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
Full Professor	4	12	16	17	35	34	30	28
Associate Professor	5	14	24	35	26	23	26	31
Assistant Professor	24	63	53	49	30	38	45	44
Instructor	29	75	33	10	6	2	1	1
Lecturer	17	95	49	48	42	34	38	37
Total (N)	79	259	175	160	140	131	140	142
(%) Representation	1.3	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.5

Sources: Data for 1970 from CUNY, *Affirmative Action Program Report*, September 1971. (Appendix, summary statistics of instructional staff by title). Data for 1974 to 2002 from CUNY, *Affirmative Action Summary Data by College*. Data for 2005 and 2006 from CUNY, *Affirmative Action Summary Data by College, Ethnicity and Gender (Instructional and Classified Staff)*. University Office of Compliance and Diversity Programs, Office of Faculty and Staff Relations, 2006.

**Figure 1.**  
**Fulltime Faculty at CUNY by Race and Ethnicity (Fall 2006)**



Source: CUNY, *Affirmative Action Summary Data by College, Ethnicity and Gender (Fall 2006)*.

**NYLARNet Testifies Before State Assembly Committee ...** (continued from page 2)


Professor Abbe Herzig

Our current educational system in New York State has not adequately included students of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, and this lack gets worse at higher rungs of the educational ladder; the Commission on Higher Education needs to pay explicit attention to issues of diversity as a basic democratic imperative.

The Higher Education Commission's report makes numerous references to workforce development and other economic benefits that impel us to support various groups of students in their pursuit of higher education. While these economic considerations are compelling, this is a rather self-serving view of why diversity matters. Notably missing from these arguments is a much more fundamental concern: In a democratic society, we have a moral, ethical, and perhaps even legal obligation to ensure equal educational opportunity for all students.

Most striking to me, is that the report uses the words "diverse" or "diversity" infrequently. The words "race" and "ethnicity" do not appear at all. The word "racial" appears only twice. As I read the report, it seemed to me that the authors carefully avoided discussion of the real issues facing Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, and other people who are underrepresented in higher education. This is a significant gap and therefore I will address the balance of my comments to several important issues in diversity in higher education that demand attention.

Accessing and attaining a college or post-graduate degree is challenging for all students. However, students of some racial, ethnic, or socio-economic groups face additional challenges. In order to ensure that these students have true access to higher education, we need a better understanding of the specific obstacles and challenges they face, and then from that, develop approaches to minimize the effects of those obstacles.

The language of this report focuses on remediation and on what we in education call the "deficit model"—a view that the problems facing students of color can be fixed by fixing the students. Unfortunately, this view places responsibility for failure on the shoulders of the students themselves, and distracts attention from fundamental changes we need to make to the educational system as a whole. Remediation focuses on fixing symptoms, rather than on the underlying causes of educational gaps between people of color and their majority peers.

Recent data show that the proportion of degrees earned by Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans in New York State gets progressively smaller, the higher we go along the educational ladder. For example, according to data from the Urban Institute, in 2001, only 32 percent of Latino students graduated from high school,

compared with an overall state graduation rate of 61 percent. While Latinos comprise 19 percent of high school students in New York State, data from the State Education Department show that Latinos earned only:

- 11 percent of Associates degrees,
- 9 percent of Bachelor's degrees,
- 6 percent of Masters degrees, and
- 3 percent of doctorates.

Patterns for African Americans and Native Americans are similar.

When challenged about the relatively low numbers of racial and ethnic minorities in their higher education programs, it is not uncommon for administrators and faculty to blame the so-called leaky pipeline: at the post-graduate level, blame is placed on the small numbers of minority undergraduates; at the bachelors level, blame is placed on the small numbers of qualified high school graduates.

The metaphor of a "leaky pipeline" implies that students are homogeneous, passive participants in their education; it fails to represent why members of some groups stay in the educational system while others leave in greater proportions. This metaphor allows policymakers to overlook the inequities that are institutionalized in our educational system. What filters are there within the pipe itself that lead more people of color out of education at each successive stage?

There are other hierarchical institutions which take alternative approaches to ensure that talented people of all races and ethnicities can persist. As an example, consider professional athletics, in which many people of color successfully participate. Professional athletic organizations do not begin their recruiting by looking at athletes who are seniors in college, and take the best of the lot. Instead, talented athletes are sought at much younger ages, and are nurtured, mentored, and trained until they become candidates for professional athletics. Our educational system might do well to consider a similar model, by recognizing talent early on, and giving students and schools in all communities the necessary resources to develop that talent.

The report describes programs intended to enhance the achievement of all students; this goal is the basis for the No Child Left Behind legislation which has fundamentally changed Pre-K-12 schools in this country. However, we must recognize that achievement and talent are not the same thing. Many students with tremendous talent are overlooked, indeed wasted, because they do not have the opportunities to develop the skills that allow them to demonstrate their talent through achievement on exams and in classes. Some of the recommendations on the report are based on students' achievement on standardized tests, but we must recognize that students who attend poorly-resourced schools are not adequately prepared for these exams,

**NYLARNet Testifies Before State Assembly Committee ...** (continued from page 3)

compared with the preparation received by their more affluent peers. These students' lack of achievement on tests does not necessarily reflect a lack of ability or motivation, but is often an artifact of sub-standard educational environments.

The way Pre-K-12 schools are financed in New York State (and many other states), through local property taxes, virtually ensures that students from lower socioeconomic groups will attend schools with far fewer resources. Since people of color are more likely to come from lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, the educational resources available to these students are far more limited than their majority peers. Thus, one important focus of providing access to higher education in New York State for all students must include a plan for providing schools in all communities with comparable and equitable educational resources, including:

- small student-teacher ratios;
- textbooks, computers, and other materials;
- safe environments in which to learn;
- coherent curricula that are relevant and meaningful; and
- advising about adequate preparation for college.

In some immigrant or first-generation communities, parents do not understand the American educational system, nor its importance for their children, nor how they can interact with school officials to advocate for their children's interests. We need community outreach to educate these parents so that they can become partners in their children's education.

Just getting students of racial and ethnic minorities through high school and into college is not enough. Once they arrive on their college campuses, many students are on foreign ground in a predominantly-white institution where the social and educational norms are unfamiliar. To make matters worse, majority students have

access to the informal flow of information about how to navigate college: which classes to take, which support services are available, how to study for calculus and with whom. Minority students are often isolated from these information channels, and to compensate for this, they need advising, mentoring, and a host of other supports to help them adapt to and succeed in these environments.

Research shows the critical role that community membership plays for all students, and for minority students in particular. Students who feel that they belong, or fit in, in an educational environment are more likely to persist in the face of difficulties. Unfortunately, minority students receive many messages about the ways they do not belong in the mainstream culture of their college campuses. Faculty and administrators must pay explicit attention to fostering the development of student communities in which minority students feel they belong, which will in turn enhance these students' persistence and learning. This holds at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Finally, many courses and curricula at both the high school and college levels are perceived to be irrelevant to the realities of students' lives. We need to re-examine the content of our curricula to make them more meaningful to the students whom they are meant to serve.

Diversity in higher education is a democratic imperative. References to diversity in the Commission's report are few and do not address the issues that must be considered in order to make diversity significant not just socially but academically as well.

**Link to the Commission on Higher Education's Preliminary Report:**  
[www.hecommission.state.ny.us/report/CHE\\_Preliminary\\_Report.pdf](http://www.hecommission.state.ny.us/report/CHE_Preliminary_Report.pdf)

## NYLARNet Publications Online

Gregory Acevedo, Manny González, Victoria Santiago, and Carlos Vargas Ramos, *The Status of Latino Health/Mental Health in New York State*.

Clive Belfield, *The Costs of Inadequate Education in New York State*.

Christine E. Bose, *City Variation in the Socioeconomic Status of Latinos in New York State*.

José E. Cruz, editor, *Latino Immigration Policy: Context, Issues, Alternatives*.

Papers presented at NYLARNet's Latino

Immigration Policy Conference, November 3, 2006.

José E. Cruz, Cecilia Ferradino, and Sally Friedman, *Latino Voting in the 2004 Election: The Case of New York*.

Anthony De Jesús and Daniel W. Vasquez, *Exploring the Education Profile and Pipeline for Latinos in New York State*.

NALEO, *A Report on Accessibility of Polling Places in the November 2005 Election: The Experience of New York Voters*.

Felipe Pimentel, *The Decline of Puerto Rican Full-Time Faculty at the City University of New York (CUNY) from 1981-2002*.

Victoria Santiago, *Constricted Airways: Status of Asthma Among Puerto Ricans and Latinos in New York State*.

Carlos Vargas Ramos, *The State of Housing for Hispanics in the United States*.

**To access or purchase NYLARNet's publications go to [www.nylarnet.org](http://www.nylarnet.org)**

## NYLARNet Third Year Projects at Somos el Futuro



Professor Francisco Rivera-Batiz

NYLARNet researchers presented their work for the third year in a row at the Somos el Futuro legislative conference, held in April 2007. From the Institute for Urban Minority Education at Columbia University, Dr. Francisco Rivera-Batiz, an economist who specializes on education, discussed his research on Latinos and community colleges. Rivera-Batiz examined the role played by community colleges in increasing the educational attainment of Latinos, the extent to which community college enrollment results in transfer to 4-year institutions, the contribution community colleges make to college completion, and the role they play on the education of English Language Learners. According to Rivera-Batiz community colleges are an invaluable resource for Latinos in New York State that facilitate, among other things, good economic returns for its graduates.



Professor Carlos Vargas Ramos

From the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro), Political Scientist Dr. Carlos Vargas Ramos presented the findings of the study on the health and mental health status of Latinos in New York carried out by researchers at Centro and Fordham University. According to Vargas Ramos, Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic whites within the same age cohort to report being in fair or poor health, indicating a need for health services. There is substantial evidence that Hispanics' health care needs are largely unmet. Latinos/as encounter several barriers to health care access such as lack of health insurance, transportation, and child care; underutilization of preventive health services; and limited availability of linguistic and culturally competent services. The high poverty rates among Hispanics, even for full-time workers, aggravate this situation.



Professor Gil Marzán

Finally, Professor Gil Marzán, a sociologist at Bronx Borough Community College, provided a preliminary report on his study of gentrification in the Mott Haven neighborhood of the South Bronx. According to Marzán, the situation in Mott Haven tends to run contrary to much of the literature on gentrification. In this neighborhood, changes did not evidence a displacement of lower income renters by higher income residents. Further, the basic character of Mott Haven did not seem altered by residential change. Rather, the first wave of "gentrifiers" were seen as a complement to the neighborhood rather than unwelcome interlopers. This study includes the collaboration of Professor James Freeman, a Political Scientist also at Bronx Borough Community College.

## Consortium Events

### "Colombian Migration: Transnational, Political, and Cultural Perspectives"

**April 11-12, 2008**

Conference sponsored by Latino Studies Program, Latin American Studies Program, and Department of City & Regional Planning, Cornell University.

### "Those I Left Behind,"

**April 16, 2008**

Documentary by Lisandro Perez-Rey exploring the transnational ties that bind Cuban-Americans in the United States to their families on the island, sponsored by the Department of History, Latin American Studies Program and Latino Studies Program, Cornell University.

For more information go to <http://latino.lsp.cornell.edu/events.asp>

### "Dominicans in the U.S. Prior to 1970: Recovering an Earlier Dominican Presence"

**May, 2008**

Second International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Dominican Studies, sponsored by the Dominican Studies Association.

For more information go to <http://www1.ccnycunyc.edu/ci/dsi/>

## NYLARNet at UUP's 2007 Legislative Lecture Series



Dr. José E. Cruz

On April 30th, 2007, Dr. José E. Cruz, NYLARNet Director, spoke at the Legislative Office Building on State Street in Albany as part of United University Professions' Legislative

Lecture Series. Dr. Cruz presented the findings of the Latino immigration policy conference organized by NYLARNet in November 2006. Dr. Cruz focused his presentation on the issue of voting rights for noncitizen immigrants. He also discussed the major challenges facing an effective immigration policy.

According to Dr. Cruz, the arguments against noncitizen voting rights are

flawed by their failure to distinguish between *de jure* and *de facto* citizenship. These arguments often reflect ignorance about immigrant attitudes and values, at best, and mask xenophobic fears, at worst. In New York a strong argument against noncitizen voting rights is the fear of electoral fraud. Yet, it is the exclusion of noncitizens from the franchise the precise condition that opens the door for irregularities in the electoral process. If they were allowed to vote, their participation would be regulated and therefore less likely to result in fraudulent practices.

One critical question concerning immigration policy in general is how to reconcile federal jurisdiction with state action. No one wants New York State to enforce federal policy. While it is not

necessary for the state to stand idle to make the lives of immigrants better, the issue is so sensitive that state action can easily trigger xenophobic reactions as was the case when Governor Spitzer proposed allowing undocumented workers to sign up for driver's licenses.

In general, an effective immigration policy must address both the interests of employers and workers, come to terms with the political implications of an economy that relies on low-wage workers, and ensure that border protection does not translate into a police state.

A fuller analysis and discussion of these and other issues can be found in NYLARNet's publication *Latino Immigration Policy: Context, Issues, Alternatives* available on our website and on paperback.

## NYLARNet Fourth Year Projects 2007-2008

- A survey of Latino political attitudes, values, and behavior in New York State, using random-digit-dialing (RDD) technology. This demonstration survey scheduled for 2008, initiates NYLARNet's Latino Political Barometer project. This project will generate public opinion data and analysis on topical as well as baseline social, economic, and political questions focusing on Latinos. Project Director: José E. Cruz, Associate Professor, Political Science and Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies Departments, University at Albany, State University of New York.

- A study of health and healthcare needs of Latinas in the Upstate New York cities of Amsterdam, Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. This project is a collaboration between NYLARNet, Centro Cívico of Amsterdam, Centro Cívico Hispanoamericano of Albany, and community and church leaders in the targeted geographic areas. Principal Investigator: Dr. Blanca M. Ramos, Associate Professor, School of

Social Welfare, University at Albany, State University of New York.

- A study to identify and understand factors that influence use of health care among Latino women including Latinas' cultural beliefs and their previous experiences using health care in small cities and towns in Upstate New York. The study explores Latina beliefs about when to use health care and beliefs about obtaining preventive and mental health care; documents Latinas' experiences using health care in NY State; and triangulates the proposed findings with existing quantitative data for validation and cultural and experiential context. Principal Investigator: Janine Jurkowski, Assistant Professor, School of Public Health, University at Albany, State University of New York.

- A study to document and analyze the reasons why New York State does not collect electoral data by race and

ethnicity; the practice of electoral data collection by race in three states with significant minority populations: Alabama, Florida, and Pennsylvania; and the reasons for data collection only by race in these three states. Based on a comparative analysis the study will make recommendations for electoral data collection by race and ethnicity in New York State. Principal Investigator: José E. Cruz, Associate Professor, Political Science and Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies Departments, University at Albany, State University of New York.

- A study to identify and analyze the factors and dynamic of intra-state migration focusing on the movement of Latinos from New York City and other locations in the state to Albany. Principal Investigators: Lina Rincón and Katherine Platt, Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies, University at Albany, State University of New York.

## NYLARNet Latino Health Issues Symposium

On November 14, 2007, NYLARNet held a symposium on health issues affecting Latinos in New York State. The event took place at the Standish room of the science library at the University at Albany. Dr. José E. Cruz moderated the panel which included two paper presentations by researchers at the University at Albany. The symposium examined the health disparities picture for Latinos in New York State, describing health trends in the community, the general barriers to health care access faced by Latinos, and discussing strategies to effectively address Latino health issues and problems. From the University's psychology department, Professor Jeanette Altarriba examined the barriers that prevent effective communication between health providers and Latino clients in New York State, including factors related to language, ethnic

identity, race, and culture. According to Altarriba, "emotions are often shaped by the social or cultural context in which they are experienced." She suggested that "researchers in cognitive psychology should actually be investigating issues regarding memory, knowledge representation, perception and the like, by exploring the behavior of multilinguals vs. monolinguals." Professor Janine Jurkowski, from the School of Public Health at the University at Albany, described individual and provider factors that influence use of health care and other health behaviors by Latina women, focusing on the growing upstate New York Latina population. According to Dr. Jurkowski, these factors include "competing demands of family and caregiving roles, work, and negative views about going to the doctor." To improve



From left to right: Professor Janine Jurkowski, Professor Jeanette Altarriba, and Professor José E. Cruz, November 14, 2007.

adequate access to preventive health services, providers should be aware of social and cultural factors involved in health care decisions. The symposium was co-sponsored by the Center for the Elimination of Minority Health Disparities and the Center for Social and Demographic Analysis at the University at Albany.

## CUNY Puerto Rican Faculty Recruitment Project

The primary functions of this project are to conduct outreach and recruitment activities in all disciplines at CUNY and to work with CUNY colleges to connect highly-qualified candidates with positions available within the CUNY system. The project was established by CUNY Chancellor Mathew Goldstein in 2006 in response to the publication of *The Decline of the Puerto Rican Full-time Faculty at the City University of New York (CUNY) From 1981-2002*, a Centro/NYLARNet policy paper authored by Hostos Community College Professor Felipe Pimentel.

For more information contact Professor Jose Luis Morín at [jmorin@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:jmorin@hunter.cuny.edu)

## U.S. Latino Studies at the University at Albany

For more than three decades the Department of Latin American, Caribbean, and U.S. Latino Studies (LACS) has promoted interdisciplinary research and teaching in area and ethnic studies. LACS is particularly proud of its pioneering role in offering instruction and training in Puerto Rican studies and more recently in the broader field of U.S. Latino Studies. The core Latino Studies faculty consists of Distinguished Professor Edna Acosta-Belén (Literature and Women's Studies), Associate Professor José E. Cruz (political science), Assistant Professor María Isabel Ayala (sociology), and Professor Pedro Cabán (political science). Cabán is currently Vice Provost for Diversity and Educational Equity at SUNY Central Administration.

For more information go to [www.albany.edu/lacs](http://www.albany.edu/lacs)



## Mission and Contact Information

The New York Latino Research and Resources Network (NYLARNet) brings together the combined expertise of U.S. Latino Studies scholars and other professionals across research institutions within New York State in four target areas: Health, Education, Immigration, and Politics. This network is constituted by recognized scholars and other professionals who are engaged in critical thinking, dialogue, and the dissemination of information on U.S. Latino issues. NYLARNet addresses a broad spectrum of concerns related to the four target areas mentioned above, and provides information services to legislators, public agencies, community organizations, and the media on U.S. Latino affairs.

NYLARNet also pays special attention to the realities and needs of the largely neglected Latino populations outside of New York City. The creation of NYLARNet was made possible by in-kind support from the University at Albany and grant support from the New York State Assembly under the sponsorship of Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Bronx Assemblyman Peter Rivera.

**DR. JOSÉ E. CRUZ**, NYLARNet Director  
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and Latin American, Caribbean, and  
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### NYLARNet External Advisory Board

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