

# LARES NEWSLETTER

SPRING / SUMMER ISSUE

JULY 2007

## Not just a thing of the past

When you think of affirmative action what comes to mind? Perhaps you visualize groups of demonstrators protesting against racism and discrimination like in the '60s? Maybe you visualize women taking a stand and struggling to win a place in a male dominated workplace such as occurred in the 1970s. Maybe you evoke more contemporary times with universities thinking twice about how they evaluate applicants and whom they admit into their schools. All of these images might be correct since the problems that created these situations still exist today. Affirmative action is not a thing of the past, nor something that can be

conveniently forgotten. Affirmative action is something very relevant to our everyday lives. It is about how we attempt to make things a little fairer in a generally unfair society.



Diana Ramos, Elizabeth Gomez De la Casa and Alejandra Chavez (left to right) at the ILACHE conference.

Over the last few months I was able to conduct some research and participate on a panel regarding affirmative action. I presented on this topic to a

group of students and professionals who attended the Fifteenth Annual Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE) Conference held this past March at Northeastern Illinois University. Attendees gathered to discuss current issues affecting Latinos in higher education. The theme was "Latino Leadership: Passing on the Torch." As part of the younger generation in attendance, I perceived this message as it being our responsibility to become leaders and then continue passing the torch and everything it represents on to others.

My fellow team members and I--students from UIC and Roosevelt University--knew affirmative action was something most students our age usually did **(continued on page 4)**

### LARES Congratulates !

- All 2006-2007 Latino Graduates
- Rudy Aguilar on his acceptance to the American Studies PhD program at the University of Minnesota
- The 2006-2007 LARES Tuition Award Recipients:
  - \* Sharon Aurelio
  - \* Fernando Garcia
  - \* Mariana Gomez
  - \* Luis Hernandez
  - \* Gryssel Montagner
  - \* Erika Ortiz
  - \* Isis Reyes
  - \* Laura Rios
  - \* Cesar Rodriguez

## Education as social activism!

In 1973 local college students, community leaders, university staff, and faculty were deeply concerned with the low enrollment of Latinos attending institutions of higher education, particularly at the Chicago branch of the University of Illinois at Chicago (then UICC). Their goal was to raise awareness around recruitment and admissions policies and the absence of financial investment that

affected Latino participation in higher education. The lack of response by the administration eventually led to the takeover of University Hall. The idea was to raise awareness and demand support and resources for the Latino community.

Educational access was one of the demands of the 1960s and 1970s that I would argue is still relevant for us today. The number of Latinos in higher education

across the country is still overwhelmingly low compared to other ethnic groups. Underrepresentation can be witnessed at the baccalaureate level and even more dramatically within graduate programs. It is for this reason that I believe attending college for Latinos is not only a personal goal but an act of social activism. **(continued on page 3)**

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## Recruitment and Outreach Half the Battle for Increasing Latino College Graduates

In the early 1970s a generation of Latino students, community leaders and UIC faculty and staff created the LARES program because of the need to conduct specialized outreach into Latino neighborhoods and schools. It was one of the most important civil rights achievements for Latinos in the state of Illinois. The program encouraged bilingual professional recruiters--familiar with community needs and sensitive to the pressures of school guidance counselors and teachers--to create productive family and professional networks that could serve young Latinos. As a consequence thousands of students have used the program to become familiar with the process of higher education and receive intensive, personal bilingual services.

It has made a big difference for many. When a south side high school suspended the annual college fair, LARES worked with a consortium of college recruiters to provide an alternative college fair in the community so that students from the neighborhood could meet with representatives and obtain financial assistance information and become familiar with educational opportunities at Illinois colleges. When specific high schools fell off college recruitment lists, LARES made sure that Latinos at those schools had the opportunity to meet with outreach staff. When a local principal called LARES because many of his top students had not been contacted by any university and had made no plans to attend college, the program worked with these

students and made sure that they completed college application forms. The mother of one student whose son encountered multiple problems transferring to several schools brought her student to LARES. Today, after completing an undergraduate degree at UIC, that student is enrolled in a master's degree program at Harvard and was recently accepted into joint advanced degree programs at Columbia, Harvard and several other schools.

Recruitment and outreach is fundamental to supports services and a commitment to the representation of historically underrepresented students at American colleges (i.e., African American, Latino and Native American students). The crisis in **(continued on page 6)**

## Around campus

Of the several outreach and development activities coordinated by the LARES staff this past semester, workshops were a big hit. In April, representatives and students from various programs and organizations attended the MBA Workshop. Staff and current students from the MBA programs at UIC and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) along with representatives from the National Society of Hispanic MBA's (NSHMBA) came to speak to undergraduates. Topics included reasons to get an MBA, how to prepare for the GMAT, admission requirements and student testimonials regarding their personal experience.

In addition, on March 21 LARES held the Elementary and Secondary Education Info Session for students interested in undergraduate teaching programs at UIC. Representatives from the

elementary education program in the College of Education and secondary education program in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presented both programs. The presentations included information on program requirements, important deadlines and the different areas of concentration in teaching.

Both workshops were followed by Q&A sessions and networking opportunities where students were able to ask more detailed questions and seek advice from attendees. Look out for similar programs sponsored by the LARES office in the upcoming school year .

- Alfredo Estrada  
LARES Program



Joseph DeLaGarza explains why he chose to pursue an MBA. (Top photo.) Cesar Argueta talks about his experience in the IMBA program. (Pictured above.)



Attendees listen in on a presentation during the Education Info Session coordinated by LARES.

## Education as social activism!...(continued from page 1.)

One day during the winter break of my sophomore year at UIC, I found myself visiting the Graduate College for the first time. Some students have the idea of attending graduate school the first day of their freshmen year because they obtain the knowledge of its importance from their families and have the support system to guide them. I, on the other hand like many Latinos, had limited support early on to prepare me for the transition to higher education. I discovered graduate school later during college. My curiosity and plans for obtaining an advanced degree led me to research possibilities and seek support. Fortunately, I was steered toward a research program geared at assisting students of color into advanced studies, the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP).

Even if we remove the financial advantages from gaining more education, Latinos who obtain undergraduate and graduate degrees would still benefit by empowering our families and communities. This is

the vision that I wish to carry with me as my time as an undergraduate comes to an end. When I graduate this May, I will begin graduate studies at the University of Minnesota. In Minneapolis, my goal is to obtain an advanced degree because my educational vision has expanded from one of personal achievement to social activism. I believe that there is room for activism to be conducted in the fashion of the 1960s and 1970s with university takeovers like the one that occurred in November of 1973 at UICC. But past events such as this have opened some doors within the higher education system. We must continue to be active and increase our presence in higher education for the betterment of our communities. In the context where educational opportunities have been denied to our raza, there is a possibility that one's academic degree can now be used as a weapon to demand higher education opportunities and resources for Latina/o students.

Fortunately, I have been admitted to the American Studies

program as a doctoral student for the fall of 2007. My drive to complete a Ph.D. is not necessarily for financial gain. In reality, I seek this degree because I wish to mentor students of color and encourage them to engage in higher learning in my future role as a professor. There have been many educators that have dedicated their lives to youth, translating their knowledge so it inspires and using it as a vehicle to empower younger generations. Here at UIC I can attest to several Latina/o professors and staff that have supported me throughout my studies. I have chosen to continue my studies and the cycle of mentorship and activism through academia to empower Latina/o students just like those community activists, students, faculty, and staff did in the 1970s by sparking awareness of the needs of Latino students with the takeover of University Hall.

- Rudy Aguilar

*Latin American and Latino Studies*

## Aspiring Business and Engineering Leaders (ABEL) participants attend NTCC conference

The Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE) held its Thirtieth Annual National Technical & Career Conference (NTCC) at the Colorado Convention Center in Denver, Colorado, from January 10-13, 2007. I, along with three other students from Lakeview High School, attended the pre-college symposium. Our trip to Denver was one of the best experiences in my life. Networking and sharing ideas with current college students was a great opportunity. It helped me consider my options and plan out my future.

In the years to come, I will think back upon the opportunity to

travel to Denver and appreciate its benefits. The city was spectacular. It was nice knowing that there were many students and professionals attending the event. During dinner, I had the chance to talk to people from around the country. I learned from a Navy officer that no matter how ambitious your goals or how many people tell you that you cannot accomplish them, what matters most is when you accept the challenge and pursue them.

I also came to realize that engineering is everywhere. As one of the presenters who was a chemistry teacher said, "Engineering is the solution to

many problems." Everybody agreed with her. She also said that the challenges confronted and addressed through engineering, despite their difficulty, are always **(continued on page 5)**



Lakeview High School students and LARES staff at NTCC conference

## Not just a thing of the past...(continued from page 1)

not think twice about. For a majority of us, affirmative action is a thing of the past. People stood up for our rights, things changed, and we should now be able to move on with our lives. This was the attitude I had when I was in high school and through my first years of college. The panel and I knew this mentality was an obstacle, and we had to present our ideas in a way that would give young people a new found appreciation and concern for affirmative action.

Some believe that remedies addressing inequalities have reached a point where things have become balanced, and there is no longer a need for programs that make college more accessible to Latinos, Native Americans and African Americans. Many have the misconception that affirmative action is just an excuse for minorities in this country to have special privileges, simply because of their ancestry.

Today, there are programs and organizations that exist to help minorities enter college. Is it fair? Personally, I say yes. Many feel that because we are given such assistance we are taking advantage of what happened in the past. Yet, if you really think about it, everything minorities endured in the '50s and '60s still exists to some extent today. Many of us grow up in segregated

areas where education is not made a priority, where there are limited resources, and where high schools sometimes see college as out of reach for Latinos. For those of us who get past these barriers, who believe in ourselves--sometimes when hardly anyone else does--why shouldn't we be given such support? Many of us grow up in families where our parents or siblings did not have the opportunity to attend college not because they did not want to but because they did not know how or did not have the financial resources.

Affirmative action has produced programs such as the Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services (LARES) here at UIC which helps us become better prepared and informed in many areas relevant to college and professional success. Perhaps this helps compensate a little for the fact that we did not have as many opportunities as other people. If such programs and scholarships are taken away, what affect would it have? Some feel it would not have a major impact at all. Many people perceive there to be a level playing field and believe that future generations can simply make it into college based on grades. This very well might be true. Yet, I know I feel better and safer knowing that I have resources that can assist me to navigate the higher education system

so I do not get lost along the way; that there is someone available who understands what it is like being the first one in college; someone who can help explain to my parents what needs to be done and why.

Affirmative action is not just a thing of the past but something that affects us now and will continue to affect us in the future. Our generation, including high school students, must realize this. It is our duty to help pass on the torch to others so that one day if we were to lose affirmative action entirely it would be based on the fact--and not the misguided belief--that everyone is truly treated equally. Until then, it is our responsibility to educate ourselves and others on the continuing necessity of affirmative action. Regardless of what others believe or say, we have every right to obtain a higher education because we have the potential. We must be leaders within our community and pass this knowledge on to the next generation. Affirmative action is not just a thing of the past but something that is necessary if there is to be a better future for us all.

- Diana Ramos

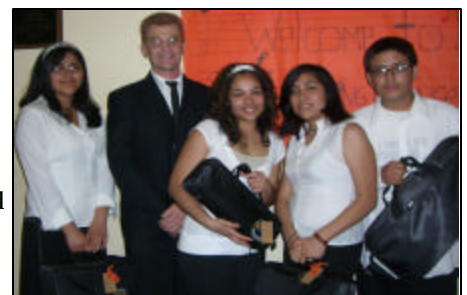
*College of Architecture and Arts*

## In the community

In February, instructor and math tutor Terry Mankus decided to donate some musical instruments to a needy school. Over the following months five brand new Gibson Epoch instruments -- two flutes, two clarinets, and a trumpet were bought. Lakeview High School on Chicago's northside was chosen to receive the donation. The teaching staff at Lakeview nominated five deserving students and helped coordinate a time and place for the donation. On Wednesday, May 9th, 2007 the group representing the LARES program included Associate Director Hugo Teruel, Math

instructor Dr. Mankus and counselor Nubia Raygoza.

The LARES representatives were introduced at the Annual Lakeview High School Spring Concert. Hugo Teruel briefly spoke of the LARES mission of helping students and how that dedication related to the donation of the instruments. Lakeview Music Director Jim Barbick then called upon the five recipients to come to the stage and receive the instruments donated by Dr. Mankus in the name of LARES.



Terry Mankus at Lakeview High School with recipients of the donated instruments.

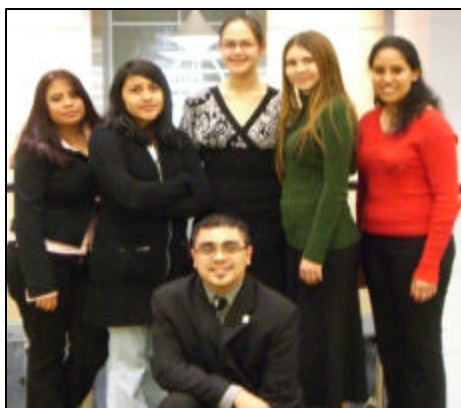
## Aspiring Business and Engineering Leaders (ABEL) participants attend NTCC conference...(continued from page 3)

satisfying in the end.

Our group also had the opportunity to visit the University of Denver in Colorado. There, we met a Mexican astronaut. At a young age he worked in the fields with his parents. He explained that when he was young he did not speak English but mathematics and science were his passion. He did everything he could until he graduated from college and finally became a scientist who worked with people from all over the world. He later talked to us about his work ethic and how he continued to work very hard to accomplish his goals. He explained how he wanted to move and progress in his career, which later led him to apply for a job with NASA. After some time he had not received an answer and figured that in order for him to be hired he would need to educate himself more and obtain advanced degrees. Now, he works for NASA, but he knows that he has to continue to try to be better. He

taught me that language should not hold people back if they are determined and that goals can be accomplished if you work hard and are committed.

During our trip, we also went to a demonstration in Colorado Springs. It was very entertaining and educational.



Student attendees at NTCC conference. (Rossett Hernandez; pictured far left side.)

Engineering was utilized in the everyday operations of the project. We also went to a college and job fair which was very beneficial because we got the chance to talk to people from many companies and organizations such as 3M, Ford Motor Company, IBM, Verizon, Caterpillar, and Microsoft, just to name a few. I also learned

many things from my discussions with the attendees on how to set and accomplish one's goals. On this trip I learned the value and importance of education and the type of career I want to pursue. As I met with various members from SHPE and was exposed to various opportunities, I can say that this experience had a great impact on my life. I

learned that a successful person is one who loves what they do, fights for what they want and says to himself, "I CAN DO IT."

Thanks to this great experience I can help other students make plans for their futures. I can explain what it takes to accomplish their goals. I can also tell my friends what benefits there are to becoming an engineer. I believe I can assist students that do not know about engineering or the benefits of pursuing education after high school.

I am really glad that I had this experience and advise everyone to think about attending an event such as this. I really thank SHPE from UIC, Nubia Raygoza and Carolina Velarde our chaperones from LARES, the Latina Girls Club and Ms. Lopez from Lake View High School. Without them I would not have been able to attend this event and obtain this valuable experience, which I intend to share with others.

- Rossett Hernandez  
Lakeview High School

## Sign up for tutoring services next semester !

**C.L.A.S. Tutoring** - Room 476 SCE  
Monday - Friday 10:00am - 5:00pm  
Phone: 312-355-5185  
Tutors available for:  
*Math 070 through Math 220*  
*Biology 100 and 101*  
*Chemistry 100, 101, 112, 114, & 234*  
*Spanish 112 and 113*

**Honor's College Tutoring**  
Burnham Hall Room 220  
For more info log on to:  
[www.hc.uic.edu/tutoring/tutorintro.htm](http://www.hc.uic.edu/tutoring/tutorintro.htm)



**English Composition**  
The UIC Writing Center: 312 413-2206  
Douglas Hall (DH) - Room 100  
<http://www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing/>

LARES English Composition Tutor:  
By appointment only: 312-996-3356

**Math**  
LARES Math Tutor: Terry Mankus  
E-mail: [tmanku1@uic.edu](mailto:tmanku1@uic.edu)  
Call the LARES program at 312-996-3356 for his office hours and availability.

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Educational Services Program (LARES)  
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### Recruitment and Outreach...(cont. from pg. 2)

representation is at such a dire level for Latinos that many more students have to be pumped into the pipeline as well as guided out the other end for recruitment into professional positions and advanced study and preparation.

At the annual dinner for Latino graduates, hosted by the Latino Committee on University Affairs (LCUA) with the support of LARES and other Latinos at UIC, I had the opportunity and pleasure to greet old and recent alum as well as members of the UIC community that have been critical to a social justice educational agenda. There were lawyers that had been helped by the program, graduates who now own their own businesses who did not know that the high schools where they attended were at one time not seen as worthy of attention. There were moms who had their second and third child graduating from UIC and parents who were celebrating the occasion of their first in the family to graduate from college. For so many people an important part of their experience was meeting a LARES recruiter/counselor who was able to help forge a path from the neighborhood to the university. LARES has served the Latino community well for many years. We hope it will continue to do so for many more.

- Leonard Ramirez, Ph.D.  
LARES Program, Director

### LARES poetry corner...

#### Shut your mouth and open your eyes

Don't listen to society's lies  
They don't want you to hear the innocent cries  
They only hope to monopolize  
CLOSE YOUR EYES AND OPEN YOUR EARS  
Don't let them fill you with false fears  
They only hope to bring you tears  
CLOSE YOUR EARS AND OPEN YOUR MIND  
Don't let other's prejudices make you blind  
For it's your own convictions you must find  
Leave past generation's notions behind

- Dominick William  
Garritano  
MFA Candidate

