### UTQAP Cyclical Review Report

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<td><strong>Commissioning officer:</strong></td>
<td>David Cameron, Dean, Faculty of Arts &amp; Science</td>
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<td><strong>Date of scheduled review:</strong></td>
<td>February 2, 2018</td>
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<td><strong>Reviewers:</strong></td>
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EXTERNAL REVIEW
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY
OF TORONTO
2 FEBRUARY 2018

Review team
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INTRODUCTION
The external reviewers for the cyclical review of the Latin American Studies Program at the University of Toronto conducted a one-day site visit on February 2, 2018. In advance of the site visit, the reviewers were provided with extensive documentation about the program, including a very thorough and detailed Self-Study as well as a lengthy list of appendices providing relevant information about the program. The itinerary for the site visit included meetings with the Dean and Vice-Dean, Academic Planning and Strategic Initiatives, of the Faculty of Arts and Science, the Director and Coordinator of the Latin American Studies Program, core and affiliated faculty members, students and librarians. The external reviewers are extremely grateful to all the individuals who made time to meet with us, and answer our questions. All of the meetings were extremely informative, and were conducted in a very cordial atmosphere. The external reviewers received a highly favorable impression of the overall climate in the program. Nevertheless, we do also want to state that the agenda for the day felt a little crowded and some of the meetings a bit rushed. In the meetings that involved larger numbers of participants, such as the meetings with students in the program and with affiliated faculty, the members of the external review team were left with the feeling that there had not been enough time set aside for a truly thorough exchange of viewpoints with all those in attendance. Nevertheless, the site visit was very useful, allowing us, in combination with the written materials provided in advance of the visit, to develop what we believe is a well-informed perspective on the program. We also want to express our gratitude to the Administrative Assistant to the Vice-Dean, who showed exceptional efficiency in taking care of the logistics of our visit.
SUMMARY
The reviewers were impressed by the commitment of the core faculty, the coordinator, and the Director of the Latin American Studies Program, the excellence and enthusiasm of the current students, the innovative courses recently developed in the curriculum, the research strengths in the program, and the engagement with the Latino community in Toronto. The LAS Program at the University of Toronto has much that is to be highly commended, as noted throughout this report. The students who met with the reviewers are clearly meeting the UT mission of becoming “graduates [who] are educated in the broadest sense of the term, with the ability to think clearly, judge objectively, and contribute constructively to society.” The organization and financial structure of the program pose the most concerns to the assessors; the standalone nature of the program, unaffiliated with any College or Institute and thus unable to have tenure stream faculty, places limitations on the program. Addressing those limitations appears necessary to unlock the potential for growth in this important program. The University of Toronto, as “an internationally significant research university” located in a city with a large Hispanic population, would clearly benefit from a Latin American Studies Program that could expand to meet its potential.

PROGRAM EVALUATION CRITERIA
The external reviewers found that the five objectives of the Latin American Studies Program are consistent with the University of Toronto’s overall mission of being “being an internationally significant research university, with undergraduate, graduate and professional programs of excellent quality” and with the more specific goals of “encouraging scholarship in a wide range of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, sciences and the professions,” “ensur[ing] that its graduates are educated in the broadest sense of the term, with the ability to think clearly, judge objectively, and contribute constructively to society” and the “Promotion of equity and justice within the University and recognition of the diversity of the University community” (https://www.utoronto.ca/about-u-of-t/mission).

The Latin American Studies Program objectives and curriculum also align well with the Faculty of Arts and Science’s 2010-2015 Academic Plan goals to educated undergraduate students who are:

• Strong analytical, critical and creative thinkers
• Excellent communicators
• Broadly educated
• Engaged and ethically grounded global citizens
• Well prepared for careers, or for graduate and professional studies


Emphasis on critical, creative thinking, communication, and breadth of knowledge are central to the LAS program, which focuses on training in Spanish or Portuguese, rigorous writing and research skills that allow students to critically explore the historical and contemporary challenges
of the Latin American region in a global context, encourages students to have international
teaching and other high impact learning experiences. The
undergraduate LAS majors and minors who met with the external reviewers during our site visit
were amazing communicators and excellent representatives of the quality education students are
discovering in this program.

No concerns were noted with admissions requirements. According to the LAS Program Self
Study documents, “Enrolment in the Latin American Studies program is open to students who
have completed four courses (4 FCEs); no minimum GPA is required. However, we should note
that the quality of our students is excellent, according to the mean entering average for new
enrolments from high school, which was at 89.5 for LAS majors and minors in 2016.” External
reviewers confirm that the quality of the students they met during their site visit was indeed
excellent. The faculty members the reviewers spoke to during the site visit also spoke highly of
the students in the program, so all indications received of the quality of the students admitted
into the program are quite positive.

In terms of curriculum and delivery, the external reviewers found the LAS Major clearly laid out
in terms of requirements. A Latin American Studies Major comprises seven full courses or their
equivalent (FCE). It must include LAS 200H and LAS 201H and one half LAS 300+ level
course. Also required is a minimum of 2 FCEs at the 300+ level, at least 0.5 FCE of which must
be at the 400-level. At least one half course must be LAS300H1 or LAS301H1. LAS courses at
the 300 and 400 levels may be taken more than once for credit, if the topic has changed. Students
must successfully complete (with a grade of at least 65%) the second level of instruction in
Spanish or Portuguese language (or equivalent) by the end of the third year of study. Students
completing the Major program are also required to complete JQR360H. The language
requirement is intended to ensure that students have some working knowledge of a major
language of Latin America; while the requirement to take courses at the upper level from the
variety of offerings in Latin American Studies ensures that they will develop the “strong
analytical, writing, critical thinking, and research skills” desired, “as well as the ability to apply
quantitative thinking and analysis” that will be practiced particularly in JQR360H or the
equivalent course.

The Self-Study is clear in mapping the curriculum and learning outcomes to those of the
university and Faculty of Arts & Sciences and the external reviewers found that mapping
convincing and appropriate for the discipline. Indeed, the curriculum reflects the current state of
the discipline in important ways. Socially engaged scholarship is common to the discipline of
Latin American Studies in North America, as is the commitment to an interdisciplinary program
that engages with departments and faculty from across the university whose research and
teaching interests involve Latin America and the Latin American diaspora and a continued
commitment to a base in one or more languages of Latin America (Spanish and Portuguese, but
also, at some universities, the Indigenous languages of Latin America). A strong collaboration
with the Latin American collection at the University library is also characteristic of the best of
the Latin American Studies programs in North America.
The LAS program also shows many signs of innovation, creativity and strength in the content and delivery of its program. A few notable examples include:

- The JQR360 course is an interdisciplinary strength, the result of collaboration between African Studies, Caribbean Studies, Equity Studies, and Diaspora and Transnational Studies and incorporating quantitative analysis, an emphasis not found in every LAS program.

- LAS 400H – While capstone courses are common in interdisciplinary courses, the focus of LAS 400 on a current topic allows students to bring to bear their knowledge and skills to a current debate or issue in the field.

- LAS 401, Latinos in Canada, is designed as an experiential learning course for advanced students in the LAS Major program. The course includes a volunteer placement of approximately 25 hours in a community organization with a specific focus on serving Latino communities in Toronto. This course includes high impact learning practices and is an excellent way for students to bring their learning into the community and the community into their learning.

- Another new course, LAS 302, Critical Perspectives in Development and Volunteerism in Latin American Contexts, is an innovative topic that attracts students in public health and other fields and again underscores both the interdisciplinary nature of the LAS program at the U of Toronto and takes advantage of the strong local, national and international community connections the program and the faculty members have. This course is unique for its self-critical stance in the discipline, underlining the importance of questioning our own work and interrogating long-held paradigms about “progressive development, North-South relations, and the role of academic inquiry as a motor for change” as noted in the self-study.

Other positives noted by the reviewers are the many opportunities for student learning beyond the classroom. The LAS program organizes a wealth of lectures, films, and other events, including a Latin American Studies Career Day, with discussions of options for careers for graduates of LAS, in partnership with such organization as the Toronto Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and invited Latinos working in the City of Toronto. There is an active Latino student organization affiliated with the LAS, “Organization of Latin American Students, St. George,” that also organizes events, including a panel of 4 alumni speakers to talk about their LAS experiences. The OLAS group has organized conversation practice opportunities for students to practice their language skills, posadas navideñas to celebrate winter holidays, and help organize the Undergraduate Research Day with the LAS program. LAS students are encouraged to participate in study abroad activities to gain experience in the various countries and cultures of Latin America. The LAS program offers an Undergraduate Research Award ($2500) that allows students the opportunity to do a research project in a Latin American country or on a Latin American topic, with the supervision of a faculty member. Students in recent years have done projects on topics from Peru, Honduras, Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico, Guatemala and Cuba. These opportunities are highly valued by the students. Additional funding for this Undergraduate Research Award would allow additional outstanding LAS students to take advantage of this excellent opportunity to conduct undergraduate research, a high impact learning opportunity, and
would be an excellent investment by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences in the program and its outstanding students.

As far as the reviewers could assess from the self-study documents, the 12 learning outcomes are appropriate for the LAS program, helping students to focus on relevant contemporary and historical debates in the discipline, use the two major languages of the region, put to use research tools and skills that are of particular use to projects on Latin American topics, and require students to think and write through critical analysis informed by a geopolitically specific area of inquiry and research. The learning outcomes take advantage of the resources in the program—faculty research and teaching skills, library resources, connections in the community—that students can access and learn from during their degrees. The methods of assessment, as outlined in the LAS self-study, also seem appropriate to the courses and levels of study.

The somewhat precarious nature of the program—run by an extremely dedicated but half-time coordinator, a faculty member seconded from another unit for a three-year term, and with all core courses taught by sessional instructors (again all passionate and extremely dedicated)—means that the offerings are sometimes limited, not always secure as to when they are to be offered again. The external reviewers found that what was there is excellent, but were concerned about the structural base (faculty lines, funding, and reliably offered courses) of the program to attract more students.

The University of Toronto undergraduate LAS program is similar in some of its requirements to other strong programs in North America. To cite a few examples here:

- The University of Texas Austin major in Latin American Studies requires 27 semester credits hours in LAS, at least 18 of which must be at the 300 or 400 level, with requirements in both humanities and social sciences, and LAS core courses. The language requirement is intermediate proficiency in Spanish, Portuguese or an Indigenous language of Latin America. The program is intended to provide an interdisciplinary, broad-based knowledge of Latin America. Some students do a semester of approved study at a Latin American university abroad as part of their degree.

- The University of Michigan major in Latin American and Caribbean Studies requires proficiency in either Spanish or Portuguese, at least 30 semester credit hours in the major (at least 20 of which must be at the 300-400 level), with required courses in anthropology, history, literature, politics and economy. Elective courses may come from any department, as long as they deal with Latin America and the Caribbean; including up to 4 credits of Quechua or Nahuatl language. Study Abroad coursework may be used toward the major with approval from an advisor. [https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/majors-minors/latin-american-and-caribbeanstudies-major.html]

The LAS program does not offer courses in Indigenous languages of Latin America; however, it does offer both Spanish & Portuguese and has true interdisciplinary strengths that are key to a Latin American Studies Program. As the University of Toronto addresses its responsibilities of living in right relations in response to the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the LAS might consider both how it can expand offerings in Indigenous Studies in
Latin America and collaborate with other Indigenous Studies programming at the University of Toronto.

The self-study addresses reasons why data is lacking regarding registration and application into this program or NSSE Results for Latin American Studies, but the reviewers in conversations with the students during the site visit, found that the students are very pleased with the truly interdisciplinary nature of the program. Not only is the program an interdisciplinary program in its overall curricular design, but every course the students take is taught in an interdisciplinary fashion, so that all topics are discussed in a rich, multidisciplinary fashion. That is a true strength of the LAS program at the University of Toronto and one that does set it apart from some interdisciplinary programs which are a patchwork of courses from different departments where the students are still taking courses taught as history, anthropology, literature or political science courses but not getting the core LAS experience.

LAS students are very articulate about the value of their LAS program and how it complements their other study choices (as all LAS students are other double majors or are doing a major and two minors) and career choices. LAS students appreciate the opportunity to do primary research, to work closely with faculty members, and to have international experiences through this program. Course evaluations and LAS survey data, reported in the self-study, also report high satisfaction with the quality of the educational experience in the LAS program. The assessors deem that the quality of the educational experience is rated as very high.

The assessors made positive note of initiatives to improve the quality of the curriculum and learning experience for the students. The new courses developed to meet student interests and to prepare students for careers and lives as global citizens are examples of the ways in which the LAS is taking initiatives to enhance the quality of the program. LAS 401, Latinos in Canada, and LAS 302, Critical Perspectives in Development and Volunteerism in Latin American Contexts, are both excellent additions to the curriculum.

The LAS Program is a welcoming and diverse program and celebrates the diversity of the students, faculty and staff. The LAS Program reports a strong working relationship with the Office of Health and Well-being and has accommodations plans in place for staff members who need them. Diversity topics of all kinds are key research and teaching topics within the program, enriching the teaching and learning experience for all involved in the LAS program.

The program is small, unable to address all areas of the broad field of Latin American Studies, but strong and, from the little data available to external reviewers from the self-study, it appears that the graduates of the program are finding employment (or pursing further study) in a variety of fields connected to their LAS fields of study and using the skills developed in their LAS in their lives and careers.

**RESEARCH**

In addressing the scope, quality and relevance of faculty research activities, one should begin by distinguishing between core and affiliated faculty.
Core faculty, who are defined as those who teach courses with the LAS code, or the JLN (Joint New Latin American Studies and New College) code, are all sessional lecturers, not permanent faculty. Although the reviewers were not able to locate specific information on the criteria for reappointment, or promotion, for sessional lecturers, either in the self-study, or on the University of Toronto web-site, one assumes that greatest weight is not given to scholarly achievement, as it is for promotions for tenure-stream faculty. This means that the core teaching responsibilities of the Latin American Studies program are borne by faculty who are not evaluated in the first place for the quality or quantity of their research. Still, the self-study notes that the research activity of the sessional lecturers is “key to the program’s role in developing and advancing research” in the field (p. 43). Indeed, to different degrees, the sessional lecturers are all active scholars, sharing the outcomes of their research through books, articles, book chapters, and conference presentations. It is impossible on the basis of the information at our disposal, and taking into consideration the different individual trajectories of the sessional lecturers, to make general statements about the quality of the research carried out by the core faculty. However, we have no hesitation in concurring with the statement from the self-study that “the sessional lecturers are active in the production of research in their fields” (p. 3).

The core faculty’s research spans the humanities and social sciences, and focuses above all on Venezuela, Brazil and the Hispanophone Caribbean. The reviewers understand that Latin America is a vast continent, and that many factors are taking into consideration when hiring sessional lecturers to teach the core courses of the Latin American Studies program; nevertheless, the regional scope of the core faculty’s research strikes us as somewhat unbalanced, with two out of five sessional lecturers focusing their research primarily on one country (Venezuela), two others working on the Caribbean, and no one with a focus on important regions such as the Southern Cone nations.

Core faculty members conduct research on a wide range of topics, including Latin American testimonial literature, Venezuela’s Bolivarian revolution, sexual diversity, religion in the Caribbean region, immigration, and literary responses to natural disasters. The focus on questions of politics, culture, and identity, as well as the strong concern among all core faculty with key contemporary developments in Latin America means that the relevance of core faculty research can be rated as extremely high.

LAS affiliated faculty members are drawn from a range of departments across the university. The self-study identifies six research categories into which affiliated faculty can be grouped: anthropology; Brazilian studies; Caribbean Studies; development, policy, and social justice; linguistics; and, literary and cultural studies. Although there are in fact a number of faculty members who fall outside these categories (the report mentions two faculty members in economics and one in education), the groupings are a helpful way of identifying the scope of faculty research, as well as areas of particular strength. The range of disciplinary interests covered by the affiliated faculty is impressive indeed, as is the coverage of different regions within Latin America. The quality of the research carried out by the program’s affiliated faculty can be rated as very high, with an attractive mix of eminent senior scholars and dynamic younger scholars. The University of Toronto appears to have been very successful in hiring faculty in
Latin American studies in recent years. One might also mention a relatively large group of active mid-career scholars, although one would prefer not to see such a large number of faculty with appointments at the Associate Professor level, which is especially worrisome when faculty remain appointed at that level for extended periods of time. The self-study sensibly notes that benchmarks of research success vary from one discipline to another, but also draws attention to “high levels of research funding success” among affiliated faculty of the Latin American Studies program, noting in particular the fact that many faculty members hold competitive SSHRC grants. The external reviewers concur that the overall quality of faculty research activities deserves to be lauded. There is also no doubt that the relevance of affiliated faculty research can be rated as very high. All in all, the appropriateness of the level of activity relative to national and international comparators deserves commendation.

The research profile of the Latin American Studies program has been greatly enhanced through the recent launching of a working group on the topic of Latin American racial technologies, supported by funding from the Jackman Humanities Institute. The working group, which meets monthly, brings together faculty and graduate students from a range of units, giving participants the opportunity to workshop their research projects. Funding is also available to bring in outside speakers. The workshop highlights strengths in race and ethnicity studies, and allows faculty members to engage in productive interdisciplinary dialogue around common interests. The organization of a major academic conference on Mexican literary and cultural studies in September 2017, supported through funding from a variety of units on campus, represents another commendable effort on the part of the Latin American Studies program to raise its research profile.

The self-study draws attention to a number of gaps in the scope of faculty research. The recent retirement of Professor Ricardo Sternberg has left the Department of Spanish and Portuguese without an expert in Brazilian literature and culture, and the imminent retirement of Professor Rosa Sarabia will leave the same department without a specialist in Spanish American poetry, in particular avant-garde poetry, although we note that in recent years Professor Sarabia has shifted the focus of her research towards narrative fiction. The authors of the self-study also draw attention to what they feel is an insufficiently strong representation of the field of political science in the Latin American Studies program. Although the Latin American Studies program cannot hire its own faculty, it can offer recommendations as to future hires that would be beneficial to the program. The external reviewers strongly support the recommendations in the self-study to give priority to new hires in Brazilian literature and culture, Southern Cone literature and culture (and/or Latin American avant-garde literatures) (p. 10), and political science (p. 11).

The Latin American Studies program at the University of Toronto does not have a graduate program, so it is not possible to evaluate the appropriateness of the research activities of graduate students in the Faculty. However, there is no doubt that graduate students in other units at the University of Toronto benefit from a variety of Latin American Studies initiatives, including conferences and activities such as the working group mentioned above. With regard to undergraduate students in Latin American Studies, the reviewers were deeply impressed by the
opportunities available to them, and the level and quality of undergraduate participation in research activities. We want to begin by highlighting the new undergraduate research journal, *Kawsaxkuna: The University of Toronto Journal of Latin American Studies*, the inaugural issue of which is now available on-line. The quality, range, seriousness and relevance of the articles as well as the attractiveness of the journal’s design make this a truly extraordinary achievement. The Latin American Studies faculty members who supported and advised the undergraduate students who brought this project to fruition deserve to be warmly commended. Another significant opportunity for undergraduate students to share their research is the annual Undergraduate Research Day, launched in 2013, and held every year towards the end of the spring semester. Finally, we should also mention the Undergraduate Research Award (established in 2010), which aims to support exceptionally qualified and committed undergraduate students who want to engage in bold, innovative research projects on a Latin America related project, which they develop in consultation with a faculty member. Recent projects include a remarkably rich and varied range of topics. In sum, the research activities of undergraduate students in the Latin American Studies program can be rated as outstanding.

In conclusion, we believe that the appropriateness and effectiveness of the Latin American Studies program’s use of existing human resources is impressive indeed.

**RELATIONSHIPS**

External reviewers met separately with the Director, the coordinator, various groups of faculty, sessional lecturers, and with LAS students. Overall, they found a strong sense of commitment to the LAS program among the colleagues.

The sessional instructors are very committed to their teaching and to the program. They provide quality courses and quality engagement with the LAS students and remain engaged in research in their discipline, although they do not hold tenure-stream positions. These instructors are carrying the weight of the program, yet are the most precarious of the persons employed in the program. Similarly, the administrator of the program is tremendously committed to running the program, but is in a half-time staff position. In this part-time position, she tries to meet all the needs of instructors, Director, students, programming and course planning, advertising courses, planning events, community outreach and engagement, and more. She has started to work on fundraising for the LAS program as well. She also developed and taught the successful new course on Latinos in Toronto, taking advantage of her extensive network of contacts with community partners. She appears to be doing a tremendous amount for a part-time position and the students routinely rave about her. She is high energy and enthusiastic, but depending so much on the energy and enthusiasm of a part-time person does not seem a secure path for the long-term viability of the program. Additional support for the program (see recommendations) would be beneficial.

The external reviewers did not have enough time during the one-day-only site visit to have thorough enough conversations with the faculty members to gain a sufficient sense of their morale in relation to the program.
The LAS program has relationships with many departments and units across campus, as it draws on the faculty member expertise of those units to maintain the intellectual vibrancy of the program. The core courses are taught by sessional instructors in LAS, who are extremely committed to the program and appreciated by the students; all other courses are courses taught in departments (Spanish & Portuguese, Political Science, Anthropology, etc.). Faculty members from these units offer lectures, organize events, work with students on research projects. Some concern was expressed that LAS draws more from Spanish & Portuguese than from other departments and that while Spanish & Portuguese is happy to support the program, it is a strain on the resources of S & P that is not adequately compensated by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences.

LAS has proven creative and resourceful in developing fruitful partnerships within the university and beyond to foster research, creative professional activities and to deliver teaching programs. The LAS program routinely collaborates with Miguel Torrens and David Fernandez (an alumnus of the LAS program) at the Robarts and Fisher libraries to support the research needs of the program and faculty and to provide additional teaching support for the courses. There are collaborations with the Consulates of Mexico and Argentina in Toronto, co-sponsoring and co-organizing events.

The LAS Program partners with the CERLAC (Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean) at York University on events and lectures. The LAS Program also partners with the Institute for Creative Exchange (ICE), a newly founded, Toronto-based cultural organization offering workshops with international and Canadian artists, writers, producers and theorists.

Many of the relationships with external government, academic and professional organizations have been around the co-organization or co-sponsorship of events—lectures, film series, visiting speakers, panels, career days for the students. Collaboration with other universities, with organizations in Toronto, and sometimes in Ottawa, increases the visibility of the LAS program at the University of Toronto, at the same time as it provides important networking opportunities for students, alumni, faculty and staff. The work that goes into organizing these events could potentially pay off not only in increased visibility for the program, but in increased student enrollment, donations to the program, and other tangible benefits. During the short visit of the reviewers, it was hard to gauge the organizational efforts. Much comes from the part-time coordinator and the Director. The extent to which the full-time affiliated faculty members are involved varies but was more difficult to assess.

The Latin American diasporic communities of Toronto are large and growing. For these communities to know that there is a place at the University of Toronto where their countries, cultures, languages, politics, and concerns are valued, debated, studied, and showcased is extremely important. In maintaining this program and providing the conditions in which the program might grow, the University of Toronto would affirm the importance of the Latin American community in the GTA and of the relationships that Canada has with all the Latin American countries in our world. As “an internationally significant research university,” that promotes “recognition of the diversity of the University community,” the University of Toronto has a small gem of a Latin American Studies program that could be grown into a larger program.
that could have a larger social impact locally and nationally. What is here is terrific, but it could grow, if allowed and supported to do so.

**ORGANIZATION AND FINANCIAL STRUCTURE**

Susan Antebi, Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese, is currently in the third and final year of her appointment as Director of the Latin American Studies program. According to the self-study, Professor Antebi “reports to the Dean of Arts and Science and attends meetings of the Coalition of Arts and Science Director that provide a mechanism for consultation among interdisciplinary programs on items of common interest” (p.54). The self-study also indicates that many decisions in the program are made in consultation with previous directors of the program, affiliated and core faculty, and the program coordinator (p. 55). It is also clear both from the self-study and from interviews in the course of our site visit that that the program Coordinator, currently appointed at 50%, carries out extensive administrative duties.

Professor Antebi appears to have done an outstanding job as director of the program since 2015. The self-study states that six faculty members (Professors Mills, Sarabia, Jagoe, Bejarano, Napolitano, and Antebi) have served as director or acting director of the Latin American Studies program since its inception in 2005. Although it is impossible for us to know all of the factors that might explain this high turnover in program leadership (six directors and acting directors in thirteen years), it may well indicate that the job is a challenging one, and that directors might benefit from greater support than they are currently receiving from the institution.

While the informal processes of consultation described in the self-study are surely beneficial to the program, we wonder whether it might not be advisable to create a more formal structure for discussing important decisions in the program. Many Latin American Studies programs have advisory committees consisting of faculty from the different participating departments; even if such a committee meets only once a semester, it promotes faculty involvement, increases transparency, and ensures that a wide range of viewpoints is taken into account prior to important decisions being made. An alternative would be to follow up on the proposal made in the self-study to create “task forces for specific projects or initiatives” (p.55).

The self-study generously acknowledges the contributions of the program Coordinator, stating that “much of the program’s recent success in the areas of student and community outreach, planning and organization of events, and academic advising” is owed to the coordinator’s efforts. In addition to her many regular duties administering the program, the Coordinator indicated during the site visit that she is also actively involved in fund-raising efforts. We note that it is highly unusual for administrative staff at this level of employment to devote time to fund-raising, surely proof of the extraordinary level of commitment the current Coordinator has to the program. We strongly agree with the self-study’s suggestion that increasing the Coordinator position to a full-time appointment would benefit the program (p. 55). Such a move would be a clear indication that the University of Toronto is committed to growing its Latin American Studies program.

A topic that came up regularly in the course of the site visit was the status of the Latin American Studies program as a stand-alone unit. The initial reaction of the external reviewers was to regard
this as a somewhat anomalous arrangement. Why, we wondered, is the Latin American Studies program not part of the Munk School of Global Affairs, given that numerous other regionally focused centers are housed there? In the course of our visit, we learned furthermore that at the University of Toronto programs or centers are often part of a College, another option of which the Latin American Studies program has not availed itself. We heard many different perspectives on this issue in the course of the day, and in the end came to appreciate the many advantages of preserving the unit’s independence, in particular from the point of view of maintaining its distinct identity. At the same time we note that the program leadership’s goal of moving towards the possibility of permanent faculty appointments in Latin American Studies (p. 56), which we endorse, is at odds with the program’s continued status as a stand-alone unit, since we understand that such a unit cannot at the University of Toronto make such appointments. We also note that combining with a larger unit might increase the Latin American Studies program’s visibility within the University.

The unit’s financial structure is complicated, with funding coming from numerous different sources. The Latin American Studies program draws support from the income from an endowment, from allocations from the Faculty of Arts and Science, from the Centre for Comparative Literature in the form of TAships, from OTO (one-time only) funds from the Faculty, from a cooperative arrangement with the Caribbean Studies program involving the splitting of costs for certain cross-listed courses, and, on at least one occasion, from a curricular development grant. The self-study notes that some aspects of the funding process have been regarded as cumbersome and as creating uncertainty, and, as a result a new funding process has been instituted beginning next year. The self-study expresses optimism that new process will be more streamlined than the one it replaces. The self-study also notes that the program has been able to offer all its proposed courses in recent years. Nevertheless, we draw attention to a certain air of precariousness to the unit’s financial structure. Let us take the example of the course for which a curricular development grant was awarded: LAS 401 (Latinos in Canada). The program deserves to be commended for having developed this highly attractive and relevant course, and for having obtained a curricular development grant to support it. From everything we heard during our site visit, the course was very successful when it was first offered last year. Still, there is no indication in the self-study, or on the program web-site, as to when the course will be offered again, undoubtedly the consequence of the limited availability of funds. This is truly regrettable: a more generous funding stream would surely allow the program to sustain its most original and creative initiatives.

The Latin American Studies program is housed in a very attractive building in an excellent location. The self-study mentions the desirability of obtaining an additional office for the TAs to hold office hours; apart from that, faculty and administrators appear to be pleased with the program’s office space.

**LONG-RANGE PLANNING CHALLENGES**

The Latin American Studies program objectives align closely with central elements in the University of Toronto’s Faculty of Arts and Science’s Academic Plan 2010-2015. The Academic Plan states that the goal of the Faculty of Arts and Science is to educate undergraduate students
who are “strong analytical, critical and creative thinkers; excellent communicators; broadly educated; engaged and ethically grounded global citizens; well prepared for careers, or for graduate and professional studies” (“Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Plan 2010-2015, p. 3). As the self-study indicates, “emphasis on critical, creative thinking, communication, and breadth of knowledge” are key to the Latin American Studies program, and are achieved “through training in Spanish and Portugese, and in rigorous writing and research skills that allow students to critically explore the historical and contemporary challenges of the Latin American region in a global context” (p. 13). Given the strong social and political orientation of teaching and research in Latin American studies at the University of Toronto, and in light of the program’s indisputably strong international orientation, it is also beyond question that LAS makes an important contribution to the University’s goal of preparing its students to become “engaged and ethically grounded global citizens.” The reviewers also concur with the self-study’s statement that students who graduate with a major in Latin American Studies are “uniquely positioned” to undertake graduate work in Latin American Studies and related fields, and we are pleased to note that many students who graduate from the program enroll in professional schools in a wide range of fields (“Self-Study,” p. 13).

It is not possible for us to itemize every single way in which the Latin American Studies program shows that its endeavors are consistent with the Faculty’s Academic Plan; however, we do want to highlight two salient features of the program that reveal its value to the University. First, we draw attention to the Academic Plan’s emphasis on supporting “successful innovations in teaching and learning” (p. 18). The new courses developed in Latin American Studies in recent years clearly fulfil this recommendation. Second, we note the importance assigned by the “Academic Plan” to “Engaging with the Community: Globally and Locally” (p. 23). We believe that an entire range of initiatives in Latin American Studies, including the design of new courses involving experiential learning components and community engagement, the forging of links with a variety of institutions and organizations outside the University, and indeed the engaged quality of much of the research produced by Latin American Studies faculty, all serve to demonstrate the unit’s strong commitment to this component of the Faculty’s mission.

If there is one thing that is cause for concern in reviewing the Latin American Studies program at the University of Toronto, it is the faculty complement plan, in particular the balance of tenure stream and non-tenure-stream faculty. In reading through the materials provided to the external reviewers ahead of the site visit, the fact that the program’s core faculty are all sessional lecturers, hired on a course-by-course basis, came across as highly problematic. Relying on temporary hires to deliver the core courses of the program’s curriculum provides a very fragile basis for ensuring the quality and continuity of the program, and faculty commitment. Nevertheless, several of the interviews conducted during the site visit provided considerable reassurance. It is clear that members of the administration are sensitive to the precariousness of the lecturers’ position, and are committed to alleviating it, insofar as possible. The external reviewers were also very pleased to discover that there is a strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the program among the sessional lecturers. In spite of these positive signals, we
continue to believe that the exclusive reliance on temporary faculty for the program’s delivery of its core courses creates an underlying sense of uncertainty, and is damaging to long-range planning for the program.

There are some worrisome trends in the area of enrollments. There has been a sizeable drop in the number of Latin American Studies majors in recent years. The drop can be attributed at least in part to the challenges facing Humanities disciplines generally, and the leadership of the program remains optimistic that demographic changes in Toronto, specifically the increase in the Latino population, among other factors, will contribute to a return to a larger number of majors. Faculty and staff of the program also expressed a commendable commitment to increasing outreach efforts, both within and outside the University.

With regard to student financial aid, the self-study states that Latin American Studies students “are eligible for the same funding sources as other undergraduates at the University of Toronto” (p. 26). In addition, there are a number of small grants available only to Latin American Studies students for the purpose of conducting research in Latin America or on a topic related to Latin America.

An energetic and multi-faceted fund-raising campaign has been launched by the Latin American studies program coordinator with the initial goal of establishing an undergraduate student award (“Self-Study,” p. 27). The external reviewers were not provided with information regarding funds raised so far, but there is reason to be optimistic, given the program coordinator’s obvious energy and dedication to her tasks. We would also like to take the opportunity to commend the program for an exceptionally attractive and well-designed web-site, which will no doubt buttress fund-raising efforts. However, we do also want to reiterate a point made previously: it is highly unusual for a part-time program coordinator to be tasked with so many responsibilities, and especially for such a person to provide leadership in the area of fund-raising.

In the area of leadership and management, we believe that the program has benefited enormously from the talents and dedication of Professor Antebi and Dr. Villagómez. If Professor Antebi decides not to continue as director, we hope that the institution will identity a similarly qualified faculty member to lead the program. And we reiterate our concern about the large work load carried by the program coordinator.

**INTERNATIONAL COMPARATORS**

The external reviewers were favorably impressed by many aspects of the University of Toronto’s Latin American Studies program, including the design of the major, the availability of original and innovative courses, the wide range of courses offered by core and affiliated faculty, the programming of academic and cultural events, community outreach efforts, the quality of faculty research, and the high academic level of the undergraduate students. Nevertheless, we feel compelled to note that in comparison to the best programs internationally, the Latin American Studies program at the University of Toronto has a modest profile. The program does extremely well with the resources at its disposal, but what it offers pales in comparison with what the top programs in the United States make available to faculty, students and members of the community.
Let us take, as an example, the Teresa Long Lozano Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. The institute offers undergraduates both a major and a minor in Latin American Studies, and houses a doctoral program in the field as well. Required courses for the Latin American Studies major are typically taught by tenured members of the faculty. Under the umbrella of UT’s Institute of Latin American Studies we find several specialized centers: the Mexico Center, the Brazil Center, and the Center for Indigenous Languages of Latin America. There is also an Argentine Studies program within the Institute. In addition to courses in Spanish and Portuguese, students at UT Austin have the opportunity to study Quechua. Faculty and students at UT benefit from the existence of three separate Visiting Professor programs: the Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long Visiting Professorship, the UT-Fulbright Chair in Brazilian Studies, and the Tinker Visiting Professor. A quick look at the list of staff persons affiliated with the Institute shows that there are twenty such employees, including one person devoted exclusively to “public engagement.” A look at the list of events for the next month or so shows that there is at least one event related to Latin America every week, and sometimes more than one. Other major universities with significant strengths in the study of Latin America—such as Columbia and Stanford—offer a similarly rich environment for students and faculty in the field. The University of Toronto is one of the top-ranked research universities in the world. We are firmly convinced that it should be taking steps to strengthen its Latin American Studies program so that it will eventually be able to compete with programs such as the ones at UT Austin and other universities in the United States.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **Increase promotion of all LAS courses.** In discussion with sessional instructors, one instructor spoke about promotion efforts made in a previous term for a course that they thought would not have sufficient enrollments. Reviewers suggest that such recruitment efforts be made routinely for all classes, with the goal of boosting enrollment in all classes and allow for the possibility of more majors and minors.

2. **Advertise LAS program more widely in first and second year courses.** When the external reviewers met with current LAS majors, we learned that only two had ever had a professor speak about the LAS Program (one in a first year Spanish class and one in a Political Science class). The others all told stories of accidentally finding out about the LAS program on their own. Affiliated faculty members should be promoting the program in their own departments in order to increase visibility of the program, increase enrollments, and increase the numbers of majors and minors.

3. **Engage current students in recruitment.** The current LAS students are excellent representatives of the program, bright, articulate, and full of ideas. They speak well about why they have chosen LAS, what they get out of it, how it articulates well with all their different second majors and minors, how it goes with their career paths, their international experiences, undergraduate research experiences, etc. They could star in short videos about the program. They also have ideas about recruitment, mentioning the following in the meeting with assessors:
• Outreach to high schools
• Adopt a high school student for the day on campus
• Participate in the Backpack to Briefcase program

4. **Promote the excellent new courses to targeted departments and units.** The Latinos in Toronto class could be promoted in Canadian Studies, Diaspora Studies, Equity Studies, Sociology, Urban Studies, etc.

5. **Provide additional support for the administration of the LAS program.** The part-time administrator of the LAS is a terrific resource in this program and the U of Toronto is fortunate to have this high energy and enthusiastic person in the role. As she works on launching a fundraising campaign for the LAS program, the reviewers suggest exploring what resources might aid her efforts: a part-time intern from Marketing and Communications, a student group from Business who can do projects for LAS, student groups from a media class who can make promotional videos with the LAS students. The program appears to have capacity to grow in enrollments and majors if it has more support to work on those goals.

6. **Explore course offerings in relation to Indigenous peoples in Latin America** as part of U of Toronto’s shared commitment to recognizing Indigenous knowledge, history, stories, and truths locally, nationally, and internationally.

7. **Explore further options for study abroad options for LAS students and for funding for those options.** Many LAS students spoke about their desire to have an international experience in Latin America as part of their degree. Openness to different structures (not just full year or full semester programs, but short programs of 2-5 weeks) may make that possible for more students.

8. **Invest additional funds into the Latin America Studies Research Award.** LAS currently has $2500 to award for outstanding undergraduates to do research projects in Latin America or on Latin American topics. External reviewers were quite impressed with the quality of the LAS students and their commitment to undergraduate research and international experiences. A modest financial contribution from the university to this fund could increase the number of U Toronto students benefitting from this high impact learning experience.

9. **Explore structural options that will allow for core faculty members who are tenure stream faculty in LAS.**