

**California State University, Fullerton
Centers and Institutes Self-Study/Program Review Report**

**Latino Communications Institute
College of Communications
2018-2024**

1. Mission and Goals

The College of Communication's Latino Communications Institute (LCI) is a workforce-preparedness and civic engagement program that supports the development of U.S. Latino cultural competency through mentorships, research, and intentional industry-connected educational and engagement opportunities. LCI's mission is to build communications leaders of the future with a framework of Latino cultural competency through mentorship and research opportunities. Reflecting the College of Communications' mission of preparing communicators to advance a democratic society, the program's goal is to lead efforts to ensure an equitable experience for Latina/o/x students and scholars so they can accomplish their academic and professional goals and positively contribute to their communities and society at large. Many LCI students are first-generation college students who find impactful mentorships, career pathways, and professional memberships through this learning community, as well as networking opportunities. LCI's goal is to become the West Coast's top Latinx-centric teacher-scholar institution that mentors a new generation of American leaders excelling in communication and storytelling, placing innovative research regarding Latinx communications in the public debate.

LCI aligns with California State University, Fullerton's mission to combine the best qualities of teaching and research universities that actively engage students, faculty, and staff. LCI enhances four of the eight Cal State Fullerton's goals. The institute relies on a strong connection between faculty work and creative activities in the classroom, which places interdisciplinary collaboration at the center of the Institute. Also, LCI's mission makes creating connections and partnerships inside and outside our campus a priority for student development. LCI conducts high-impact practice that provides students with unique insights into the communications industries and democracy-building efforts.

2. Organizational Structure

LCI has changed its organizational structure since the retirement of its first Director, Inez Gonzalez, in 2021. Currently, LCI functions in two levels. At the administrative and resource allocation level, LCI is led by the Dean of the College of Communications. The dean and the college development team serve as liaisons with LCI's Advisory Board and LCI's individual and corporate donors, such as Southwest Airlines and Casanova McCann. At the academic and programmatic level, LCI is led by Dr. Ricardo Valencia, who is an associate professor at the Department of Communications. Dr. Valencia is LCI's faculty director.

In the 2024-25 academic year, the LCI also brought on two faculty AMIGOS to add additional college-wide programming in areas of cinema and television arts and human communication studies.

3. Resource and Sustainability

The center is staffed by a faculty director who receives the equivalent of one course-release per semester and one part-time student assistant. This is a shift from the initial staffing of the center, which had a full-time MPP position assigned as director (from 2014 to 2020). LCI began as an "initiative" whose goal was to become financially self-sustaining. It moved to "institute" status in 2017. Leadership has been sensitive to budgetary issues and its growth is contingent on expanding resources.

The following organizations provide financial contributions and gifts in kind that make it possible for the LCI to operate. Below is the financial support received in the past three fiscal years.

- Casanova//McCann - \$82,500 for FY 22-24
- Southwest - \$40,000 plus tickets for FY22-24
- Other Corporate Giving - \$40,000 for FY22-24
- Individual donors - \$7,000 for FY22-24

- LCI Scholarships Established:
- Ingrid and Jordan Smart Scholarship - \$2,000 per year
- Lucio Villa Scholarship - \$1,000 per year

The College of Communications provides office, clerical and IT support.

The LCI continues to be self-sustaining, as revenue has matched or exceeded expenses in recent years. As of November 2024, the cash balance of LCI is \$406,703. Separately, an endowment of \$75,000 produces about \$2,400 per year for expenses.

One priority for sustainability is to expand the partnership base of LCI. This includes expanding partnerships with the CSU Entertainment Alliance, the Academy of Motion Pictures, and the National Association of Latino Journalists CSUF chapter. There are targeted efforts to expand LCI partnerships across the four academic departments within the College.

4. Highlights and Accomplishments

In Fall 2021, LCI started its transformation to a more college-wide collaborative model in which faculty, administration, staff, and students participate. In the 2021-2022 academic year, Dr. Jasmine Phillips led LCI 2021, which became a transition year that sought to realign the institute's goals with the College's. In Fall 2022, Dr. Valencia took LCI's helm and, in coordination with the Dean's office, engaged in a 1-year envisioning process for the next version of LCI. During the 2022-2023 academic year, LCI revised its mission and vision after interviewing dozens of faculty members, students, staff, and donors. In September 2023, LCI presented its new vision and mission to the College, which was called the "LCI 2.0" era.

LCI's redefinition process propelled the institute into two new directions: 1) conceiving LCI's as a safe space for all Latinx students and allies, and 2) cultivating faculty leadership that makes LCI sustainable in the future.

LCI's activities reported a record-breaking attendance of over 300 people in the last two years. Since 2022, LCI has organized four student gatherings a year, five field trips to destinations such as the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures, Dodger Stadium, and a sponsored panel with the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ). LCI has organized two speaker series with nine communications professionals including the Los Angeles Times's Director of Latino Initiatives, Fidel Martinez, former Los Angeles Dodgers Vice President of Communications and Public Relations, Nicole Chayet Singer, and CSU Entertainment Alliance Advisory Board member, Ivette Rodriguez. In April 2024, LCI hosted the first Latinx Media Showcase which presented films and other media produced by CSUF students.

LCI has embedded its mission in faculty's classes. For example, LCI -in collaboration with the Department of Cinema Studies and Television- took students in the *Contemporary World Cinema (CTVA 374)* course to the red carpet of the Hola Mexico Film Festival at Montalban Theater in Hollywood on October 6, 2023. The new faculty partnership approach has helped LCI to develop deeper relations with faculty members in each of our four departments including Dr. Rebecca Sheehan in Cinema and Television Arts, Dr. Henry Puente in Communications, Dr. Claudia Evan-Zepeda in Human Communications, and Dr. Toya Wyatt in Communicative Disorders.

Another achievement has been reactivating the network of alumni. In February 2024, with support from the college development team, LCI organized a student-alumni mixer with 25 former Titans in attendance including NBC LA reporter, Eric Resendiz, Senior Account Manager at Hill+Knowlton Strategies, Gabriela Armenta, and Casanova McCann's Social Media Manager/-Influencer Relations Manager, Alexis Flores. As a result of this alumni relations strategy, LCI reported an increase in the number of donors that gave during Cal State Fullerton's 24-hour day of giving, Titans Give following the event. All of these accomplishments contribute to the College's mission to advance a democratic society by increasing faculty and students' engagement, especially in activities that advance student's professional development and academic curiosity.

5. Planning and Strategic Outlook

For the next six years, LCI has two strategic goals: 1) Expand the faculty and student participation in the LCI to the four departments in the College of Communications and 2) building avenues to increase the funding for faculty-student high impact practices.

Aligned with the first goal, in 2024-2025, LCI and the College of Communications will be launching its first fellowship program. The AMIGO Fellowship (Affiliate Mentor for Student Inclusion, Engagement, and Development) will allow tenure-line faculty to organize and execute at least three high-impact practices during the 2024-2025 academic year. The AMIGO Fellowship organizes activities related to Latinx issues with a focus on Latinx populations, across the four departments of the College. To make the AMIGO fellows sustainable, LCI and the College leadership are looking at avenues of funding inside or outside the campus.

Regarding our second goal, LCI is looking at our alumni and friends as one of the avenues to increase the resources that fund students' field trips, guest speakers' fees, and our faculty members' labor in activities beyond their instruction time in the classroom. Also, LCI is committed to finding external grants that can help us build an archive for student media production that captures the transformation of the Latinx community in Southern California. This could include a hub for multimedia storytelling, where students produce documentaries, journalistic reports, or other audiovisual work, covering topics relevant to the growing Latinx populations, including its contradictions, barriers, and dreams.