

Conferences

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[Teaching Puerto Rican History in the 21st Century](#): [2] On Friday, November 20, 2009, the Center for Puerto Rican Studies sponsored a one-day teaching and resources conference in celebration of November: Puerto Rican Heritage Month and the 40th Anniversaries of the CUNY departments and programs in Puerto Rican, Latino, and Latin American studies. The main goals of the conference were to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas on teaching of Puerto Rican history; to share best practices on syllabi and curriculum development; and to promote the use of archival documents, primary sources, and innovative technology. Specifically, the conference addressed critical questions confronting the field: What is CUNY faculty teaching? And, how have they improved Puerto Rican studies course development and curriculum? What are the challenges confronting the teaching and learning of Puerto Rican history in the 21st century? How do we utilize archival depositories, media, technology, and other recent innovations in our teaching?

Pathways to Economic Opportunity: Improving the Prospects for Puerto Ricans in Low Wage Jobs, an all-day conference scheduled for Friday, December 11. This will assess trends of Puerto Ricans in low wage labor markets, the barriers impeding economic opportunities, and the role of local workforce-development systems and community-based strategies. Centro has commissioned ten papers for the conference. The conference proceedings will be published in a special issue of CENTRO Journal. Both the conference and the special issue of the journal are sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

Cultural Competence Conference

Centro believes that we cannot take for granted that we are living in an increasingly diverse society--there is a strong need to acknowledge and nurture it through the educational process. As part of its Cultural Competence Initiative, last May Centro held a conference called Developing Culturally Competent Professionals: Meeting the Needs of Puerto Rican/Latin@ Communities.

Centro Director Dr. Edwin Meléndez, Ph.D., framed the conference by describing Hunter's initiative to support experiential learning, student recruitment, and support networks. He stressed the need for a cultural competency curriculum to prepare all graduate students, whether in education, social work, public health, urban planning, or nursing, to work with Puerto Rican, Latino and other communities of color. Centro's initiative seeks to help Hunter faculty and students to acquire cultural knowledge, value diversity, and learn to facilitate and manage the dynamics of difference.

Dr. J. Emilio Carrillo, Vice President of Community Health Development at New York-Presbyterian Hospital made the keynote presentation on "Cultural Competency: A Comprehensive Framework." Dr. Carrillo made clear that cultural competence's reach applies to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual

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orientation, and disabilities, and that it is an ongoing process requiring a multi-level approach on organizational, group, community, and individual levels.

Dr. Meléndez indicated at the closing of the conference that Centro would follow up with more programmatic work and would seek ongoing financial support for the Cultural Competence Initiative. He reiterated Centro's commitment to looking at area studies and Puerto Rican studies as something that is relevant to the education of undergraduate and graduate students and of professionals as well.

Future Conferences: In addition to the planned conference described above, Centro is actively engaged in conversations with Centro staff, external scholars and other stakeholders about two future conferences.

The Status of Puerto Rican Research and Policy on Social Conditions: This conference is a follow-up event to Centro's Search Conference last May and an integral component of the Puerto Rican Research and Policy Initiative, explained elsewhere in this document. The conference is scheduled for the spring of 2010 and will have a broad thematic focus, following the roundtable topics of the prior conference. It will provide a forum for the discussion of the current state of the Puerto Rican community with the participation of a broad range of researchers and other stakeholders. Specifically, we will invite policy makers and community leaders as discussants of the studies presented by researchers.

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