

Latino/a Research Project

Touchstones for Understanding Inclusion and Belonging at UD: A Study of Latino/a Student Experiences

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Touchstones and Recommendations

The growing Latino/a population is quickly transforming U.S. classrooms and coinciding with increasing efforts and demands to make universities more welcoming and responsive to students from historically underrepresented groups. Drawing on interview, focus group, and secondary institutional diversity data, the authors explore the nature and quality of Latino/a students' lived experiences. They describe four important touchstones that emerged and describe ways in which academic and social opportunities at UD promote engagement with, inclusion of, and learning from and about Latino/a groups.

Touchstones

Invisibility:

The Latino/a population and community at UD are largely invisible, unnoticed, and loosely dispersed



I came to UD and I was the only Latina on my floor, in my building, in my complex. And it wasn't something that I thought would bother me, but it did."

Within Group Diversity: Diversity within the Latino/a population leads to differences in how students perceive and navigate a predominantly white campus.

"You're telling me that the Latino population is increasing but I don't see these faces. Maybe it's someone that's on paper putting Latino but they don't necessarily identify with the culture."

Racial Microaggressions and Stressors:

Students experience and cope with race-related microaggressions and stressors on campus in their daily interactions with others.



"She told me that I only got into this school because I was Mexican. She told me they circled some multicultural aspect on my application."

Limited Scope of Latino/a Community:

The Latino/a community at UD is largely experienced through the Latino/a centered RSOs, minimizing the opportunity for Latinos/as and Latinidad to be an integral component of the university.

"A Hispanic student here would have to work to be able to find a community where they could develop and understand better their Hispanic roots and heritage. They would have to work hard to find that."

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Recommendations

Provide a physical space and resources for a Center for Latino/a Affairs

- A central homebase that nurtures and promotes a shared Latino/a community and has staff dedicated to understanding and addressing Latino/a student needs or concerns
- Partner with other units on campus to provide proactive strategies for enhancing the racial climate of the university
- Promote programming of matters related to Latinos/as at the local, national, and international level so that all members of the UD community can grow their diversity competencies
- Establish and promote relationships and collaborations with UD Latino/a alumni and with local Latino/a communities
- Create an intellectual space in which faculty, staff, students, and members of local Latino/a communities can collaborate



Integrate the lived experiences of Latinos/as in the US and the cultures and histories of Latino/a communities into the university's curricular and co-curricular offerings

- An introductory course on Latino/a studies
- Expanded sequence of Latino/a Studies
- Inclusion of Latino/a themes into current curricula



Increase the number of Latinos/as across the student (graduate & undergraduate), faculty, and staff stratum

- Recruiting and retaining a critical mass of Latino/a faculty, staff, and students
- Create a campus racial climate where Latinos/as are a visible and vibrant component

Continue supporting information gathering and research about UD's and Delaware's Latino/a population and use new understandings to inform campus decisions related to Latino/a students and Latino/a affairs

- Explore the backgrounds and experiences of Latino/a population at UD
- Expand opportunities for research, teaching, and service work with and by Latino/a communities



Both Latino/a and non-Latino/a students at UD would benefit from an expanded integrations of Latino/a identities across academic, social, and physical spaces on campus. Rather than expecting Latino/a students to fit into the predominantly white environment, UD could change and adapt its campus climate to better embody an identity that reflects and is responsive to changes locally and nationally.