



THE CENTER *for*
INTERNATIONAL
UNDERSTANDING

**THE LATINO INITIATIVE FOR PUBLIC
POLICY & CIVIC LEADERS:
MECKLENBURG COUNTY TO GUANAJUATO, MEXICO
MARCH 2007**

Immigration is a statewide challenge that calls out for imaginative leadership

Background: The Center for International Understanding's Latino Initiative provides North Carolina policy leaders with a fresh approach to immigration integration. North Carolina has the fastest growing Latino population of any state, and most of the state's newest residents are from Mexico. The Latino Initiative provides North Carolina leaders with resources and information to create practical solutions for successfully incorporating immigrants into their communities. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is the institutional partner for this initiative.

Goals:

- Develop a multi-disciplinary network of leaders interested in investigating the challenges of incorporating immigrants into strong North Carolina communities
- Gain a deeper understanding of the cultural, political, social and economic issues impacting the decisions of Mexicans to come to North Carolina and the families they leave behind
- Have a better understanding about what cultural, governmental, and local resources are available in North Carolina and in participating counties in order make appropriate community-based decisions for the benefit of all residents

Why Mecklenburg County?

- Through comparative statistical research, the Center recognized that Mecklenburg County has the highest Latino population in North Carolina.
- Based on the US census figures, Mecklenburg County experienced a 571 percent increase in its Latino population from 1990 to 2000.
- Charlotte Mecklenburg schools experienced an 822 percent increase in its Latino student enrollment from 1995-2005 and had more than 12,000 Latino/Hispanic students enrolled in 2004.

Who is involved:

- Participants are state and local leaders from agencies and organizations within the county.
- Between 1998 and spring of 2006, 282 policy and civic leaders participated in the Latino Initiative. They included legislators, city and county elected officials, Latino leaders, law enforcement officers, educators and leaders in health, housing, agriculture, law, business and communities of faith.
- An interdisciplinary team for the Mecklenburg County will be comprised of 25-30 members, with representation from business, government and non-profit communities.

Participants are required to:

- Attend all portions of the program
- Act as ambassadors of North Carolina while in Mexico
- Create an action plan for identifying lessons learned, presenting them to a wide circle of colleagues, and applying them to effect change within participants' organizations and agencies
- Serve the community as a resource regarding integrating immigrants and related issues

How will participants be selected? A steering committee, composed of five representatives, will be convened in the summer of 2006. The steering committee will:

- Compile nominations and recruit potential Fellows
- Establish the time and location for local team information sessions
- In collaboration with the Center, confirm funding for participation of teams

Who are the steering committee members?

Diego Anselmo, Captain, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Police Department; **Michael Dulin**, Director, Evidence Based Medicine & Research, Carolinas Medical Center-Eastland Department of Family Medicine; **Dianne English**, Executive Director, Community Building Initiative; **Carol Hughes**, Executive Director, Crisis Assistance Ministry; **Joan Lorden**, Provost, UNC-Charlotte, **Angeles Ortega-Moore**, Executive Director, Latin American Coalition

Cost of the program:

- The cost for the program is \$3,800 per person. The Center Funding will be raised through grants and private sources such as local businesses.

Schedule/Tentative Dates:

- **July – October , 2006. Steering Committee convenes**
The Steering Committee identifies and approaches potential participants. The Center will facilitate monthly conference calls to receive updates from the Committee.
- **November 15, 2006. Initial local meeting (1-hour)**
Confirmed participants will meet for an initial gathering to discuss the program objectives.
- **February 2, 2007. Study in NC (1-day)**
Presentations, readings and facilitated discussions led by scholars and experts, as well as on-the-ground community leaders.
- **March 26- April 1, 2007. Study in Mexico (7-days)**
Seven-day program in Mexico to better understand issues impacting decisions to come to NC.
- **May 18, 2007. Planning for Change (1-day)**
Participants discuss what they learned and how it will inform local decision-making. Create an action plan for sharing lessons learned across the leadership of their county. The Center will continue to work with leaders in order to collect local solutions that could assist other North Carolina communities.
- **Fall (TBD) 2007. Report on Progress (3-hour)**
Meeting with team members to discuss progress on implemented plans.

What are some results of the Latino Initiative? Each county identifies the issues that need attention, and, through the networks created with policy leaders and the Latino community, identifies and implements their own solutions. Here is a sampling of outcomes:

❖ **Health**

- The State Secretary of Health and Human Services expedited the hiring of bilingual staff
- Utilization of Lay Health Advisors/Promotores in Wake County to deliver holistic health promotion with an emphasis on nutrition, preventing obesity and diabetes
- Creation of a Latino Community Center in Duplin County to provide outreach and educational training on pre-natal care, child safety seats, and folic acid
- Duke University Health System administrators supported the development of a program at the Duke Area Health Education Center (AHEC) for training and preparing Spanish-speaking women who were trained as nurses in their home countries to be certified nurses in NC

❖ **Public Safety**

- Smithfield Police Department provided their law enforcement officers with cultural training that focuses on officer safety and community outreach
- Creation of a new nonprofit organization by a local police department to focus on the needs of the community's non-English speakers, with start-up costs supplemented by the town

❖ **Community Outreach**

- Establishment of a statewide program to train church leaders on outreach to immigrants
- Renewed focus on community outreach that pays attention to all backgrounds and ethnicities

❖ **Education**

- State legislators appropriated 7M towards addressing the academic achievement gap and the needs of students with Limited English Proficiency
- Allocation of new funds by Chatham County commissioners for their school system to start a newcomer center to assess Limited English Proficient students and appropriately place students in the correct grade level
- Implementation of professional development programs for teachers to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity for the benefit of all students
- Increased outreach to Latino families through improved communication methods, development of Spanish-language materials, and enhanced collaboration with service agencies

About the Center for International Understanding:

Founded in 1979, the Center for International Understanding has sent more than 8,000 North Carolinians to 47 different countries to learn from and about the world. The Center is committed to helping North Carolinians live and work effectively with people of all cultures. Its unique blend of global education includes short-term immersion programs abroad, coupled with study and training in North Carolina. The Center works primarily with policy leaders and educators, providing them with the experiences and tools necessary to guide their communities and the State through changes associated with an increasingly interdependent world. The Center for International Understanding is a public service program of The University of North Carolina.

For more information: Please contact Melissa Edwards, Latino Initiative Program Manager, medwards@northcarolina.edu, 919-733-0600.

Or find more information on the Center's Website: ciu.northcarolina.edu