La Casa Latina Space Proposal

Prepared for
Dr. Jackie Balzer, Vice President Enrollment Management and Student Affairs

By,
Emanuel Magaña, Cynthia Gomez, and Dr. CeCe Ridder
Diversity and Multicultural Student Services
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Proposal for Larger Space

Vision
La Casa Latina provides an inclusive and welcoming environment where Latino students find culturally relevant and holistic learning experiences and opportunities to ensure that they become fully participating members of the campus community.

Mission
The mission of La Casa Latina is to attract Latino/a students to Portland State University, support their academic success, and provide cultural, social, and academic services and programs that enhance the quality of Latino/a student life.

Goals
- To provide a place on campus where Latino students’ cultures and experiences are validated and supported.
- To provide culturally relevant programs and academic support services that foster the successful transition, adjustment, persistence, achievement and graduation of Latino students.
- To create opportunities for students to explore and share cultural and personal identities to better understand themselves and others.
- To collaborate with campus and community groups for students to discover and develop leadership skills that will enhance success in their academic programs and future careers.

Space Proposal
La Casa Latina is in high usage compared to the population that it serves. The Latino population on campus and in the Portland community is projected to grow and La Casa will be a place for many of these students. Furthermore, it is woefully undersized when compared to the other Cultural Centers on both campus and other institutions. Lastly, the space that it currently occupies (Smith 229), was designated as a temporary space by the ¡Exito! Initiative, until a more suitable location could be found. With usage rates projected to rise and the Cultural Center Programming Team planning more events each year, the current space will not be sufficient.

Finding a larger permanent space will fulfill what the ¡Exito! Initiative set out to accomplish. By creating a space that Latinos can call their own, Latinos can feel more comfortable on campus which will translate to successes. There are models that show that the institutional environment can significantly affect a student’s success (Astin, 1993). Furthermore, by creating a robust center we can provide an environment in which students are cared for, participate in college activities, and create overall better services which have shown to create persistence in student achievement (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

It is important that students have a sense of belonging. This is especially true for students coming from Bi-Cultural/ Bilingual backgrounds who must navigate the process of assimilation while retaining their cultural background (Torres, 1999). Because of this struggle students need
what Gonzalez (2000) calls “cultural nourishment” in order fight marginalization and be able to connect with other Latino peers and be exposed to cultural works. Yosso and Lopez (2010) also speak to the idea of Cultural Centers becoming counter-spaces to build a community or resistance and community organizing. By building cultural knowledge students begin to understand their marginality and are motivated to take action against it.

As Jenkins (2010) mentions in his writings, the best facilities are, “fully functioning building that allow the scope of the centers to grow and transform beyond what student of the university might have envisioned 30 years ago when the centers were established” (p.145). She goes on to say that a center should include:

- Lounge space for social gatherings
- Cultural library
- Study space, offices for cultural student organizations
- Space for cultural artifacts for events,
- Dance studio for practice
- Classroom/auditorium space for academic/student affairs partnerships
- Programming space for both large and intimate programming
- Sufficient administrative space for growth of staff
- Conference rooms
- Up-to-date technology

(Jenkins, 2010 p. 146)

It’s clear from the limited space that La Casa currently occupies that it would be impossible to accommodate all of the above. Therefore, it is crucial that we move to larger space that can feature all of these.

**Vision for the Space**

Below outlines the specifics of what a new La Casa Latina space could contain. These recommendations are what a new center space would look like and how much space the center would occupy.

Overall Makeup of the space:

- Community Space/Lounge
- Event Space
- Office Space
- Computer Lab
- Reception Area
- Study Room/Quiet Area
- Kitchenette space
- Gender inclusive restrooms
- Storage

If we were to use the Multicultural Center and the Native Center as a model for a new center we
can estimate the following square footage for each space.

- Community Space/ Lounge – 600 - 1000sqf
- Event Space – 1700 - 2000sqf
- Computer Lab – 230 sqf
- Reception Area – 200 sqf
- Study Room/ Quiet Space – 150 - 200sqf
- Kitchenette Space – 100-150 sqf
- Gender Inclusive Restroom – 60-80 sqf
- Storage – 60 -90 sqf

Below are the standards that the FADM Standards Committee has mandated for office space as of February 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Type</th>
<th>Space Type</th>
<th>Net Assignable Square Feet</th>
<th>Typical Assignment</th>
<th>Functional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regular Office</td>
<td>Private Office</td>
<td>90 - 120 (goal of 100)</td>
<td>Faculty, academic professionals, managers</td>
<td>1.0 FTE staff/faculty that require frequent meetings with up to two others and/or requiring confidentiality, security, visual and acoustical privacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total requested space would be close to 4000sqf.

Furthermore, the optimal location for La Casa would be located near the center of campus near Smith Memorial Student Union or in the building itself. La Casa’s location is what helps with its’ notoriety as a space and makes it easy for new students to find the space on campus.
**Comparison to other Cultural Centers**

Portland State University currently has three separate Cultural Centers on their campus: the Multicultural Center, Native American Student and Community Center, and La Casa Latina. The following is the current square footage of each center:

Multicultural Center:
- 2,371 Event Space
- 874 Work Space
- 277 Storage Space

Native American Student and Community Center:
- 2,770 Event Space
- 575 Work space
- 330 Storage Space

La Casa Latina:
- 730 sq ft. current Total Space (includes Event, Work, and Storage Space)

It’s evident that La Casa Latina is the smallest and least equipped of all the Cultural Centers at Portland State. If we compare to another OUS institution we find that La Casa is still significantly smaller. The estimated size of the new Latino Cultural Center at Oregon State is as follows:

Oregon State Centro Cultural Cesar Chavez*
- Total Estimated Space 2,934
- 1,020 Event Space
- 483 Work Space
- 329 Student Lounge

*Building is still under construction. Numbers taken from design plans.

**Usage Numbers for La Casa Latina**

Below are the usage numbers for La Casa Latina:

2012-2013
- Total Visitors 6,980

2013-January 2014
- Total Visitors 1,795

If we take into account that the Latino population hovers close to 2,300, it is clear that La Casa Latina is serving a high volume of Latino students at Portland State University.

The Multicultural Center has served the following students this year until January 6th 2014:
Total visitors 7,326
Estimated population of domestic students of color 7,321 (Week 4 of Winter 2014)

The usage of the La Casa Latina compares to that of the Multicultural Center when taken into account the population that each center serves.

List of General Items in the Center in comparison to the Multicultural Center

La Casa Latina
- Furniture to sit 15 comfortably
- Four tables that sit 4
- 3 computers
- Microwave
- Mini-fridge
- Book case
- Reception Area that includes two desks
- Smart board
- Storage Cabinet

Multicultural Center
- Furniture to sit 30 comfortably
- 6 tables (up to 8) that sit 8
- 8 Computers
- Microwave
- Book Case
- Reception area that includes two desks
- 3 tables in a Conference/Workspace room
- Projector
- Audio speaker system

Student Voice

La Casa Latina is first and foremost a student space. As a Cultural Center it is completely student fee funded. Because of this we feel it necessary to give students the opportunity to voice their opinions on the center. In collaboration with ASPSU the center solicited student feedback. Below is what was expressed about the space:

- Not enough tables
- In my opinion, it would be a better economic investment to advocate for a bigger SMSU building. More chance for a better LCL space.
- I found a home away from home.
- E-man [Program Coordinator] needs a bigger space for representation for La Casa Latina.
- Bigger space with security Lockers like the rec center.
• Needs comfier chairs.
• Sense of belonging.
• La Casa Latina is a place to feel like home and to connect with fellow students.
• More space means more diversity which means more Latinos diversity from other places around the world.
• Events get really crowded- we need a bigger space.
• More tables. More events. More events with food.
• Sense of community within a huge campus.
• We need a bigger space because so many more people could use and take advantage of the great resource
• It’s comfy in here.
• We need more computers! We need more art that expresses the Latino community. More tables for more students to socialize.
• I need a bigger fridge.
• We need a bigger space because we need more tables to do homework and projects on.
• Bigger space!!! Will be awesome. More computers! And maybe comfy chairs.
• A bigger space will attract more people to La Casa Latina.
• We need more computers.
• With a bigger space it will seem less exclusive and intimidating to walk in.
• More computers.
• Most of the events that I host here become cramped which dissuades folks from continuing to come.

Current Space

La Casa is eager to look for a new space however, we would be remiss if we did not think about other communities on campus that could also use a space. It is for that reason that we request that Smith 229 be retained by the Cultural Centers so that it may be used as a gathering space for any community in need, including the Queer Resource Center, the Resource Center for Students with Children, the Women’s Resource Center, and the Veterans Resource Center as meeting space. We are already outgrowing our current space for the Programming Team and Program Coordinators behind the Multicultural Center and could also utilize the current La Casa Latina space for our office staff and students. We also feel that Portland State is moving in the right direction by creating space that can cater to the specific need of various communities on campus.

Future Plans

The long term vision for the Cultural Centers and for Diversity and Multicultural Student Services is to utilize the Feasibility Study in the Portland State 2020 plan, which includes spaces for multiple communities to gather. Our hope is that eventually the space that La Casa Latina
may be moved to occupy will be reconsidered once again if there is a possibility of a new Union or a new space designated for student fee funded student organizations or Cultural Centers. In the meantime, the growing need of the Latino/a population continues to press for a larger space at this time.

**History of La Casa Latina**

In 2009 president Wim Wiewel appointed a task force to examine the state of access, retention, and graduation of Latino students at PSU. Latinos currently make up the highest growing minority population in the state of Oregon however, Latinos still lag in graduation and college retention rates. President Wim Wiewel asked the committee to create a series of recommendations to help solve the issues facing Latinos and increase their recruitment. The ultimate outcome was the “¡Exito!” report. This report outlined multiple strategies including the creation of a Latino student cultural center. The goal of the center was to serve as a place on campus where:

- students cultures and experiences would be validated and supported;
- students would find community;
- students could easily access information, support services, and connections to resources.

The committee outlined a building featuring various resources that students could use including a computer lab, study space, and lounge area. In 2009 Smith 229 was chosen as the temporary location for La Casa Latina until a larger space could be secured.

Following is a timeline of the creation of the center.

**Fall 2009**
Portland State Wim Wiewel commissions a Task Force to make strategic recommendations to increase the enrollment and retention of Latino/a to the University.

**June 2nd, 2010**
The Task Force convened publishes the Exito Report outlining the need for a “Latino/a Cultural Center”.

**July 2010**
Focus groups conducted with students to discuss the needs and wants for a “Latino Student Success Center”. The focus group consisted of the following students:
- Rebecca Arcos
- Erich San Juan Corona
- Bryan Ortega-Schwartz
- Francisco Ianni
- Christina Estrada
- James Nuñez
- Araceli Miranda
Recommendations for “Latino Student Success Center” sent to key stakeholders.

**Sept. 30th, 2010**
Concept designs created for the “Latino Student Success Center”.

**Oct. 4th, 2010**
President Wim Wiewel launched a new initiative to recruit, support, and graduate more Latino students, who make up the most underrepresented group at Portland State University relative to their growing population in Oregon. The program is called "¡Éxito!" or "success" in Spanish.

**Nov. 4th, 2010**
Building committee convened to discuss the use of SMSU 229.

**Nov. 22, 2010**
Building committee is convened to continue the discussion and discuss the needs for SMSU 229.

**January 2011**
Call for art to be commissioned in “Portland State University's Temporary Latino Student Success Center-La Casa Latina”.

**May 4th, 2011**
5 students stage a sit in President Wim Wiwel’s office to address concerns with lack of progress in the creation of La Casa Latina. They also addressed other concerns such as the necessity of a better Chicano studies program.
[http://psuvanguard.com/uncategorized/students-seek-results-from-%EF%BF%BD%EF%BF%BD%EF%BF%BD%EF%BF%BDxito-program/](http://psuvanguard.com/uncategorized/students-seek-results-from-%EF%BF%BD%EF%BF%BD%EF%BF%BD%EF%BF%BDxito-program/)

**June 6th, 2011**
Portland State University Wim Wiwel invited to the opening of “La Casa Latina”.

**June 8th, 2011**
Official opening of “La Casa Latina”.

**June 11th, 2011**
“La Casa Latina” opened for student use.
La Casa still continues serving not only Latino students but all of the Portland State University Community. With the addition of a Program Coordinator and Cultural Centers’ Director, the center has grown by leaps and bounds. The Center hosts an average of 5-6 events each term. Furthermore, the Center hosted Portland State University’s first annual Cesar Chavez Week.

References


