Progress Report

1. Curricular matters:
   a. We have completed a revision of the core courses. In the last few years we have made several important changes to our program. For example, we have created a new course, LST 207 Cultural Studies in the Americas which provides a foundation for theoretical concepts and approaches to research in Latin American and Latino Studies. One of our core faculty members also created a Study Abroad course in Hawaii which will include the course LST 300 Outpost of U.S. Empire: Transnational Cultures and National Identities after 1898. In our yearly assessment projects we have been assessing whether or not our students are meeting our program and course goals in terms of understanding concepts and improving writing. We have discovered that students seem to be successfully acquiring significant course concepts but demonstrate weakness in writing in the core courses. As a Program, we are discussing the breadth and scope of the writing that students do in the core courses and we are working together to share creative strategies for teaching and assessing writing. In the future, we may ask the Writing Clinic to facilitate a workshop on teaching writing for the LST faculty who teach the core courses.

   b. We have several significant gaps in the current program, especially the coverage of Portuguese and Brazil. We are pleased that we were able to hire a specialist in Brazilian Studies this year. John Tofik Karam will join us in the fall. He will teach a range of courses on Brazil, Comparative Studies in Latin America, and Globalization across the Americas. In order to cover gaps in Chicano Studies we have asked LST affiliated faculty to develop courses in this area. We also hope that our next faculty hire will be in the area of Andean and Central American areas, another significant gap in our Program.

   b. This year, when our new faculty member joins us, we will evaluate our course offerings and discuss the possibility of reworking our current areas of concentration. We have added some new courses in Cultural Studies and Cinema and we will create new courses in the areas of specialization of our new faculty member.
2. Student Advising
We have discussed the issue of student advising and decided to continue the current practice of having only the core faculty participate in advising majors and minors. This will be manageable because we have added a new faculty member. We currently have about 45 majors; therefore, advising duties will be split among the director and the two full-time faculty in the Program. As the Program grows we will expand advising duties to those affiliated faculty who are most familiar with the Program.

2. Resources
a. Program faculty regularly submit requests for books, films and journals that support the program. The library has generally purchased all the books and film requested. Unfortunately, that has not been the case with important journals.
b. We added a new faculty member and will continue to request new positions in the following years in the areas where we have gaps in the Program.

3. Internal and External linkages
a. We continue to expand the program’s links to other DePaul departments, programs, and centers. For example, this year we have co-sponsored programs with The Center for Latino Research, The Humanities Center, The Women’s Center, The Center for Black Diaspora, The African and Black Diaspora Program, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program, The Political Science Department, and The English Department. We have increased our outreach to the Latino Community in Chicago. We ran several programs (for example, The Militarization of Latino Youth and Latinos and the Elections) which we planned with Latino community leaders. These programs generated much interest and brought together a student, faculty, and Chicago Latino community audience. We continue to work on programming with other Latin American Studies Programs in Chicago, particularly UIC Chicago.
b. We believe that all the links we have made both within and outside of the University have increased the program’s visibility. We continue to explore the possibility of collaboration with other regional programs. Our attempts to file a joint application with the Latin American Studies Program at UIC for a Department of Education Title VI 2 grant fell through last year because the UIC Program could not complete the project, but we may work together with the Latin American Studies Program at UIC on such a grant in the near future.
c. The Program faculty engaged in a discussion concerning the possible advantages of the program’s identifying its own distinctive niche, as other programs in the area have done. There
was not a consensus among the faculty about what such a niche might be. Some faculty thought we should develop and expand on a Cultural Studies niche since so many of our faculty are interested in this area. We decided to table that discussion until next year when our new faculty member can participate in this discussion so that we can consider how his contribution might shape any specific niche.

4. Governance

In the last few years we have revised the Program by-laws. We have also drafted promotion and tenure guidelines for the program’s full-time faculty. These guidelines were reviewed by the College Personnel Committee last year. Next year we will revise the Program’s statement on research and creative activities.