

**“Your Cogent Arguments Haven’t (as yet) Resulted in Our Capitulation”:
The Birth of MAST at Chico State College**

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Abstract:

This paper is a history of the birth and development of the contemporary Chicana/o Studies Program at California State University Chico. The Chicana/o Studies Program at CSUC began like many others, after the conference in Santa Barbara, but did not achieve its first faculty lines in the Program until 27 years later. Like many programs and departments it suffered neglect and hostility. Only through the concerted efforts of MEChA, and the “Chicana/o Studies Underground” did the Program eventually gain two positions and move forward to become the largest north of Sacramento. This is the history of that struggle and the people who fought it. It makes use of extensive memoranda and university documentation, in addition to newspaper clippings, correspondence, y un poquito de chisme.

The history of CSUC is important to learn for anyone trying to create or revive a Chicana/o Studies Program/Department in a rural, isolated location. Oddly, although located in California where Latinos are the majority population, Chico State is the second whitest campus of the 23 in the CSU system. The strategies employed here to maintain and develop the program are useful for those who teach where Chicano/a students are not the majority.

This paper is dedicated to all those who have participated in Chicana/o Studies' founding and survival over the past thirty years. Without the efforts of so many people at CSU (California State University) Chico over the years, we would not be here, nor be able to tell this story. This was created because the history of the Program's survival was *chisme* at best, from those who remembered or claimed to know it. This paper is an administrative program history, and, the first of two. This one is a brief history of the Program's development and evolution, culled from documents long since forgotten, or never known to have existed.ⁱ A statistical portrait and analysis of Chicana/o Studies students at CSUC over the decades will be the next.ⁱⁱ Like many departments and programs, the history of Chicana/o Studies at CSUC waxes and wanes, with waves of successes and failures, ultimately culminating in the hiring of two tenure-track faculty in the Program after twenty-seven years.

The Chicano Studies Minor at California State University Chico passed the Faculty Senate on March 4, 1971, back when CSUC was still known as Chico State College. The faculty member initiating the program proposal was Spanish Professor Dr. Steve Rivas.ⁱⁱⁱ The program was developed from the Mexican American Studies Committee, which first met in September 1970, at the request of Vice President for Academic Affairs, Donald Gerth.^{iv} Gerth wanted student representation on the committee and in a memo dated September 3, 1970 wrote: "In addition I would ask that you select a student to serve with you, and identify this student to me in order that I might send *him* an appointment note also." (Emphasis mine. Memo from Donald Gerth to Mexican-American Studies Committee, dated September 3, 1970).^v The departments originally responsible for delivering courses were largely those involved with the program today:

This is designed to be an interdisciplinary program similar to those currently offered by the College such as African Studies, American Studies, Asian Studies, and Latin American Studies. As such, it will be administered by the Director of Area and Inter-Disciplinary Studies. Courses which go into making up the Program are those which are currently being offered by the departments of Social Welfare, History, Foreign Language, Anthropology, and Sociology

(Memo from Lloyd S. Jones to Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, dated March 8, 1971).

The purpose of the newly created Minor in Chicano Studies was:

To promote better understanding among all Americans and enrich their range of experience through exposure to cultural, political, historical and economical contributions of the Mexican Americans. Also it is intended to encourage Mexican Americans to seek higher education by creating a greater feeling of pride for their heritage and acquainting them with the culture that helped form their community, and to enable all students, whatever their ethnic background, to learn more of the Mexican American heritage of our country (Memo dated March 8, 1971).

And, the need for the minor was described as wide-ranging in scope:

This program will permit the students majoring in several Social Science and Humanities degree programs to supplement their training by a limited concentration of courses which complement their major program of study. These include majors in Spanish, History, Anthropology, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Social Welfare.

The minor is of most immediate use for those preparing to teach in the public schools and colleges of California. Preparation for public school teaching is the interest of about 50 per cent of our student body. Such a need is especially pertinent to Chico State College because of the large concentration of Mexican Americans in its service area. For example, in Butte County, 3 per cent; Glenn, 7 per cent; Yuba-Sutter Counties, 10 per cent; and Colusa, 1 per cent. Thus, this educational institution should provide adequate and pertinent training to prospective teachers in this area.

In addition, of the prospective teachers being trained at Chico State College, approximately 60 percent ordinarily accept career positions in urban areas. There is a growing need for these teachers to be equipped with the training which will permit them to better relate to the Chicano students. Also, these urban school systems are increasingly introducing Mexican American Studies courses. This proposed minor program, therefore, will be a significant contribution to the teacher-training program of this College.

Moreover, this curriculum prepares the graduate for a wide-range of other professional activities. It provides an important supplement to the training of students who are preparing themselves to enter such occupations as social welfare, community development, law enforcement, recreation and government (Memo dated March 8, 1971).

The minor originally consisted of twenty units, with required courses coming from Spanish, Anthropology, History, Psychology, Social Welfare, and Sociology. A number of new courses were created to begin in the fall of 1971: History 74 (now 035) “Mexican Heritage in the United States;” History 274 “Spanish Borderlands;”^{vi} Sociology 157 “Cultural Differences of the Chicano;” and Spanish 204 “Literature of Mexico” (Memo dated March 8, 1971).

By April 21, 1971 approval had been given by the Chancellor to include the program in the 1971-1972 curriculum, provided “support for the necessary implementation is available.” However, the proposed minor was not recognized as “Chicano Studies,” as originally submitted by Dr. Rivas, but as “Mexican American (Chicano) Studies,” with the designator MAST (Memo to Donald Gerth from John Houk, dated April 21, 1971). The name change was significant and long-lasting. A flurry of letters and memos were exchanged from 1976-1977 regarding the political importance of calling the program “Chicano” Studies. A survey of the names of other programs and departments throughout the state was submitted by students, along with a petition requesting the Program’s name be changed:

We the concerned Chicano populous of California State University, Chico, as representatives of the Chicano movement on this campus, feel it is of the utmost importance for the changing of the now existing ‘Mexican American Studies’ to ‘Chicano Studies.’

We demand this change for the following reasons:

- 1. The success of the Chicano Movement depends upon the unity and identity of the entire Chicano population. The value of this change cannot be measured since our need for self-determination is essential in both our lives and our education.*
- 2. The name ‘Mexican American’ is part of the oppression and suppression we have suffered. The Anglo society has labeled us Mexican Americans, a name we cannot accept. The term ‘Mexican American’ is a thing of the past, therefore it does not relate to our present identity and goals.*

Therefore, the concerned Chicano populous of this campus feel we have substantial support and reasons for this demand (Memo to Curriculum Committee of Behavioral and Social Sciences from Robert Sherrard^{vii}, Chair of Dept. of Ethnic and Women’s Studies, dated October 11, 1976).

On October 14, 1976 the Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences approved the name change and forwarded it to Robert Fredenburg^{viii}, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (Memorandum). Robert Fredenburg in turn sent a memo to President Cazier^{ix}, indicating that in 1971 the Chancellor’s office would only approve a minor with the name Mexican American, but “I suspect times have changed sufficiently that they would now approve ‘Chicano.’ I see no reason why this should go to the Senate since name changes such as this are not usually considered there. What do you wish me to do with this request? (Catalog deadlines push hard if

we want to include the new name)" (Memo to Pat Brose and President Cazier from Robert Fredenburg, dated October 19, 1976). Brose and Cazier agreed they should request approval from the Chancellor's office since all appropriate bodies in the college had already approved (Memo from Pat Brose to Rob Fredenburg, dated October 25, 1976).

Associate VP Fredenburg sent a letter to Deputy Dean John Baird in Long Beach requesting the name change:

Dear Jack, As you know, we have a Mexican-American Minor. At the time this was approved we had hoped to call it a Chicano minor but your office felt that Mexican-American was the proper name. The faculty in the department and school still prefer the name 'Chicano.'
Have perceptions changed sufficiently so that we can now change the name to 'Chicano?' This request is supported by the department, school, Faculty Senate, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and the President... (Letter dated November 3, 1976 to Dr. John Baird from Robert Fredenburg).

The response from Long Beach was that they had not.

At this point Associate VP Fredenburg sent a memo to Frank Olvera^x, Director of Ethnic and Intercultural Affairs of the Associated Students^{xi} informing him that the name change would not likely go through and that it would be inappropriate for him, or anyone else, to call the Chancellor's office regarding the name change: "We will continue to work through the regular channels through the Chancellor's Office and direct contact between you or members of the Mexican-American Studies group would probably be counterproductive in terms of obtaining a name change." The letter indicated that he was not optimistic, but would consult with Olvera and others while preparing an academic response to the Chancellor's office that changing the name from Mexican American Studies to Chicano Studies was not only a desired, but reasonable, thing to do (Letter dated November 24, 1976 to Frank Olvera from VP Robert Fredenburg).

Anthony Moye, State University Dean, followed-up a telephone conversation with VP Fredenburg through a formal letter dated January 5, 1977, in which he wrote:

You ask if perceptions have changed sufficiently to retitle the minor 'Chicano Studies.' It is my observation that they have not. We have not as yet approved that terminology for any programs, although the Northridge program is known officially as Mexican American (Chicano) Studies, and several other programs are informally called Chicano Studies.

My reluctance to approve the terminology change in this still sensitive area is that I have at this point absolutely no academic rationale on which to defend this action. If you can prepare a solid academic rationale for the terminology—one which we could use with confidence—we would be quite willing to look again at the request.

I am sorry to have to respond to your question negatively, but hope that you can appreciate and indeed respond to our concerns (Letter dated January 5, 1977 from Anthony Moye to Robert Fredenburg).

Five days later, Cyril "Cy" Gonzáles, coordinator of the Mexican American Studies program at CSUC, responded to VP Fredenburg with an articulate two page memo detailing the history of Mexican/Mexican American/Chicano terminology, calling Dean Moye's trepidation on the name change "more than a little dated." He argued for the importance of academic self-determination for everyone: "One grew up insisting that one was American. My Anglo Saxon counterparts stoutly denied this and insisted that I was Mexican. And now, Mexican American?" He concluded:

Granted, there will be those of our cultural heritage who find the term offensive and repugnant. These would be the ones who would deny the need for even a Mexican American Studies program, let alone the need to become assertive in order to achieve social justice by helping social institutions to become more aware of our perceived needs.

Solid academic rationale? There is a group of legislators in this state who call themselves the Chicano Caucus. There is a growing wealth of scholarly materials that has been and still is being authored and read by Chicanos and is contributing significantly to educating others about the Chicano. We identify with that name, not Mexican American, not Latin American and most certainly not Hispanic" (Memo from "Cy" Gonzáles to "Bob" Fredenburg dated January 10, 1977).

Associate VP Fredenburg forwarded Gonzales' memo to Dean Moye in Long Beach, and added his own logs to the growing fire by noting: "As you can see, your cogent arguments haven't as yet resulted in our capitulation." He argued that it was not inappropriate for a particular campus to chose the term with which they felt most comfortable:

In support of our request, I would point out that the catalog entitled Professional Women and Minorities published in 1975 by the Scientific Manpower Commission uses the term Chicano as do the catalogs for the UC campuses at Davis, Berkeley, Los Angeles, and possibly others.

Also, the Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing recognizes the Chicano area as appropriate for a credential along with Mexican-American and La Raza. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in Ethnic Studies in Higher Education, includes a section on Chicano Studies but does not include one on Mexican American. Listed under this generic heading they have included Mexican American, Spanish Speaking, etc.(Letter dated January 13, 1977 from Robert Fredenburg to Anthony Moye).

Six days later Dean Moye sent a letter to VP Fredenburg approving the name change effective Fall 1977 because of the “sensible and persuasive” arguments provided from him and Gonzáles. He sounded a note for the future however by writing:

It is true that we have not really looked into this matter for several years, and while you have provided us with the information we would need to justify our own actions in approving the terminology change, you should be aware that this is still a sensitive area to many of those with whom we deal. I would continue, for example, to have reservations about changing the terminology of a degree major, which has more visibility than the minor in question (Letter dated January 19, 1977 from Anthony Moye to Robert Fredenburg).

From its inception it was a struggle to create Chicana/o Studies in the manner desired by involved students, faculty, and staff. Six years of struggle over self-naming alone was only the first of many struggles the Chicana/o Studies Program at CSUC would face over the years. For example, in 1978 a course proposed in Ethnic and Women's Studies (EWS) where Chicana/o Studies was housed for a time, was not accepted as named by Dr. Jaime Raigoza. The course, EWS 198A, submitted as "Foundations of Race, Ethnic, and Minority Inter-Group Relations in the United States," was returned by then Sociology Chair Jerry Maneker with a new suggested title: "It is our feeling that a more appropriate title might be 'Patterns of Ethnic Dominance in the United States,'" effectively removing race and minority status from the descriptor, and again reaffirming the Program's lack of self-determination in regards to curriculum and development. The lack of departmental status and self-determination has created many of the problems in the Program in the past and in the contemporary.

Since its founding, the curriculum of Chicana/o Studies at CSU Chico has largely revolved around faculty available to teach courses. Cy Gonzáles is recognized as the first to

teach Chicano Studies in 1973, being replaced by Dr. Sylvia López-Romano in 1975, when Gonzáles became the campus Affirmative Action Officer. López-Romano was replaced in 1976 by Clyde Aguilar when she took a position as Coordinator of the campus Upward Bound Program.

The number of units in the Chicano Studies Minor consistently rose over the 1970s and 1980s to its current eight classes (24 units), regardless of where it has been housed; a major, however, remains elusive. The 1976 creation of a Major and Department of EWS (Ethnic and Women's Studies) sent hope that Chicana/o Studies could eventually expand to a major or department, a hope renewed periodically over the years, never to materialize. Beginning in 1977, students were required to take Ethnic and Non-Western courses, and again, hope grew, as the bulk of these courses would be taught by EWS. To meet these demands, in 1978, Dr. Jaime Raigoza was hired into the Department of Sociology and Social Work to teach Chicano Studies courses.

By 1985 however, the Department of EWS was disenfranchised and changed to a Center. It was moved from the School of Behavioral and Social Sciences into the Institute for Liberal and Interdisciplinary Studies (ILIS). In 1987 the Chicana/o Studies minor was decreased in units, and in 1991 the Spanish Language requirement was removed. In 1995 EWS became the Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies (MCGS) and was moved back to the School of Behavioral and Social Sciences, although it currently rests in the College of Undergraduate Education (UED).^{xii}

During 1995-1996, the crisis in Chican/ao Studies was profound enough to generate a report and subsequent drafts for a Chicano Studies Minor^{xiii}, Chicano Studies Program, and a Chicano Studies Institute, in part which read:

...a great deal of contention, confusion and disillusionment has persisted among Chicano students, faculty, and staff over how, who, and what should constitute the program. The program

has managed to exist, albeit in a moribund state, through the efforts of a few loyal part-time instructors and an unwavering MEChA student interest and determination. It is quite clear from the program's brief history, with its numerous changes, lack of assigned resources and minimal administrative commitment, that it has never been presented a serious chance to develop as a viable academic program. This has occurred in spite of the growing numbers of Chicanos in the state, in colleges and universities, as producers of literature and research, as educators (Chicano Studies Minor Draft, dated December 19, 1995).

The 1995-1996 reports and recommendations contextualized the Program and a call for reform in terms of anti-Affirmative Action and anti-immigrant propositions in the state (187 and 209)^{xiv}, English-Only initiatives, and the removing of support programs and remedial courses for needy students. Thus a group of concerned Chicana/o faculty, students, and staff, who identified themselves as the Chicano Latino Council (CLC) and the subgroup the Chicano Studies

Advisory Committee (CSAC) wrote:

The continued maintenance of a moribund program that lacks the necessary design, leadership, faculty, and staff and financial resources will be the clearest message that we have not learned from prior experiences...any program, no matter how well designed it may be, is destined to a moribund state without the appropriate resources (Chicano Studies Minor Draft)^{xv}.

Specifically the Chicano Latino Council proposed the Institute for Chicana/o Studies within the Center for Multicultural and Gender Studies. Its mission:

The Chicano Latino Council is committed to the task of redesigning and developing a viable Chicano Studies Program. Developing a viable program necessitates an expansion of the original focus for Chicano Studies by looking beyond the curriculum components to include a greater perspective for the program. The program should encompass a variety of opportunities for students, scholars, and community audiences. These opportunities should include instruction, research, mentoring, conferences, visiting lectures, community internship programs and community partnerships. Collectively, these activities would be the vehicle for developing and establishing a credible identity for the program. Furthermore, the Committee believes that designing Chicano Studies as an 'Institute' will provide the appropriate framework for housing and implementation. This framework represents a comprehensive program for Chicano Studies. It is one that CLC is both supportive of and committed to developing. It will, however, necessitate funding across all four components (Institute for Chicana/o Studies Planning Document, dated May 13, 1996).

The report and planning documents then continued to describe in detail each of the Institute's four interconnecting components.

It was at this time that serious lobbying began for two tenure-track positions in Chicana/o Studies, with the hope that at least one would actually materialize. And, in 1998 two full-time faculty were hired with joint appointments in Chicana/o Studies and Sociology, and Chicana/o Studies and History. The CLC and CSAC have since been working toward the vision and mission of a Chicana/o Studies Institute. Revision, regularization, and maintenance of Chicana/o Studies courses was an important first step. Other important firsts included hosting a NACCS FOCO Symposium and MEChA Regional Conference on the campus in the spring of 2001. This was the first time Chicana/o Studies conferences had ever been held at CSU Chico. The proposed Institute and its advisory committee have been aggressively pursuing both internal and external funding for projects, begun Institute research projects on Braceros, alcohol use among Mexican American youth in Butte County, and Chicano student recruitment and retention, and began establishing and sustaining ties with Chicanas/os in the CSU Chico service region through Butte County Office of Education, k-12 institutions, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Northern California, and the Hispanic Resource Council.

Although Chicana/o Studies has moved from being the heavily censored Mexican American Studies Program (MAST) at Chico State College, to a slightly more liberated Chicana/o Studies Program (CHST) at California State University Chico, the political battles and struggle to maintain the gains of the past few years will be ongoing. While enjoying a broad base of support and assistance from many across campus, the ability to expand with only two half appointments in Chicana/o Studies is a serious concern. Lack of resources facing all CSU campuses will also take its toll in some way. However, the *movimiento* and the *lucha* at CSU Chico have been carried on for many decades by those who believed in what the Plan de Santa Barbara proposed, and that same spirit of commitment will see it through many decades to come.

ⁱ Thanks to Bitsy Easley in the Provost's Office. She helped me locate the basement archives of Kendall Hall, the administrative building at CSU Chico. Oral histories are also envisioned for this project at a future date.

ⁱⁱ I have used the designator Chicana/o Studies because it is the most current and gender specific and appropriate. However, the name of the Program at CSUC has remained Chicano Studies, and the debate about gender equity in the title has yet to be undertaken. Similar name changes, such as changing "Mexican Heritage in the U.S.," to "Chicana/o History," met with rejection, and a program name change will likely meet with similar resistance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Others who were instrumental in the birth of MAST included Dr. Julio Qioñones, Dr. Art Preciado, Dr. Cy Gonzáles, and Dr. Sylvia López-Romano.

^{iv} Gerth was Professor of Political Science at CSU Chico from 1964-1976 and Vice President for Academic Affairs from 1970-1976. He currently serves as the President and Professor of Public Policy and Administration at CSU Sacramento, where he has been since 1984.

^v All documents cited are in the possession of the author.

^{vi} Attempts to revive HIST 274 were many as HIST 035 only covers Chicana/o History post-1848. Finally the course was recreated as HIST/CHST 137 "Mexican Heritage in the United State pre-1848." The course was placed into GE over the objections of the History Department and has subsequently been cancelled every semester for low enrollment. Similarly, HIST 035 is the only course in the History Department which students cannot use toward either the major or the minor in History.

^{vii} Sherrard joined the faculty in the Political Science Department at CSU Chico in the late 1960s. He was one of the founders of the Black Studies Program, later to serve as its first Chair. He later oversaw the expansion of Black Studies to include Women's Studies, and others.

^{viii} Fredenburg joined the CSU Chico faculty in 1959, in Physical Sciences. Between 1969 and 1982 he served as Director of International Programs, Dean for Undergraduate Education, and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. In 1979 he served as Interim President, replacing Stanford Cazier.

^{ix} Stanford Cazier became President of Chico State College in 1971.

^x Olvera was also active in the student organization Latinos in Technical Careers (LTC), of which he is an alumnus.

^{xi} Later to become known as the Multicultural Council.

^{xii} Part of the difficulty in locating program history is the movement between colleges on at least four occasions. Bits and pieces of communications were found in several locations, but it is clear many documents have been lost completely, separated from the main archives in Kendall Hall, or have yet to be found.

^{xiii} The most comprehensive history of the Chicano Studies Program at CSU Chico to date is included in this draft for the Chicano Studies Minor. It indicates Chicano Studies discussions began in 1973, while university documents place the inception in the 1971.

^{xiv} One of the largest battles faced by students and faculty of color on the CSU Chico campus was the debate over, and passage, of Proposition 209, the misleadingly named "California Civil Rights Initiative," designed to end Affirmative Action in the state government. Many claim Prop 209 began at Chico State due to the Affirmative Action policies and emphases of the administration of President Manuel Esteban. Response from CSUC History Professor Charles Gesheker, combined with the efforts of local Representative Bernie Richter, and UC Regent Ward Connerly, drafted and moved the proposition forward.

^{xv} Prior to the draft of the Chicano Studies Minor, and the Chicano Studies Institute Planning Document, was a draft of a Chicano Studies Program Proposal, which is hand-dated with the year 1994. Those who signed the Program Proposal for the Chicano Studies Advisory Committee included Dr. Lawrence Benton, Dr. Sylvia López-Romano, Oscar de la Torre, and Emiliano Díaz. Current membership of the CSAC is composed of concerned faculty, administrators, staff, students, and community members.