



Latin America

A yearlong celebration and investigation of the culture, history, art, music and politics of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.



Seeking to expand students' horizons, bring academic departments together in collaboration and infuse a global perspective on its curriculum, SUNY Orange has planned a year-long focus on Latin American culture, heritage, geography, art, music, language and much more as part of its first Global Initiative.

Rooted in the College's international studies program, this debut Global Initiative project is drawing participation from all corners of the campus community, but it is hoped that as the initiative gains attention, it will appeal to local businesses, civic leaders and community members as well.

"This Global Initiative will recognize the contributions Hispanics have made to areas such as American art, culture and economics. It will also bring Hispanic Americans to the College, thus expanding the community base of the College and helping to strengthen our 'American culture' by informing Hispanics and non Hispanics about these contributions," explains **Max Schaefer**, SUNY Orange professor

who coordinates the College's theater productions.

A number of the College's academic departments have incorporated Latin American-based courses into their programs. Additionally, a pair of international trips to Peru and Mexico is planned; Latino lecturers have been invited to speak to both students and county residents; an immigration and migrant work symposium is scheduled; and concerts, art exhibits and plays by Latino artists will be performed by the College's Arts and Communication Department. Many other events are being planned and will be announced as they are scheduled.

Among the many faculty members who have embraced this Global Initiative are Schaefer, **Kathleen Wright**, **Dr. Jean Carlos Cowan**, **Dr. Barry Kass** and **Dr. Demos Kontos**. Wright, Kass and Kontos will spearhead the College-sponsored trips to Peru and Mexico while Cowan has organized the immigration and migrant work symposium. Schaefer, who will oversee production of a play by Latino playwright Carlos

Morton in November, has joined with many of his Arts and Communication colleagues to feature Latin American artists in their performances, plays and concerts.

"We really had two goals when we first began discussing this Global Initiative," says **Paul Basinski**, coordinator of the College's international studies program and chair of the Global Initiative team. "We are hoping we can create something meaningful here. It is a project that is collaborative, it is educational and it is intended to be inspirational, too. We want to talk about Latin American history, politics, heritage and culture, in all dimensions, the light side, the dark side, because we feel that is part of our ultimate educational mission here.

"The other part of it is to reach out into the Latino community, and we've begun to do that as well. We really want to get a sense of who our Hispanic constituency is, and ways in which we can involve those people who aren't part of our academic community, both in terms of attending the events, or helping us to set up,

participate or sponsor them," Basinski adds. "That is part of the collaborative piece as well. We think this is a way to present the best side of SUNY Orange to a very large and growing segment of our potential college population."

Basinski has already seen the on-campus collaboration hit its full stride as a diverse grouping of departments



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have banded together to create a year-long educational focus that ultimately benefits the students.

Dr. Catherine Chew, SUNY Orange's vice president for academic affairs, says it is imperative that today's educational programs stress cultural understanding. "You can't underestimate the importance of helping students gain a deeper knowledge of the global society we live in today. We want to make sure our graduates leave us having been exposed to diverse cultural experiences and recognize their impact."

There is a sense among faculty members that this Global Initiative is not just about Latin America and the focus on learning, academics and culture, but that it will help internationalize the curriculum on campus.

"As an anthropologist, I believe that the Latin American Global Initiative is one of the most exciting educational events to be held at the College in the last several years. In our increasingly diverse and complex society, it is vital



to a liberal arts education to become knowledgeable about worldwide, national and regional trends which affect all of our lives," Kass says. "Through the migration to the United States of millions of Hispanics, this country has important historical and current connections throughout the vast region known as Latin America.

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Top: Professors Jean Carlos Cowan, left, and Paul Basinski discuss the planning of an immigration and migration workshop as part of SUNY Orange's upcoming Global Initiative.

Left: The agriculture and commerce of Latin America will be among the many topics included in the College's first Global Initiative.

who have entered our borders. The Global Initiative is SUNY Orange's recognition of the vitality of the Hispanic people and their central place in the development of our nation," Kass adds.

When the Global Initiative's focus moves on to another region in the future, whether it is Africa or China or some other locale, Basinski expects the Latin American theme to remain.

"I see no reason why once those courses and events have been established, that they couldn't continue to be taught and remain a part of our curriculum in the future. That would be one of the real legacies and impacts the Global Initiative could have on the curriculum in international education."

An even greater legacy of the Global Initiative will be its lasting influence on SUNY Orange students, as well as faculty, staff and Hudson Valley residents.