



INTRODUCING THE COHORT

The LATINX CLUSTER HIRE INITIATIVE



Dear Colleagues,

In 2019, the University of Pittsburgh's Office of the Provost (<https://www.provost.pitt.edu>) and the University Center for International Studies (<https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/main>) began a multi-year interdisciplinary cluster hire initiative to attract top candidates with demonstrated academic expertise and potential in research, teaching, and community engagement related to Latinx Studies. It is with great pleasure that we announce the successful completion of our Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative, through which nine outstanding individuals have joined and will be joining our Pitt community. These accomplished scholars will contribute significantly to the advancement of Latinx Studies not only at the University but nationally and internationally; they will also undoubtedly enrich our academic community, foster intellectual growth, and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

While the term "Latinx" has been debated, it has been deliberately used for this initiative, as opposed to Hispanic or Latino/Latina because "Latinx" transcends the traditional binary gender and sexual orientations inherent in those terms and allows for more inclusivity as it refers to populations in the United States from the diasporas of Latin America and the Caribbean whose language and culture did not originate in Spain. As a whole, Latinx Studies is an interdisciplinary field that seeks to challenge stereotypes, promote inclusivity, and deepen our understanding of the diverse experiences and contributions of Latinx communities.

At Pitt we believe in the power of diverse perspectives, experiences, and voices. This initiative serves as evidence of Pitt's dedication to expanding our understanding of Latinx cultures and histories, and investing in cutting edge expertise in this growing academic field.


Over the years, the goals for this initiative were three-fold:

- **To send a clear message of commitment to diversity and inclusion both internally and externally.**
- **To engage as a leading research institution in the serious research and study of issues that concern the growing Latinx population in the region and the United States.**
- **To provide tangible benefits to the University with the recruitment and retention of a more diverse group of students, faculty, and staff.**

I would like to sincerely thank the members of the Latinx Cluster Hire Committee from across Pitt who reviewed potential candidates, made hiring recommendations, and generously devoted their time and effort to this process. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Office of the Provost for providing funding for these hires to aid in alleviating costs. Special thanks to Dr. John Stoner, who played a fundamental role in conceiving and advancing this initiative. John served as the inaugural Executive Director of Academic Affairs at the University Center for International Studies and his commitment to diversity has been exceptional.

These outstanding scholars bring their expertise, perspectives, and passion to the School of Social Work, Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts & Sciences, School of Education, Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business and College of Business Administration, Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, and the University at large, and we are delighted to be able to introduce them. Please join us in welcoming them to the University of Pittsburgh!

Sincerely,



Ariel C. Armony
Vice Chancellor for Global Affairs
Director, University Center for International Studies

The University of Pittsburgh: LEADING THE WAY WITH LATINX SCHOLARS

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to advancing diversity and inclusion through impactful and meaningful action. The Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative sought to identify, recruit, hire, retain, and promote faculty members with demonstrated Latinx academic experience who will become leaders within the University and the Pittsburgh community. It is through this initiative that existing faculty and staff and the newly hired faculty will build upon Latinx-focused issues across all disciplines, departments, and schools, leading to a broader sphere of significant advancement in the research and study of issues concerning the Latinx population.

The University of Pittsburgh, through the Office of the Provost and the University Center for International Studies, led the charge to build a stronger, more diverse, and inclusive community that will prime a path toward improved recruitment and retention of students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds.

This University-wide Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative will shape the foundation of diversity and inclusion at Pitt for years to come, demonstrating Pitt's commitment to Latinx research, teaching, and communities.



The Latinx Cluster Hire Committee

Ariel Armony

University Center for International Studies, Chair

Sharon Alvarez

*Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business and
College of Business Administration*

Anna Arlotta Guerrero

School of Education

Angie Cruz

*Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences,
Department of English*

Patricia Documet

School of Public Health

Jasmine Gonzales Rose

School of Law

Doreen Hernandez

*Graduate School of Public and
International Affairs*

Gary Hollibaugh

*Graduate School of Public and
International Affairs*

Naudia Jonassaint

School of Medicine

Kristin Kanthak

*Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences,
Department of Political Science*

Mark Novales

Latinx Student Association

Mary Ohmer

School of Social Work

Leigh Patel

School of Education

Michele Reid-Vazquez

*Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences,
Department of Africana Studies*

John Stoner

University Center for International Studies

Kornelia Tancheva

University Library System

Belkys Torres

Office of the Provost

Sheila Velez-Martinez

School of Law

(Some colleagues' positions have changed or they have left the University.)

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We welcome and celebrate the group of Latinx scholars joining the University of Pittsburgh.



Eladio Bobadilla

PhD, Duke University
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF
ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of History

» Dr. Bobadilla is an Assistant Professor of History in the Department of History. He was an assistant professor of history and Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies at the University of Kentucky. He was born into a working-class family in rural Zacatecas, Mexico. Dr. Bobadilla served in the United States Navy. He was honorably discharged in November of 2009 with high evaluations and a number of military distinctions. Following his military service, Dr. Bobadilla attended Weber State University in Ogden, UT and graduated with a Bachelor of Integrated Studies degree in History, English, and International Politics. He then earned a PhD in history from

Duke University, where he was awarded the Dean's Graduate Fellowship as well as several other prestigious fellowships and grants. In May of 2019, he completed his dissertation, titled "One People without Borders': The Lost Roots of the Immigrants' Rights Movement, 1954-2006." In 2020, the dissertation was awarded the Herbert G. Gutman Prize from the Labor and Working-Class History Association (LAWCHA).



Victor Figuero

PhD, Boston College
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

» Dr. Victor Figuero is an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work. He also currently serves as interim co-Director of the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Ethnic Studies Research. His work focuses on ethnoracial disparities

in behavioral and mental health access and outcomes among Latinx populations in the United States and the role of racialization processes in these outcomes. His works aim to demystify the ethnic and racial homogeneity of U.S. Latinxs, render visible the lived experiences of Afro- and Black-Latinxs, and contribute to the elimination of Latinx health and mental health disparities in the U.S. He is the author of "Racialization and Psychological Distress among U.S. Latinxs" (*Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 2021). Dr. Figuero received his bachelor's degree in psychology from Clark University and master's degree in clinical psychology from Ball State University. He completed his master's degree in social work and doctorate degree at the Boston College School of Social Work.



Litzy Galarza

PhD, Pennsylvania State University
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF
ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Communication

» Dr. Galarza is an Assistant Professor of Communication in the Department of Communication. Her research lies at the intersections of Latina/o/x media, citizenship, and advertising studies and her work is most concerned with Latina/o/x citizenship and labor in the culture industries. Dr. Galarza's latest work has been published in the *International Journal of Communication*, the *Howard Journal of Communications*, and in the 2021 anthology



Immigrant Generations, Media Representations, and Audiences, edited by Dr. Omotayo O. Banjo. Dr. Galarza is currently working on her first book tentatively titled “Jane the Virgin: Televisual Representations of Latina/os and Citizenship.”



Ashley Gomez
PhD, Brown University
JOSEPH M. KATZ GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
AND COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION

» Ashley Gomez is Assistant Professor of Business Administration. She joined the faculty of the Joseph M. Katz Graduate School of Business in 2022. Her research uses an intersectional lens to examine the

relationship between entrepreneurship, work, and health among the Latina/o/x population in the United States. More recently, she has been working on a project which studies how immigrant Latina-owned entrepreneurs and workers were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Her research has implications for social change, policies, and strategies to promote Latina/o/x entrepreneurship and support Latina/o/x-owned firms. Dr. Gomez has professional experience tackling societal inequities alongside federal and local government agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and intersectoral collaboration.



Andrea S. Mora
PhD, University of Michigan
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF
ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Psychology

» Starting Fall 2024, Andrea S. Mora, a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan in Social Work and Developmental Psychology, will join the Department of Psychology as an Assistant Professor. Mora received her Master of Social Work and master’s in psychology degrees from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Mora’s research focuses on

adolescents’ experiences with community violence exposure and sexual harassment, with a particular focus on Latinx adolescents in the U.S. and Mexico. Relying on a resilience framework and strengths-based approach, Mora investigates factors that may protect adolescents from the negative psychological effects of violence. In addition, Mora examines the extent to which higher education, particularly social work education, prepares students to effectively work with youth and families from diverse identities and with diverse backgrounds.



Angie N. Ocampo-Roland
PhD, University of Pennsylvania
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF
ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Political Science

» Angie N. Ocampo-Roland is an Assistant Professor of Political Science. Her research examines the social and political incorporation of racial and ethnic minorities, with a particular focus on the

heterogeneity of the Latina/o/x population in the United States. Ocampo-Roland's work compares multiple viewpoints, examining Latina/o/x political attitudes as well as those of White and Black Americans. Her current project examines where Latinas/os/xs fit into conceptualizations of who is an American, as well as the consequences of being included or excluded from this group. Ocampo-Roland received her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in 2021.

**Lisa Ortiz**

PhD, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading

» Dr. Lisa Ortiz is an Assistant Professor of Language, Literacy, and Culture in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Leading. Her research examines knowledge-making practices of Puerto Rican migrants

and communities in rural Puerto Rico and the Midwest, against current colonial and neoliberal logics. Prior to joining the School of Education, Dr. Ortiz was at the University of Iowa as the Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Research Scholar for the "Imagining Latinidades: Articulations of National Belonging" Sawyer Seminar and as a Provost Postdoctoral Research Scholar in the Department of Gender, Women's and Sexuality Studies and Latina/o/x

Studies program. There, she developed the first working group to focus on Latina/o/x Migration and Education, funded by the Obermann Center for Advanced Studies. Previously, she was an Instructional Assistant Professor in Women's and Gender Studies at Illinois State University and has worked in academic and student affairs in Puerto Rico and the United States.





Andrea Peña-Vasquez

PhD, University of Notre Dame
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

» Dr. Andrea Peña-Vasquez joined the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) as an Assistant Professor with a focus on Immigration/Migration. Peña-Vasquez received her PhD in political science from the University of Notre Dame and a B.A. in political science and sociology from the University of Florida. She was a postdoctoral fellow at Hamilton College and a visiting researcher at the Juan March Institute at Carlos III University of Madrid and the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Her research focuses on issues of legal status and identity documentation, race/ethnicity, and migration governance in multi-level states. Her work has been supported by the J. William Fulbright Foundation, the American Political Science Association, and the Nanovic Institute for European Studies. Her

peer-reviewed research and public scholarship have been featured in various outlets, including *The Washington Post's* Monkey Cage, *The Economy of Happiness* at *Psychology Today*, and *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.



Fernando Tormos-Aponte

PhD, Purdue University
DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES
Department of Sociology

» Dr. Fernando Tormos-Aponte is an Assistant Professor of Sociology. He earned his PhD in Political Science from Purdue University and a B.A. from the Universidad de Puerto Rico-Río Piedras. Dr. Tormos-Aponte specializes in environmental and racial justice, intersectional solidarity, identity politics, social policy, and transnational politics. Dr. Tormos-Aponte's research on social movements focuses on how social movements cope with internal divisions and gain political influence. He also investigates civil society claims about the uneven government response across



communities. His work in this area examines the causes and consequences of government neglect

of socially vulnerable communities during disaster recoveries.

We believe in creating synergies that support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. A new center and cluster hire and retention initiative complement and amplify the Latinx Cluster Hire.

CENTER FOR ETHNIC STUDIES RESEARCH (CESR)

The rising number of Latinx students, the expansion of ethnic-based student organizations on campus and the need to address declining African American/African Diaspora student enrollment led to the formation of the Center for Ethnic Studies Research (CESR).

To address these factors, in 2021, the University Center for International Studies (UCIS) established CESR and named Dr. Michele Reid-Vazquez, then Associate Professor of Africana Studies, as the Founding Director of the Center.

The mission of CESR is to advance rigorous, multidisciplinary, and collaborative research on the histories, experiences, and current issues in U.S.-based ethnic communities of color, including Latinxs, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and African Americans/Black Diasporas.

Following the appointment of Dr. Reid-Vazquez, CESR welcomed Dr. Zuly Inirio as Associate Director in February 2022. Dr. Inirio is a specialist in Ethnic Studies, the arts, and social justice.

Within the first year, the CESR team established an Inaugural Advisory Committee, recruited student staff, started collaborations with the Department of Africana Studies, the Afrolatinidad Studies Initiative, and the Race-Related Centers Project. With funding from a Pitt Momentum Grant, CESR established the “Pittsburgh Transformations Project: Race, Migration, Education, and Healthcare,” a collaboration between experts at CESR, Africana Studies, the University Library System, the School of Education, and the School of Public Health. CESR has also established partnerships with the David C. Frederick Honors College, Latinx Connect Conference, the Humanities Center, the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion’s Digital Humanities Research Initiative, and the Center for Latin American Studies, Global Studies Center, Center for Civil Rights and Racial Justice, Center for Urban Education, and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

Notably, in Fall 2022, CESR launched its Ethnic Studies Research Incubator. The program is a collaborative endeavor designed to deliver enduring transformative opportunities for faculty and students. The Incubator also expands Pitt’s profile in inclusive research innovation, undergraduate development, and community engagement by addressing the significance of race and ethnicity in American society through multidisciplinary perspectives. Many of the new faculty recruited through the Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative have found an intellectual community through the CESR Incubator.



Michele Reid-Vazquez

Founding Director of the Center for Ethnic Studies Research (CESR)
UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

» Michele Reid-Vazquez served as the Founding Director of the Center for Ethnic Studies Research (2021-2023), as Associate Professor of Africana Studies, and as Director of the Afrolatinidad Studies Initiative. She specializes in Caribbean, Afro-Latin American, and U.S. Afro-Latinx history. She is the author of *The Year of the Lash: Free People of Color in Cuba and the Atlantic World* and has projects-in-progress on the Caribbean in the age of revolution, and Afro-Latinx and civil rights. She is also the executive producer and host of the *Dialogues in Afrolatinidad* podcast. As of fall 2023, Dr. Reid-Vazquez is the E. Frederic Morrow Associate Professor of Latin American, Caribbean, and Latinx Studies and Africana Studies at Bowdoin College.



Zuly Inirio

Interim Co-Director of the Center for Ethnic Studies Research (CESR)
UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

» Dr. Zuly Inirio assumed the role of interim co-Director of CESR alongside Dr. Victor Figuereo, who began his role as interim co-Director of CESR in the summer of 2023 (see Dr. Figuereo's bio on page 4). Dr. Inirio is an Afro-Latina opera singer, scholar, and social worker. She has appeared as a soloist throughout the U.S. and Europe and actively advocates for culturally concordant care for the Latinx community in Pittsburgh. Dr. Inirio also currently serves as interim co-Director of the Center for Ethnic Studies Research. She is a specialist in Ethnic Studies, the arts, and social justice and works toward equity and nuance in the dissemination of Afro-Latin and Afro-Latinx narratives through her "Afro-Latinx Song & Opera Project." She brings her expertise in collaborative work with the Black Opera Alliance, the Asian Opera Alliance, and Latina Women in Opera. Dr. Inirio recently received the following awards: Advancing Black Arts in Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh Foundation and Heinz Endowment), Scale Fellowship (Equity Impact Center), the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC) Leadership Institute and Advocacy Institute, Sphinx Organization's Sphinx LEAD Fellowship, and 1Hood Media's Artist Academy Fellowship.

Center for Ethnic Studies Research (CESR) | [UCIS.PITT.EDU/CESR](https://ucis.pitt.edu/cesr)

RACE AND SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF EQUITY, HEALTH, AND WELL-BEING FACULTY CLUSTER HIRE AND RETENTION INITIATIVE

Building on the response to the Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative, in 2020, the University of Pittsburgh's Office of the Provost and the Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences announced the Race and Social Determinants of Equity, Health, and Well-Being Cluster Hire and Retention Initiative. The purpose of this initiative was fourfold: to significantly increase the number of faculty working in these fields who are hired, promoted and retained; to attract, recruit and graduate undergraduate and graduate students for whom these issues are important; to raise the University's local, national and international profile and expertise in race and social determinants of equity, health and well-being; and to increase the University's capacity to contribute to important and sustainable societal change.

By recruiting dozens of leading scholars from around the nation, the cluster hire significantly bolsters capacity as new faculty work with and build upon the proficiency of existing Pitt faculty to conduct research, educate students, and engage in related service.

Read the RACE *and* SOCIAL DETERMINANTS *of* EQUITY, HEALTH, *and* WELL-BEING Cluster Hire Initiative PDF

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“This University-wide Latinx Cluster Hire Initiative will shape the foundation of diversity and inclusion at Pitt for years to come, demonstrating Pitt’s commitment to Latinx research, teaching, and communities.”

