

VIA EMAIL

Dr. Luke Wood  
Vice President, Student Affairs & Campus Diversity  
San Diego State University

Dr. Vice President Wood:

The San Diego Chicano/Latino Concilio on Higher Education would like to express our support for the SDSU Latinx Resource Center (LRC) and our concern for the future of the center. We were saddened by the recent departure of the initial director of the LRC, Yesenia Sanchez. In our conversations with Ms. Sanchez shortly after her departure, we sensed her perception of inadequate resources and institutional support for the LRC. These conditions cause us great concern, as the LRC represents a critical institutional asset in SDSU's continued effort to actualize its status as a truly "Hispanic Serving" university.

We strongly recommend that the SDSU leadership, particularly in SA & CD, conduct a thorough analysis of the annual budget for the LRC. We understand that the current LRC budget is approximately \$100,000-150,000. Considering that the LRC serves a constituency, Chicano/Latino students, that comprise approximately 30 percent of SDSU's undergraduates, the current LRC budget seems inadequate. Such responsibility for serving a large population of students also entails the need for higher levels of administrative staff than what might be assigned to smaller centers. We encourage you to examine the LRC's resources in that context.

Our SD Concilio envisions the LRC as a strong contribution to the institutional "validation" identified by the scholar Rendon as a key component of Chicano/Latino student success. Inevitably, Chicano/Latino students will perceive SDSU's funding of the LRC as exemplifying the institutional commitment to them. A perception of the LRC's funding as inadequate will undermine those students' sense of belonging at SDSU and their subsequent persistence and achievement.

Our collective experience with campus community centers tells us that many Chicano/Latino students will experience a degree of comfort with those spaces that is greater than their "fit" with the institution at a broader level. Students will not hesitate to express their perceptions and needs to the staff of an entity such as the LRC. Such needs will include financial, mental health, and other dimensions. If students are more likely to seek resources that meet their needs at the LRC, SDSU must consider the expansion of LRC staff to provide those resources, e.g., counselors and advisors, respectively. In the short-term, existing staff from other units in SA & CD can be assigned to provide their services at the LRC. This strategy should help alleviate the current structure in which the LRC's administrative leadership is also forced to maintain a caseload of advisees.

We recognize that the changes we recommend might entail the need for more physical space for the LRC. We strongly recommend that the SDSU leadership identify and allocate such space

as necessary, including the possibility of “satellite” space outside the current location of the LRC as a short-term solution.

In addition to providing adequate resources to the LRC, it is important that the center receive other, no less critical institutional support. The staff of the LRC should have a direct, significant role in SDSU’s structures, policies, and practices that impact the success of Chicano/Latino students. We recognize and appreciate the strong, positive relationship between the LRC and the SDSU Department of Chicana & Chicano Studies. These two entities represent perhaps the most visible and important sources of validation, support, and culturally relevant learning for SDSU’s Chicano/Latino undergraduates. We strongly recommend that the SDSU administration maintain a direct, consistent, and collective communication with the LRC, CCS, and student organizations such as MEChA to identify and address student needs and subsequent institutional strategies.

Finally, to maximize effectiveness and contribute to a thriving, visible Chicano/Latino community center, we recommend that SDSU form an autonomous advisory board for the LRC. Such an advisory board would actively support the LRC through a collective, ongoing analysis of the LRC’s role in helping actualize SDSU’s HSI status. The advisory board could also provide valuable input on the changing needs of the Chicano/Latino community on and off campus and provide supportive feedback to the LRC staff. We strongly recommend that the membership of such an advisory board include representation from the SDSU Department of Chicana & Chicano Studies, the Department of Dual Language and English Learner Education, the SDSU student organizations MEChA and AChA, and the San Diego Concilio, respectively. We emphasize that to be effective, a LRC advisory board would require the necessary autonomy to establish and follow its own processes, select its members, and set its agendas. Our SD Concilio is willing to play a leadership role in the organization of such an advisory board for the LRC.

Our SD Concilio would welcome a dialogue with representatives of the SDSU administration regarding our analysis and recommendations. We know that all of us believe in the purpose of the LRC and regard it as fundamental to SDSU’s status as a “Hispanic Serving Institution.” We will much appreciate a written response to this correspondence.

Sinceramente,

Patrick Velasquez, Co-Chair  
San Diego Concilio

Isidro Ortiz, Co-Chair  
San Diego Concilio

cc: Maria Ibarra  
Michael Dominguez  
Provost Hector Ochoa  
President Adela de la Torre  
Aniesha Mitchell  
Emilio Ulloa