This series publishes books that deepen and expand our knowledge and understanding of the various Latina/o populations in the United States in the context of their transnational relationships with cultures of the broader Americas. The focus is on the history and analysis of Latino cultural systems and practices in national and transnational spheres of influence from the nineteenth century to the present. The series is open to scholarship in political science, economics, anthropology, linguistics, history, cinema and television, literary and cultural studies, and popular culture and encourages interdisciplinary approaches, methods, and theories. The Series Advisory Board consists of faculty of the School of Transborder Studies at Arizona State University, where an interdisciplinary emphasis is being placed on transborder and transnational dynamics.

Marta E. Sánchez, Series Editor, School of Transborder Studies

Rodolfo F. Acuña, The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe
Marivel T. Danielson, Homecoming Queers: Desire and Difference in Chicana Latina Cultural Production
Regina M. Marchi, Day of the Dead in the USA: The Migration and Transformation of a Cultural Phenomenon
Priscilla Peña Ovalle, Dance and the Hollywood Latina: Race, Sex, and Stardom
The LLF, led by Ramona Arreguin de Rosales of St. Paul, pushed issues such as financial aid, campus employment for students, recruiting, and a Department of Chicano Studies. When the administration dragged its feet, twenty Chicana/o students occupied Morrill Hall on October 26, 1971. Manuel Guzmán told the administration, “If we do not have concrete evidence of the establishment or implementation of a Chicano Studies Department within 72 hours, a vote will be taken to strike against the university administration and its policies.” Students rejected a proposal for Chicano Studies to be absorbed into an existing department, because they wanted autonomy. The students held a fast. According to Rosales, “We knew that if we didn’t win at that time, that cause, we weren’t sure what was going to be the future of Chicano students and Latino students coming to the school. What was the future for your children and our children’s children.” Chicano Studies opened its doors in the fall of 1972, the first in the upper Midwest. Their example spread throughout the Midwest during the decade.99

In Sum

The energy of the Chicana/o generation nationwide was incredible. Here were first-generation college students from immigrant or immigrant-family backgrounds, from working-class families with poor education backgrounds. Many of the young women had to overcome family cultural taboos, and they accomplished what other generations had failed to do. The Los Angeles Times ran an article on April 25, 1969, that listed fifty-seven colleges with Chicano classes. The list was somewhat complete, with California State, Hayward, offering the most classes—eight. The next largest was the University of Southern California with six; San Jose State and Dominguez Hills with five; and Fresno State, San Diego State, and San Fernando State with four apiece. In all, twenty-five institutions had at least one Chicano Studies class.100

While this profile is informative, it does not tell the entire story. The push for Chicano Studies began in the fall of 1968 at a time when most four-year colleges only had a couple dozen Mexican American students. This changed in the fall of 1969 as the seed of the Chicano activism bore its first fruit. For example, Valley State already had forty-five course proposals approved by the Educational Policy Committee and was scheduled to offer twenty-four sections. In May it formally receive departmental status though the trustees, which was approved by the Educational Policies Committee. CSCLA had substantially more classes than reported by the administration, and although they had not been put through committee, they did have a commitment from the college president. Most state colleges had departments or programs within the year.

Rojas says, “Although black studies may have started in teaching colleges such as San Francisco State College and Merritt College in Oakland, the degree granting black studies program is most commonly found in research-intensive institutions. Furthermore, the spread of black studies programs among research universities depends on a combination of . . . black student protest and a ‘follow the leader’ effect.”101 The experience of Chicano Studies was different.

In the Trenches of Academe

What happened at Santa Barbara in April 1969 has become legend, and legends are assumed to be fact.1 Today El Plan de Santa Barbara is one of the most posted documents of the era, and legend is that a small group of faculty members, students, and Brown Berets founded Chicano Studies. University of California, Los Angeles, Professor Reynaldo Macias offers a more staid perspective, “Like any document, there is both a grounding and a contextualization in the time and location in which they are created, and certainly the impact of El Plan de Santa Barbara in the early ’70s immediately after it was published was significant in a couple of ways.” According to Macias, it was important because it was printed, it was “an authoritative voice on what the desires of the Chicano Movement . . . with regard to higher education . . . [and it] was reporting on what was being done in different institutions in the state.”

Without minimizing the contributions of those at the three-day conference at Francisco Torres Hall, Macias says that has a point.2 The meeting was called by Chicano Coordinating Council on Higher Education (CCHE), which had been formed at the Crusade for Justice, sponsored by National Chicano Youth Liberation in Denver, to discuss how the community and the students could increase educational access to higher education. The only professors on hand were Gus Segade, Jesús Chavarria, Juan Gómez-Quinones, Gracia Molina Enrquez de Pick from Mesa Community College, and me. Most of the four dozen or so participants were from the Los Angeles and southern California region. CCHE published El Plan de Santa Barbara in October 1969, sending the message to universities and colleges that Chicanas/os demanded a quality education.3

Many attendees were from departments, institutes, centers, and other models ready to be launched in the fall of 1969. So what happened would not change what had been set in stone. The department at San Fernando Valley State College was scheduled to start in September 1969; it would offer summer classes for first-year and transfer students.5 It was ready to go and had made its way through the numerous college review committees.
The motives of the participants varied. Many were caught up in the emotions of the time, having recently returned from the Crusade for Justice's Chicano Youth Conference. Cliques of mostly graduate students existed in what seemed to be an alliance of the Universities of California at Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. Players from Los Angeles State College and those who wanted to be players also attended. The major personas were definitely Juan Gómez-Quinones (UCLA) and Jesús Chavarria (UCSB). They were tied to most of the participants.

At thirty-five, I was older than most of the participants, some of whom knew each other, and I felt like an outsider. I already had my course of study developed, so I was not there to learn. I agreed with the thrust, which was for the most part ideological, and I saw the urgency of forming alliances with the community as absolutely essential. As mentioned, I had been active in the Mexican American community in the San Fernando Valley since the early 1960s and understood how Chicano Studies could become a power base on campus and a way to recruit and keep Chicanas/os in school. Relations with the community were essential, and the plan addressed this aspect of department building.6

As Macias points out, it was in print, one of the few books on the area of Chicano Studies. A Proquest search of dissertations reveals that only two theses have been written on the topic, and they are more reviews of individual programs than critiques of the area of Chicano Studies. CSCLA Professor Michael Soldatenko recently wrote a book on the discipline, an important work, but one that concentrates on Chicana/o Studies at research institutions. The most appealing feature of the plan is its passion, speaking to aspirations of a generation and to those who believe that change can come about. It is a manifesto that follows the pattern of a long line of revolutionary manifestos in Mexican history. The influence of Juan Gómez-Quinones, trained as a Mexican historian, is all over the document—the mixing of Spanish and English and allusions to Mexican history, the philosophical tone.

For all people, as with individuals, the time comes when they must reckon with their history. For the Chicano the present is a time of renaissance, of renacimiento. Our people and our community, el barrio and la colonia, are expressing a new consciousness and a new resolve. Recognizing the historical tasks confronting our people and fully aware of the cost of human progress, we pledge our will to move. We will move forward toward our destiny as a people. We will move against those forces which have denied us freedom of expression and human dignity. Throughout history the quest for cultural expression and freedom has taken the form of a struggle. Our struggle, tempered by the lessons of the American past, is an historical reality.8

The leaders sought to centralize management of the various California Chicano Studies programs. They foresaw the development of departments taking place at every campus with high Chicano population concentrations. Coming out of the conference, everyone expected UCLA, Los Angeles State, and San Diego State to be the centers of this movement, since that is where most of the heavies were housed.

What was unforeseen was the resistance to their leadership at other campuses and the factionalism that set in almost immediately after the conference. The document was East Los Angeles centric, and communities such as the San Fernando Valley, Ventura County, Orange County, and the northern part of California had their own identities and were often resentful of Los Angeles proper, where the movement seemed to begin and end. Over the years some campuses, not in the vanguard orbit, became much larger than the big three. Consequently, they would not accept the centralism proposed by the organizing committee. Moreover, the overall numbers of Chicana/o students was not large enough to shift the paradigm.

Much has been made of the nationalist language of the document. MEChA was organized at the conference and over the years has inherited the animosity of racists and xenophobes who have distorted the plan. However, much of the plan's critique of society is still valid today. It says, among other things, that for decades Mexican people in the United States struggled to realize the "American Dream."10 Surely anyone conversant with American history will agree that few have achieved the dream. The manifesto continues: "But the cost, the ultimate cost of assimilation, required turning away from el barrio and la colonia. In the meantime, due to the racist structure of this society, to our essentially different life style, and to the socio-economic functions assigned to our community by Anglo-American society—as suppliers of cheap labor and dumping ground for the small-time capitalist entrepreneur—the barrio and colonia remained exploited, impoverished, and marginal."11 And it says that the goal of "self-determination of our community is now the only acceptable mandate for social and political action; it is the essence of Chicano commitment."12 How much different is this than what was being said by Martin Luther King?

Critics argue that MEChA is ipso facto racist because it is mostly a Mexican American organization that excludes others. Its logo says "La union hace la fuerza" (Unity makes for strength or power). These accusations are ill informed. MEChAs are university chartered associations that cannot exclude anyone (and from my experience never have) from membership. The critics are just not probative. Are fraternities sexist because they admit only males? Are the Hillel groups racist because most of their members are Jewish? Or are the Newman clubs racist because most members are Catholics? No one raises these arguments with these and other groups. These same critics look at the plan through an epistemology that has been formed by their own xenophobic legends and fail to see the contradiction of their wearing a flag pin.

The plan makes it clear that:

... the institutionalization of Chicano programs is the realization of Chicano power on campus. The key to this power is found in the application of the principles of self-determination and self-liberation. These principles are defined and practiced in the areas of control, autonomy, flexibility, and participation.
Often imaginary or symbolic authority is confused with the real. Many times token efforts in program institutionalization are substituted for enduring constructive programming. It is the responsibility of Chicanos on campus to insure dominant influence of these programs. The point is not to have a college with a program, but rather a Chicano program at that college.13

It can be argued that this goal has never been achieved because higher education is not democratic, and changes are rare.

The plan goes into specifics: (1) organize a junta directiva (board of directors); (2) how to analyze the functional operation of the institution; and (3) “secure from the institution the commitment that it will give the highest priority to the needs of the Chicano community, not because of morals or politics, but because it has the obligation as a public institution charged with serving all of society.” It is not so much what the document says but how it says it. It does not make students feel stupid but rather feel that they are somebody—que si se puede.14

The importance of the plan is that it places students at the heart of Chicano Studies. Beginning with the manifesto, it is a demand for Chicano autonomy calling for a new era, for self-determination, and for social and political action. The plan changed the name of the movement to “Chicano,” expressing the community’s aspirations and the centrality of higher education to its goals. It proposes a process to control the structure and to establish autonomy within the structure. The duty of students is to recruit others—cultural identity must be an integral part of every activity. The plan also offers a course of study for Chicano Studies and includes examples of programs in progress. Finally, it charges Chicano programs with building political consciousness, political mobility, and developing tactics. UMAS became El Movimiento Estudiantil de Aztlán (MEChA). Symbolically changing the name from English to Spanish made this movement different. It was not assimilationist. It was not every person for him- or herself. The name “Aztlán” merely recognized the indigenous roots of Mexican Americans and the fact that they were here before Euro Americans.

In retrospect, the selection of Santa Barbara as the site for the conference was a stroke of good fortune and genius. The document could not have been put together without the leadership of a few, and if the conference had been held at Los Angeles State College or UCLA it would have attracted competing forces, and the dissent would have damaged the product. No one felt threatened, and the published monograph captured the spirit of the disparate workshops and in some cases is an almost verbatim transcription. The clarity of the document has served as a model for future generations, and it is one of the most duplicated documents in Chicano Studies.

For many, the plan is proof of Chicano nationalism—that is, Chicanismo. But the plan and MEChA are products of a time when students cared and wanted to build a better world. Critics rarely speak to the failure and racism of American education and the almost total exclusion of Mexican Americans from higher education. The times demanded strong denunciations of racism and exploitation and expressions of unity. The question of identity and racism cannot be dismissed or papered over. As Rubén G. Rumbaut writes, self-identity is subjective, shaped by historical context. It has much to do with how people are treated and punished. He gives the following as an example:

Ted Williams, universally known as one of baseball’s greatest hitters but not as a Latino player: his mother, May Venzer, was a Mexican American Baptist who married a soldier named Samuel Williams and moved to San Diego. May came to be known as “the Angel of Tijuana” for her Salvation Army work there. In his autobiography, Ted Williams (2001) wrote that “if I had had my mother’s name, there is no doubt I would have run into problems in those days, [with] the prejudices people had in Southern California.15

Most would agree that history is an evolutionary process, and as Carlos Muñoz, Jr. says, “Chicanismo partially resolved the question of identity and propelled the movement.” As discussed in the previous chapter, it motivated a few thousand students to do what previous generations and the present generation have not been able to do.16 What many fail to recognize is that Chicanismo was not an ideology, although some perceived it as such.

Much of the spirit of the plan was moved by the poetry of Alurista, who invoked metaphors such as the spirit of Aztlán, an indigenous past that romantically tied Mexicans to their roots. It countered a history of Americanization in the United States. The preamble to “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” said, “In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage, but also of the brutal ‘Gringo’ invasion of our territories, we, the Chicano inhabitants and civilians of the northern land of Aztlán, from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of their birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility and our inevitable destiny.”17 Alurista intertwined myth, identity, and struggle, catching the imagination of the Chicano generation. The product of nationalism, it inspired pride in one’s people—like most poetry does. Ironically, many Americans who condemn Chicano nationalism do not criticize Walt Whitman poetry for justifying the invasion of Mexico and, according to him, bringing civilization to Mexico.

Often the same people who criticize the plan and the Chicano generation for their nationalism celebrate their artistic expressions. For instance, the murals in Chicano Park are highly nationalistic, but serious scholars consider them state treasures. Art historians Martin Rosen and James Fisher write that the murals were painted “at the height of Chicano political activism,” which occurred between 1969 and 1975 and not only dictated the specific social and economic issues the movement dealt with, but also coincided with the most productive period of Chicano muralism. . . . keeping with a long tradition of Mexican art as resistance, murals became the art form of choice, silent sentiments and creative yearnings that were vivid and eye-catching, explosions of lights that vanquished the shadows while merging the past and the future with
the present. They spoke to the ever-increasing social consciousness of the barrio and Chicano sensibilities and reflected issues and symbols that ranged from Aztec icons to the United Farm Workers black eagle, combining the Spanish and Indigenous heritage, a significant source of California’s history.18

Historian Richard García accentuates that

the Mexican American mentality of integration, Americanism, and acculturation was in question, if not in crisis, in the late 1960s. The youth of Mexican American communities were promoting a Chicano Renaissance that was reminiscent of the Black Renaissance of the 1920s. The young activists of the Mexican American communities attempted to give rebirth to the energy of “lo mexicano” in a world in which many people of Mexican American descent found themselves becoming more a part of the culture of “lo americano.” This period gave rise to a new consciousness of nationhood that was promoted by the radical youth who had begun to identify themselves as Chicanos rather than as part of Mexican American communities.19

My contribution to the conference was a draft of the Mexican American Studies major and minor. The notion of a Chicano Studies major was a new concept almost revolutionary in nature. Disciplines generally take generations to evolve, and they are offshoots of other disciplines, such as history, the granddaddy of them all. Area studies such as American Studies and Latin American Studies were consequently considered illegitimate children and second rate when compared to the mainstream disciplines. Area studies supposedly confused academic identity and the nature of the specific skills and methods that were developed within the discipline. Hence, if scholars were trained in an area studies they were not really historians or whatever and had no identity—even if most of their course work was in history or some other discipline. At the time, most Chicana/o graduate students were shaped by the biases of their discipline and proposed classes such as Chicano psychology or Chicano sociology. The real question was how the corpus of knowledge that composed Chicano Studies was going to be taught and researched in multidisciplinary fashion. The reality is that no such thing as Chicano psychology existed, just like there was no Chicano paradigm. For me, it was the best vehicle to teach and study the untapped knowledge and at the same time build Chicano Studies.

The Return to San Fernando Valley State College

The meeting at the University of California at Santa Barbara took time away from department building. The prime value was for outsiders to get known. Many of the participants became familiar faces and soon took jobs at institutions other than the ones that they were at in 1969–1970. The leapfrogging cost programs stable leadership. I never felt any need to try to mentor other campuses after they hired their directors. I felt that as professionals they either succeeded or failed as individuals—which in retrospect was a mistake and short-sighted.

The Education Policy Committee at San Fernando Valley State College approved the formation of a Mexican American Studies department in late April 1969, at which stage it went to the California State College Board of Trustees. The strategy was to get everything done in the first ninety days, realizing that as time went by it would become more difficult to get courses passed through faculty committees. At the time, I also proposed a change in the institute’s general education policies to make these courses more accessible to the new minority students and departments. The culture of the institution was working against Chicanas/os—while some faculty empathized with blacks they could have cared less about Mexicans. Part of the indifference was due to most professors being trained outside the Southwest. Allegedly in order to avoid intellectual incest, colleges hired outside the area. SFVSC had more than its share of Ivy League graduates, which it believed was a mark of distinction. In committees faculty members reminded anyone who would listen that they were from prestigious institutions. This gang ritual is punctuated at graduations, where professors wear regalia with the colors of the universities from which they received their degrees.20

Pan-African Studies had sailed through the process. The fly in the ointment for Chicano Studies was the Spanish department, which challenged many of the Chicano Studies proposals. The department chair, Carmelo Gariano—singled out in the twelve-point demands as a racist—kept challenging the department’s proposals. Thankfully, he was neutralized by friendly faculty. Knowledge of blacks is rooted in history. Nearly everyone had studied the Civil War, and a number of them had supported the civil rights movement. However, Mexicans were considered foreigners, the people who killed Davy Crockett at the Alamo.

Besides turf wars, the principle objection to a Department of Mexican American Studies was that it was not a discipline, which was essential to becoming an academic department, according to purists. A particular methodology distinguishes a field. A corpus of knowledge is researched using a particular methodology. For example, while history has developed alternative theoretical models, at the core of the historical method is the use and vetting of documents. A scholar who does not use documents is not a historian. This principle is so exacting that at most research institutions the rule of thumb is that a historian does not become an associate professor unless she has published one book in an academic press—two books to move to full professor. I conceded that Chicano Studies was not a discipline and argued that it was an area studies that housed multiple disciplines under its administrative wing.

The question of a corpus of knowledge defining the Mexican experience was touchy at the time of the formation of the department. If the term “Mexican American” had been separated from the Mexican experience, it would have been difficult to make the case.21 Almost no literature was readily available on Mexican life experiences in the United States in print; it was a time before digitalized documents.22 If Chicano Studies had limited its corpus of knowledge to the existing
literature in print, it would have narrowed itself to being part of American Ethnic Studies, which at the time was almost entirely sociological, about immigrants (mostly European) and African Americans. The available Mexican American literature in print was sparse. This dilemma was partially resolved by including the Mexican experience. This transition was facilitated because the academy had very few courses on Mexico, an area that was equally neglected. For instance, outside of history no courses were offered on Mexico at San Fernando Valley State. The Spanish department had courses on Iberian literature and on the literature of the Rio de la Plata (Argentina), but none on Mexico. This was a failure that worked to Chicano Studies’ advantage.

Many of these obstacles were overcome by categorizing Chicano Studies as an area. Fortunately, because of the student turmoil, the counter arguments were garbled, and only a minority of the professors on campus was rigid enough to hold up the process. Chicano Studies was also fortunate because of white fear of African Americans. (Chicano Studies owes the African American community a huge debt because it blew the door open. The blacks’ continued presence created a tension Chicano Studies was able to exploit.) While the great white fathers grilled me, the members of Educational Policies Committee approved almost everything and anything that Pan-African Studies put on their plate. Yet, we knew as a matter of fairness, the committee members could not approve Pan-African’s proposals and reject Mexican American Studies.33

Area studies developed as a reaction to the tyranny of the disciplines. Since the early nineteenth century, reformers have argued that the disciplines should not determine the areas of studies. They challenged the tyranny of the disciplines and posited that disciplines should emanate from the area. This led to the development of area studies programs similar to those in American Studies and Latin American Studies, which were in great part products of the cold war.

Area studies became popular after World War II, at a time when few scholars were interested in studying topics outside the United States. The Central Intelligence Agency and Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York began funding them because they were the best way to train specialists in an area. The only kicker was that the foundations limited the definition of area studies to international programs. Many institutions developed American Studies, Latin American Studies, Asian Studies, and African Studies graduate degrees in order to break narrow specialization. I went through a Latin American Studies program. After a period of study we determined that this model was also applicable to domestic models, and it was the quickest and surest way to develop interdisciplinary Mexican American courses and ensure the hiring of Mexican American faculty members in the disparate disciplines, and to short circuit racism in hiring Chicanas/os. The uniqueness of the SFVSC program was that it was a department of area studies with a core tenured faculty the department hired. They were not joint appointments.34

The selection of an area studies model served another purpose. Chicano Studies are, above all, a vehicle to educate Chicana/o students from poorly prepared backgrounds. My generation was greatly influenced by John Dewey, who was one of the first to propose that pedagogy be recognized as a university discipline.35 Dewey recognized that the university could not adequately research a corpus of knowledge without being a discipline or being recognized by the academy as one. The reason for Chicano Studies was to teach student skills by using a relevant knowledge base that would motivate them.

Proponents of Chicano Studies argued that if the college was color-blind, it would already have courses in Mexican American Studies in every department on campus. Logically, if the departments would have hired qualified professors to teach and develop those specialties there would have been no need for Chicano Studies. But, due to racism and the resistance of faculty to the acceptance of courses on Mexicans, the university neglected that corpus of knowledge. As a result of the exclusion, the colleges were failing in their mission of objectively seeking the Truth. Thus, initiating a department was very essential to the “objectivity question.”

Chicano Studies was therefore not one discipline but many disciplines within an area examining a common corpus of knowledge. Chicano Studies used this logic to argue that it should be considered an area when appropriating credit for general education. When the institution certified Chicano Studies, the certification became a contract. Based on this contract, the department hired scholars according to their discipline, which was not in Chicano Studies but in art, history, music, and other fields of study. This was the argument Chicano Studies made to expand its offerings in general education and liberal studies.

Aside from being good historians and the like, faculty members were expected to develop an interdisciplinary world vision. Tenured faculties were encouraged to teach lower division classes that were outside their field. For instance, Chicano Studies 100 was supposed to include history, culture, and literature. Faculty members were supposed to know each other’s disciplines, as doing so bred respect and a sense of community. This has not happened, and many Chicano Studies professors look elsewhere for legitimacy. A case in point, more Chicana/o sociologists attend the American Sociological Association’s conferences than the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies.

**The Hiring of a Faculty**

The first task was to hire faculty members. Numerous candidates with terminal degrees were contacted who rejected the positions out of hand. They were not enamored with the prospect of teaching four classes at a teaching institution. The load of four courses a semester was too heavy, and the pay was low in comparison to research institutions (the preference of almost every scholar). The candidates also had to go through interviews with a committee composed of students, community, and faculty. The Mesa Directiva made it clear that it was asking for an eight-to-five commitment, five days a week. One prospect told the committee that he had not studied for twenty years to end up at a community college or glorified
high school. Moreover, the number of PhDs available was limited, and those who qualified were for the most part not the types that would go to the Santa Barbara conference or want to teach in a state college. Anyone who knew academe and the changing demographics knew that due to the small number of Chicana/o PhDs available that it would in the future become a sellers' market. The dramatic growth in the Mexican and Latina/o populations would make their degrees more marketable with time.

Finally, most available Chicana/o scholars were not hustlers. Ideology, education, and commitment are not the only traits that prepare a scholar to develop a program in hostile waters. Therefore, the strategy at SFVSC became to hire good teachers with intellectual potential. That is why we called state colleges and universities to get the names of Chicana/o college graduates who ranked high in their graduating classes while at the same time seeking seasoned high school teachers. The tactic was to hire candidates as instructors—often at low salaries—with the understanding that the new professors would continue their education. No one thought a terminal degree was unnecessary. In fact, to get tenure and be promoted, instructors would have to have a terminal degree. This so-called elitist standard can be blamed not only on the institution but also on society. The world is title driven, especially capitalist and socialist societies. Moreover, once the students graduated, they wanted jobs with the department, justifying their qualifications with the fact that their professors did not have advanced degrees. In an interview, a former student told the selection committee that he was prepared to teach Chicano history because he had taken my class and had taken copious notes.

The importance of teaching experience cannot be overstated. I had done my student teaching at SFVSC in 1985 at what was then a satellite of CSCLA. When putting programs together, students and Chicana/o faculty members at other institutions made the mistake of concentrating on hiring personalities rather than building programs. For example, at California State Fullerton, the program was allocated four faculty positions to start the department, which was generous in comparison to other colleges. Its chair, Roberto Serros, boasted that Fullerton had the most qualified Chicano Studies faculty in the country because all of them had PhDs. However, they all had doctorates in Spanish literature, and two of them were Iberian specialists. They all had degrees from the University of Southern California. They presumed that because they had terminal degrees and Spanish surnames that they were qualified to teach Chicano Studies, which would have probably been true if their degrees were in different fields. Valley State took another approach and built the department much the same as a baseball team. The central consideration was the team and the skill of each player to play her or his position. (We assumed that the hires would grow into the position and get their doctorates along the way.)

Many founding faculty members were former high school teachers, which was in keeping with the pedagogical mission of the department. Students entered college without proper preparation. Most of the Mexican schools did not have college prep classes at the time. High school teachers were conscious of teaching skills and had experience in developing courses. They knew what a lesson plan was and how to incrementally develop units. For example, Gerald Reséndez, one of our first faculty members, was a former vice principal at Cathedral High School. He developed capstone courses, such as Children's Literature in Translation and Religion and the Chicano, and was an excellent teacher and stable force in the department. Carlos Arce did not have a teaching background, but he was brilliant, and during the first year he attracted a strong cult following. However, he left after the second year due to personal problems and pursued a doctorate at the University of Michigan.

The next faculty member hired was José Hernández, originally from Eagle Pass, Texas. Hernández had a master of arts from Ohio State and was in a doctorate program at the University of Cincinnati. He was a student teacher supervisor at the university level. The committee flew him out for an interview, and despite a split vote it was decided that a position should be offered. He had a family and was anxious to move back into Chicanolandia. Rafael Perea-Sandoval was the only PhD the committee initially hired. He was known to the committee members, many of whom had worked with him in the Latin American Civic Association. Perea was attractive on several scores: he had a terminal degree, he was a Mexican national who would appeal to the Mexican-born, and he was a task master. He developed a particular constituency—those attracted to the intellectual.

The department also made an effort to hire women teachers, which was difficult for a number of reasons, one of which was that they did not have, for the most part, the flexibility that males had to move. Indeed, the second person offered a tenure track position was a Chicana who accepted the offer but withdrew several days before classes started. At the dissertation stage of her PhD in anthropology at UCLA, she had had a traumatic experience while in Bogota, Colombia, as part of a private sector Peace Corp—like program. She had been gang raped and was stranded there without any type of support from the organization. As the semester approached, she panicked. She felt that she was not emotionally ready to assume full-time teaching duties. Alicia Sandoval, a high school teacher, taught during the first summer. She became a host of her own program on KTTV (Channel 11) and was later the editor of the NEA (National Education Association) journal Thought and Action. In retrospect, it would have been ideal if SFVSC would have made gender a distinct category within the program, since this would have created the need to hire a specialist in Chicana Studies.

The administration allocated Chicano Studies six positions instead of the seven demanded. When the first female candidate dropped out, the department hired Tony Ortiz as an interim appointment. The enrollment was so successful the first semester that the administration allocated Chicano Studies a seventh line to teach part time and serve as a special assistant to the president. The specification was that the candidate have a doctorate in hand. The mesa directiva selected Joe De Anda. He had a doctorate and was active in LACA. He was also a teacher at Valley Junior College and a former high school Spanish teacher in the Valley.
Relations with administrators were always tenuous and that was good. The only thing that kept them from booting the chair of the department was the threat of a student backlash. After an initial confrontation with the first dean, things improved when Mal Sillars became the interim president and later the dean. Despite his flaws, he was a decent human being. However, the administrator that the department worked most directly with was David Benson, who belonged to the most conservative faction on campus. Associate Vice President Benson, who later became vice president, greeted me with, "I do not believe in Ethnic Studies programs, but I'll do everything in my power to see that you are successful." Benson was a Barry Goldwater Republican. Worse than that, he was a former jock, an issue that not only the liberal but also the conservative faculty would often raise. Benson, however, was a man of his word and facilitated a lot of our early projects. Unlike Jerome Richfield, later the liberal dean of the School of Letters and Sciences whom Chicano Studies later worked with, Benson did not play blacks and browns against each other. Moreover, he made key concessions: he agreed to widen the Chicano Studies net in general studies and accepted the principle of area studies. The students had already established that EOP students could take their writing and Title V government requirements in Mexican American Studies. Benson posited that limiting credit in these areas to Chicana/o students could be interpreted as discriminatory toward non-EOP students, so the EOP prerequisite was dropped.

Logically, if Chicano Studies was interdisciplinary, the area studies program should be given credit across disciplines. Valley State had a liberal arts charter, and many professors in departments such as English had terminal degrees in American Studies, avoiding the bias of mainstream departments. Benson also advised the department to study geography's offerings and its use of mode and level. I suffered through a short meeting with Richard Lamb, an opinionated and gruff man. Nevertheless, his design was a work of art, crafted to take advantage of every college regulation in the books. Its mode and level guidelines, for instance, enriched the allocations to the department to the point that it had one of the lowest student teacher ratios in the college. Each class, depending on whether it was designated as a lecture class or a field studies class, would be designated seminar status and/or other combinations. In a lecture class, the teacher-student ratio may be as high as one to thirty-five, whereas in a three-unit field the ratio would be one to nine. Lamb made almost everything field study, seminars or labs.

Chicano Studies followed Lamb's model, and most of the classes built in field study, lab, or seminar components. Almost immediately enrollment justified far more faculty than was assigned. Chicano Studies was so successful that the university changed the rules by temporarily suspending them. We soon learned that what was good for the all-white geography department was not necessarily good for Chicanas/os.78

Jerome Richfield became dean of letters and sciences in 1972. He was self-described intellectual and infinitely more liberal than David Benson. Yet he never understood mode and level or curriculum development. In fact, when he saw the formula propelling Chicano Studies, he dumped mode and level and used head counts, which worked against the department because it had a number of art and music classes. Richfield was very loyal to his former department, philosophy, and subsidized it at the expense of the rest of the school, not just Chicano Studies. Richfield at the time was paternalistic and benevolent on the human level. He protected our political rights but never understood the intricacies of the Chicano Studies curriculum. He considered us to be a notch above Religious Studies faculty members, which to him were wannabe philosophers. Richfield was liberal, but he socialized with and subsidized the research of the most reactionary professors on campus because he considered them his intellectual peers. On a personal level, I liked Richfield and appreciated that politically he protected me. If it had not been for Richfield, I probably would have been suspended or fired. But he was not forthcoming, and his lack of fairness in curriculum matters and faculty allocations set the department back. He rationalized his actions by saying that if Chicano Studies was rewarded, he would have to lay off faculty from other departments, and that would be unfair.79

Finally, Richfield encouraged dissent among faculty members and departments within the college. On one occasion he volunteered that a Chicano faculty member was intellectually limited but said that the person needed help because he was not trained in a discipline and only had an EdD. At the same time, he volunteered that the professor gave him expensive tequila. He was also down on a female professor in Chicano Studies because she had an EdD. Nevertheless, Chicano Studies classes continued to increase in enrollment with no augmentation in staff.80

The Importance of the Educational Opportunity Program

A department can have the soundest theoretical base. It can have the best teachers in the world. But if it does not build a support network, it will not grow. EOP is essential in building this network. Students, no matter how lacking in college preparation, think that they can make it. They believe in American myths of equality. Many of the first students recruited from barrio high schools were A and B students who, while they did not take academic subjects in high school, were told they were superior students. They believed that they were prepared to excel in college. However, the truth was that an A or a B was not the same in a Chicana/o or black Los Angeles district high school as it was in a white school. Most political Chicana/o students had no illusions and just wanted the chance to attend college. Many believed that the professors would help them, which is why they took Chicano Studies. Some came to college because of the military draft; others came for the stipends and thought it was a free ride. Still others just wanted out of their lives, wanted something better. When I asked young Chicanas what they wanted out of life, many responded that they did not want the lives their mothers had.
Proper counseling is essential to improving the success rate for students from poorly prepared and underfunded schools. At schools such as Roosevelt High, Garfield, San Fernando counselors discouraged most students from taking college prep courses. Hence, once in college the students were unprepared and had no idea about what the school required. College counselors would load them up with fifteen units of hard time, often taking combinations that students were not prepared for. Fortunately, EOP had its own counselors to guide students into Chicano Studies, where they could be incubated and could notify EOP what they lacked. Often they would get special help with assignments and have the benefit of follow-up counseling. Chicano Studies also pressured the counseling office to hire psychologists trained to work with Latinas/os.

Tragically, many of those who did not go through EOP tried to take heavy loads in other majors and failed. After an initial shock, they would come to Chicano Studies for help. Because it reached out, a lot of students were saved, but we also lost some. Chicano Studies’ philosophy was that even the ones who failed gained, because everyone has the right to succeed, and everyone also has the right to fail. Chicano Studies had to seed a generation or two. Students still approach me and ask me if I remember their parents who attended CSUN (aka Valley State). I always say yes, but in some cases the parents or parent only attended for a semester or less. The important thing was that college showed them something better, gave them pretensions, and they passed on this memory to their children.

Without EOP many students would have floundered and they never found their way to Chicano Studies. They would have remained isolated in some rinconcito, a small corner of the university, arguing whether there was a Chicano paradigm. Tragically, Chicano Studies programs often isolate themselves from EOP and even go into competition with it. In these cases, the students suffer. In the first years the Chicano Studies department was fortunate because it had a Chicano and a black EOP. The two units were consolidated about five years later. By that time the departments were rooted. These programs were all consolidated in the name of integration in 1972, but like Ethnic Studies, integration does not always produce a positive outcome.

More recently, EOP has been pressured to mainstream and recruit students from parochial and magnet schools. This helps the university’s retention and graduation numbers. At the same time, Chicano Studies faculty members begin to think of themselves as members of the community of scholars at the academy. They forget that they were hired to teach working-class Chicana/o students. EOP staffs begin to serve the interest of administrators, who blame the lack of retention on students being unprepared, and they become more selective about who they recruit. They want “quality.”

In this equation, students are essential to keeping everyone honest. SFVSC was fortunate, since after the twelve-point agreement EOP was divided into a Mexican American EOP and a black EOP, which allowed them to concentrate on the needs of their respective groups. It also minimized the competition between Mexican Americans and blacks—keeping conflict at a minimum. It gave the Chicanas/os and blacks a feeling of autonomy.

**The Internal Logic of Chicana/o Studies**

Like every other field in academe, Chicana/o Studies follows an internal logic and rhythm. The system develops student skills and ensures the interdisciplinary area of study. It attempts to build on a general knowledge of a particular discipline within Chicana/o Studies, progressing to more specialized courses. For example, first-year courses are introductory, while in the sophomore year it is assumed that the student has some knowledge of the subject matter. The third year is not technically an introduction but more general than the fourth year. The student by this time should have a prerequisite background to permit more specialized studies. For example, the “History of Mexico” belongs in the 300 series, whereas the “History of Mexico in the 20th Century” belongs in the 400 sequence.

An interdisciplinary program organizes the disparate disciplines in a way to complement each other. This overview and more specialized scheme is even evident inside the lower and upper divisions, with the 100 classes being breadth classes and the 200 being depth. In the upper division, the 300 courses introduce an area of study, whereas the 400 is more content based. The first Mexican American Studies offerings generally followed this pattern. An exception was that in the beginning the SFVSC program eliminated the 300 level courses because Chicano Studies wanted to push for a master of arts program in which only 400 classes were accepted—junior (300) level classes’ could not be used for graduate credit. The numbering system for upper division classes is as follows:

- 300–399 or 400–499
- 00–09, culture or anthropology
- 10–19 visual arts and music
- 20–29 economics
- 30–39 education classes
- 40–44 geography
- 45–49 history
- 50–59 religion, philosophy, and thought
- 60–69 politics and community study
- 70–79 sociological theory, the family, and urban institutions
- 80–89 literature and linguistics

Based on this logic, Chicano Studies resisted the temptation to hire friends. Faculty members were hired to meet the curricular needs of the department’s course of study and not the professors’ preferences. Specialization was essential. An instructor could be a good sociologist, but that did not qualify him to teach about children or upper division art. It would have been impossible for the core of professors to teach all the courses in Chicano Studies. The clear distinction in the individual disciplines forced the department to hire specialists to teach in each of
the disciplines. This ensured, for example, that Chicano Studies did not have too many historians or too many literature specialists.

The Chicano Studies major had four options: humanities and the arts, social science, education, and community studies. At one time the education component was for the purpose of expanding Chicano Studies’ autonomy and offering pedagogical offerings. The department wanted to offer education classes and eventually credential teachers to teach in elementary and secondary schools. Hence, a numbering sequence was essential.

The Monopoly Game

At research and teaching universities, turf is extremely important. Teaching institutions, unlike research institutions, which are heavily funded and endowed, operate on an academic marketplace. A Monopoly board determines the successes and failures of new fields of study. Therefore, to survive in the game the new department has to get a piece of property. This is easier said than done, since the “Boardwalks” and all of the prime property on the campus is owned by the founding departments. The operators are good capitalists; they don’t give an inch, and when they do it is a pittance. The disparate Ethnic Studies programs are thrown into the minority ghetto to compete for three units with the other misfits. The former nerds who were knocked around in high school and live in fear of rebellions protect their turf through committees that configure general education and other mandatory programs. They work deals that force students to take their courses. To stay in the game and get a degree, students must land on designated properties. This becomes really insidious, since the board determines the size of the faculty, the size of the offices, secretarial help, and resources.

They justify adding to the requirement and maintaining their monopoly by using politics to argue their case. For example, the requirement that students take a year of Western Civilization has been a sacred cow. Any attempt to change this requirement has met opposition. Just changing the focus from Western Civilization to World History produced cultural wars that still rage in academe. At Northridge, white faculty members and administrators had a hard time accepting that a history class taught in Chicano Studies class by a trained PhD in history was the same as a history course taught in the history department by a white historian, even though the history department’s class was often taught by a teaching assistant. The same rule applied to art, dance, sociology, and the like.

The most important battle after getting the department approved was general education. General education is the breadbasket of teaching universities and colleges. Even more so than majors, the portion of general education that a department cuts out determines its growth: “One common purpose of general education programs is to ensure that students have a secure foundation in prerequisite skills that will be essential for upper-level and disciplinary major courses. On most campuses, these foundation skills include mathematical understanding, written communication, and computing and information technology.”33 This principle adheres to the liberal arts tradition that pretends to produce a well-rounded student. General education has been almost eliminated in prestigious small liberal arts colleges. However, in public institutions, especially community colleges, general education is “key” to ensuring that “ill-prepared” students receive a “proper” education.

Again research and teaching institutions differ, and the disciplines and tradition play a more important role at the former.35 At teaching colleges, a strong department is essential for getting a share of general education and liberal studies. Without a department, Chicano Studies could not play on the Monopoly board, and they would be at the mercy of majors within the disparate disciplines. As it is, the department has had to fight for properties such as Title V (U.S. history and government requirements), English, literature, economics, etc. Chicano Studies often used students to stack Educational Policies Committee meetings and the Subcommittee of General Education with students. It often got ugly.

Creating the Legend

Academe is a microcosm of society. It creates illusions of self-governance. Throughout the 1970s the institutions that established Ethnic Studies programs told minority scholars that to survive the programs had to attract students to carry their share of the load. In order to survive, they had to enroll students in order to justify the classes. The same rule applied to research institutions that spent millions of dollars to establish and support Medieval Studies centers that served a half dozen students. But the Ethnic Studies center had to scurry around for soft money to pay their way. In reality, not all of the animals were equal.

The illusion is that the administration is fair—it is the victim’s fault for its community not wanting Chicana/o Studies. The reality is that institutions of higher learning prioritize what courses students should take. At the community college level, the first classes to fill are the general education classes that are transferable to four-year institutions. The same pattern follows students into the upper division. Most colleges have set general education courses that are negotiated by departments and administrators. Over the years, it takes what amounts to a constitutional amendment to change them. Counselors tell their students to get the general education classes out of the way, even before they decide on a major. The result is a monopoly game that students play, and new departments are expected to survive.

Who gets what depends on what the professors on a labyrinth of committees think is important. Generally, senior professors are elected to these committees. They know each other, drink each other’s merlot, and often sleep together. At teaching institutions, general education is a big deal because departments are allocated professors and other resources on student enrollment. There is an illusion of inclusion based on the legend of faculty governance.

There are openings, however. For example, San Fernando Valley State College was established as a complement to Los Angeles State College, which had a general charter that allowed it to offer technical programs, such as nursing and industrial
arts education. SFVSC, in contrast, had a liberal arts charter in the tradition of a Harvard. The liberal arts curriculum essentially revolved around history, philosophy, abstract sciences, and language—disciplines that scholars believe foster general intellectual ability. The curriculum entails classical learning as distinct from specialized or vocational training. The fundamental principle of any liberal study is the notion that society's quality of life depends on rational thought. However, as mentioned, universities are far from being rational and are more like theological centers than academies. It is difficult to introduce new knowledge when everything is deduced from accepted knowledge. It is in these instances where other knowledge must be induced through disruption.

A basic flaw with most studies on Chicana/o Studies and Latina/o Studies is that researchers have not looked at the epistemology of the field. I would posit that Chicana/o Studies is not yet fully developed as a research field, and that its development as a teaching field has been thwarted by being housed in disparate disciplines. We are on the road toward developing a content field, but we still have not arrived. The basis and justification for the area is more pedagogical than it is theoretical. Everyone has the right to know how to read and write. So, we must concentrate on being superior teachers.

A serious flaw in the formation of the SFVSC was the failure to address the gender question and homophobia. Many naively believed that education and political action alone would transform society, and that all forms of inequality would disappear. Others were just plain patriarchal and homophobic. What most failed to recognize was that activism alone would not transform society as a whole. That could not happen without a constant critique of the social order and a correction of its imperfections. For many, this was the pedagogical mission of Chicano studies: to empower Chicana/o students and the whole community through the act of critical thinking. This was what San Francisco State, the Chicano walkouts, and the establishment of Chicano studies was about. The stemming of the dropout problem was essential to this mission.

The years 1969–1973 were critical to the formation of Chicano Studies. Students took advantage of a window of opportunity to form Chicano student organizations that were able to negotiate and disrupt when reason failed. The opportunities closed rapidly at the end of the Vietnam War, and any goodwill that Chicano students had dissipated quickly. After this point, the high priests moved to reassert their control over their institutions. The adrenaline boost infused by the movements of the sixties was gone. The only possible advantage was the decline in white enrollment. The end of the white baby boom led to a loss of 12,000 students in the Los Angeles schools in 1971, and the birthrate in the state slowed down another 6 percent that year. The crisis would have devastated the schools if it had not been for the rise in minority enrollment, which since 1967 had increased by 50 percent. The decline in the white student population was offset by the rise in the Latino student population at the K–12 levels.

However, Chicanos were not in a position to exploit these events, because they were not used to thinking in these terms, and because most Mexican Americans were still not prepared academically to go to college. Unofficially over 60 percent were still pushed out before finishing high school, and the quality of the schools remained separate and unequal. What changed was the attitude of a minority of students that learned from the Chicano movement that si se puede, and more blamed the crappy schools instead of themselves. What had not changed was institutional racism and the attitudes of many educators who denied the glaring inequality in the schools. In 1973 many educators still attempted to explain the educational disadvantaged by saying that their culture bred poverty. Denial was still the main strategy for not ending education inequality—a strategy that had changed little since the early 1960s when the strategy to end the dropout rate was to end "cultural disadvantage."