



CENTER FOR
LATIN AMERICAN & LATINO STUDIES
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY • WASHINGTON, DC

*Message from the Director
August 2015*

The coming semester promises to be rewarding in many ways. As August comes to a close, we have already begun to welcome a new cohort of Research Fellows, at both the doctoral and post-doctoral level, hailing from Brazil, Cuba, and Peru. We also look forward to the arrival of some new faculty, along with the return to campus of faculty, students, and fellows whose work is what drives the Center's programs of research and knowledge diffusion.

While continuing to advance efforts described in previous messages, we hope to advance a number of new initiatives over the course of the academic year. In particular, we are consolidating a growing portfolio of projects devoted to the circumstances of Latino populations in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. In addition to expanding our work surveying Latino entrepreneurs to better understand the development of their businesses, which we are doing in partnership with the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, we have teamed up with faculty from across AU and the recently established Metropolitan Studies Center, in the School of Public Affairs, to launch the first DC Area Survey. The survey, which we hope will be conducted annually, will oversample neighborhoods with substantial Latino populations, supplying information that can inform research on health, employment, education and other issues. Plans are also underway to launch research on how school districts in the region are addressing the needs of thousands of Central American youth who have settled in our community over the past two years, and we are now carrying out the Washington area component of a multi-year project analyzing gangs in the U.S. and El Salvador.

Our Latin America focused research will continue to thrive as well, with plans in place to extend our ongoing research on the drivers of migration from Central America, and to develop projects on economic change, remittances, and community development; lessons for Cuba of transitions from centrally planned economies elsewhere; and religious engagement with debates about climate change. Our hope is that several of these projects will provide opportunities for the Center to highlight the utility of comparative, cross-regional research that transcends the artificial barriers that have too often been encouraged by conventional area and regional studies programs. CLALS is a space where Latinamericanists engage productively with researchers and practitioners whose work is not strictly on the region but rather on other parts of the world that are relevant to understanding Latin America's challenges and opportunities. In foregrounding projects that require collaboration between Latin Americanists and partners from outside the field, at a time when area specialists are too frequently confining themselves to conversations with each other, we hope to inform thinking beyond AU about how area studies ought to be organized and conducted in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

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