

HCC, WSU partner on Latinx Studies transfer pathway

HOLYOKE/WESTFIELD – Westfield State University and Holyoke Community College have partnered to create an affordable pathway for Latinx Studies students holding an associate degree who want to earn their bachelor's and master's degrees.

Under the transfer agreement, this new 2+2+1 program will enable students who receive an associate degree in Latinx Studies from HCC to seamlessly transfer to Westfield and apply their credits toward the degree requirements for a bachelor of arts in ethnic and gender studies with a double major in Spanish. In their fifth year, students can earn a master of public administration from Westfield State University, for a 2+2+1 track.

"Westfield State is excited to enhance its excellent relationship with Holyoke Community College by providing a bridge between an associate's degree in Latinx Studies and a desirable career," said Roy H. Saigo, Ph.D., interim president of Westfield State University. "This partnership highlights the university's commitment to facilitating accessible and affordable degree options for all individuals."

With a student population that is more than 25 percent Hispanic/Latinx, HCC is a federally recognized Hispanic Serving Institution. The College introduced its Latinx Studies major in fall 2019 and is the only community college in Massachusetts that offers one.

"Holyoke Community College's diversity is one of its greatest strengths," said HCC President Christina Royal, Ph.D. "We are always exploring new pathways through which our students can continue their education toward rewarding careers while becoming more active and engaged citizens. This partnership with Westfield State University provides these opportunities and will also create greater space for dialogue around the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic forces that shape our communities."

HCC's Latinx Studies program grew out of a 2015 Bridging Cultures grant the College received from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant's purpose was to help HCC faculty incorporate Latinx Studies material into existing courses while also creating new ones. The result was courses that became corner-

stones of the new major, such as "Latinx Literature," "Latinx Politics," "History of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean," and "Introduction to Latinx Studies."

"It's wonderful to see our faculty develop what began as a grant-funded project into an on-going partnership that will benefit HCC students for years to come," said HCC Dean of Arts and Humanities Kim Hicks.

Requirements for the major include an internship or Latinx civic engagement project as well as electives from a variety of other areas of study, such as anthropology, sociology, communications, history, race and ethnicity and Spanish.

"This is very much an interdisciplinary program that prepares students for transfer to four-year institutions like Westfield State University, and to pursue careers in a range of fields, such as community organizing, law and advocacy, city and urban planning, politics and policy, counseling, and international relations," said HCC Latinx Studies and Spanish Professor Raúl Gutiérrez, coordinator of the Latinx Studies program. "We're looking forward to closely working with Westfield State on this new partnership."

The chair of the WSU's Department of Language and Culture Studies, Hugo Viera, Ph.D., said, "Our department está encantado to be participating in this new interdisciplinary program and looks forward to collaborating more closely with HCC as well as WSU faculty in other departments."

As part of the partnership, Westfield State and HCC will also collaborate on a new inter-institutional "Learning Community" course this spring. The course will blend Westfield State Professor Gabriel Aquino's Race and Ethnic Relations course with an HCC Latin American Studies course taught by Gutiérrez.

"We are really excited about the partnership," said Emily Todd, Ph.D., dean of Westfield State University's College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. "Throughout each student's education and experience at both institutions, faculty and staff will collaboratively work to provide mentorship, support, guidance, and careful advising. Research and internship opportunities will enhance students' experiences, with an emphasis on community-based initiatives."