A History to Call Our Own: Establishing the Nation's First Chicano Studies Department at California State College, Los Angeles

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In the spring of 1968, a small group of Chicano students working in the administration building at California State College, Los Angeles (CSCLA) decided to join the student advocacy organization United Mexican American Students (UMAS). Eager to play a role in the movement, UMAS students used their unique employment positions to gain information on the actions of the administration. UMAS facetiously referred to these students as the CIA, or Chicano Intelligence Agency. Carlos Muñoz Jr., a founding member of Chicano Studies at CSCLA and historian of the Chicano Movement, points out, "[infiltration] was part of [their] strategy, [they] didn't have to do mass protest or shut down the campus."[1] Skillful tactics such as these allowed UMAS leaders to establish a rapport with the administration. Muñoz remembers, "I was able to talk with administrators and department chairs, so all that worked in our favor because we did not have to be militant, we did not demand, we just requested a department."[2]

In 1968, California State College, Los Angeles established the country's first Chicano Studies department. This article examines the department's development by looking at the students' strategies in relation to the community and college administration. Chicano students, intent on making the school more representative of its surrounding community, achieved their goal by working with the administration. While the emergence of Ethnic Studies is often understood as an expression of resistance, this article argues that UMAS did not establish their department through militancy or violent

[1] Carlos Muñoz, interview by author, Berkeley, CA, 13 September, 2013.
[2] Ibid.

confrontation.[3] Instead, Chicano students achieved this through skillful tactics negotiating peacefully with the Mexican American community and university administration.

While one author has looked at Chicano Studies in the context of youth activism another group of historians have examined the field through the wider lens of intellectual history. Youth activism frames Muñoz's study of the Chicano Movement. He describes his own participation as an organizer, student leader and political activist at CSCLA in the late 1960's arguing that Mexican American students challenged the hegemony of political and educational structures. He includes a chapter on Chicano Studies and its establishment as an academic field devoting a small portion to CSCLA.[4] Muñoz briefly touches on the exchange between his advocacy group and the school administration leaving room for research on the details of the department's development and the role played by the administration. Access to education, community praxis, and developing a curriculum made up important factors in the development of the department. Muñoz, nevertheless, falls short of drawing a connection between the department and the community.

Michael Soldatenko's invaluable synthesis of Chicano Studies examines the growth of the field in the context of the Civil Rights era. Chicano intellectuals, struggled to create an educational space within an oppressive academic structure.[5] Soldatenko's intellectual history, however, does not allow for individual case studies or present specific information on CSCLA. Rodolfo Acuña, widely considered one of the founding members of Chicano Studies, shows how historical forces forged the discipline. Additionally, he sheds light on Chicano Movements in the southwestern United States (i.e., New Mexico, Arizona and Texas).[6] While providing detailed information about the Chicano Studies program at San Fernando State College (later CSU Northridge), Acuña's account of the formation of the department at

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[3] From 1968-1969, San Francisco State College (SFSC) witnessed the longest student strike in U.S. history sparking a wave of student rebellions across the country. For more on the Third World Student Movement in San Francisco, see Jason Michael Ferreira, "All Power to the People: A Comparative History of Third Word Radicalism in San Francisco, 1968-1974," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2003).

[4] Carlos Muñoz Jr., *Youth, Identity, Power: The Chicano Movement* (New York: Verso, 1989).

[5] Michael Soldatenko, *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of A Discipline* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009).

[6] Rodolfo Acuña, *The Making of Chicano Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

CSCLA paints too broad a picture. Moreover, he overemphasizes the disorganization and infighting amongst students and the administration. None of the studies offer a close examination of the nation's first Chicano Studies Department at California State College, Los Angeles.

Using oral interviews in combination with photographs, college newspaper articles, and CSCLA Academic Senate Committee minutes, this article examines how Mexican American Studies developed at CSCLA. Oral histories provide insight into the experiences of former students and faculty, as they participated in this historic event. The interviews also help bridge the gap between archival material and the limited number of secondary sources available on the topic of Chicano Studies. *College Times* articles, written and published by students in the late 1960s, help shed new light on the Chicano Movement. While the articles do not grant us access into the lives of the average student, they do offer a glimpse into the experience of politically active minority students. The chronological organization traces the process of creating a Chicano Studies Department emphasizing the exchange that occurred between UMAS students, college organizations, the community, and the administration.

Mexican American Students Organize

A small group of Mexican American students attending CSCLA formed the student organization, United Mexican American Students (UMAS), between 1967 and 1969. Initially an informal social club, Chicano students officially established UMAS on the CSCLA campus in the summer of 1967. This student organization sought to increase Mexican Americans' enrollment at CSCLA, work with the Mexican community, and create a curriculum that allowed these students to gain an understanding of their ethnic identity.[7]

Between 1967 and 1972 students established UMAS chapters and other similar student organizations at colleges and universities throughout California and the Southwest. In southern California, students founded chapters at UCLA, Loyola University, California State College, Long Beach, and San Fernando Valley State College. Chicanos also started the Mexican American Student Confederation (MASC) at San Jose State University and UC Berkeley. In Texas, students formed the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) at Saint Mary's College in San Antonio, Texas and the Mexican American Student Organization (MASO) at the University of Texas, Austin. Simultaneously, UMAS chapters began forming throughout the

[7] "Perez Speaks: The History of UMAS," *College Times*, February 25, 1969.

Southwest.[8] These student groups emphasized the theme of Mexican American progress through education in their efforts to recruit and help Mexican American students stay in college.[9]

Although initially non-political, Mexican American student groups politicized as they came into contact with other Chicano struggles for social justice.[10] In the fall of 1967, Reies López Tijerina, the leader of the Spanish Land Grant Movement in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico, visited CSCLA to speak to the campus community. UMAS held a forum at the free speech area in front of the gymnasium. According to UMAS leader Phillip Castruita, "we wanted to familiarize the campus with the plight of Mexican Americans throughout the Southwest and especially in California and Los Angeles." UMAS also hoped that inviting speakers like Tijerina to campus would increase their membership. However, not all CSCLA Mexican American students participated in UMAS's events or agreed with the organization's goals.[11]

Monte Perez, an undergraduate student majoring in Political Science, was a founding member of UMAS at CSCLA and provides insightful details of UMAS's formation. He served as UMAS's president from the summer of 1968 to the spring of 1969. Upon graduation from CSCLA, he went on to earn a Master's degree and a Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Policy from the University of Southern California. In 1971, Perez returned to CSCLA to serve as Director of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). Perez recalls the absence of Mexican American students on the CSCLA campus: "When I got to CSCLA in 1965, I was shocked to see that there were very few students from my community. There weren't any other students from where I was from, Roosevelt High, Garfield High; those kinds of schools out of East L.A."[12] The underrepresentation of Mexican American students at CSCLA signified a major problem for Chicano students, especially because of the school's location in a community largely populated by Mexican Americans.

In the post-World War II period, impoverished Mexican American communities began to emerge in East Los Angeles. Like other ethnic groups, the Mexican community experienced a population boom. In 1950, approximately 156, 356 Mexican Americans lived in Los Angeles, nearly doubling to 291, 959 in 1960. A disproportionate

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[8] Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power,* 157-160.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] "Tijerina Calls for Justice," *College Times*, October 16, 1967.
[12] Monte Perez, interview by author, Sylmar, CA, 24 September, 2013.

number of Mexican youths grew up in impoverished communities.[13] East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights had historically had diverse ethnic populations with Jewish people, Italians, Japanese, African Americans, and Mexican Americans living amongst each other. Although in the post-War period California received the largest share of the Federal Housing Administration's funding and the government allocated most of these funds toward the Los Angeles area, the Housing Administration denied minorities access to housing loans, especially African Americans and Mexicans.[14] The Jewish population successfully worked around discriminatory government housing policies. Also, they experienced economic success in the service and private business industries, which aided Jewish suburban migration to areas like West Los Angeles and Lakewood. The flight of Jewish people and other ethnicities out of what became labeled "the Mexican barrio," as Mexican immigration continued to increase, economically crippled unincorporated East Los Angeles. This contributed to the further segregation of the Mexican American community. Government discrimination and White flight left the Mexican community to combat the establishment of prisons and industrial waste sites with few resources.[15]

The CSCLA student population was not representative of the surrounding community, which mainly consisted of low income Mexican Americans. Similar to the U.S. Census, CSCLA identified Mexican American students as Spanish surnamed. The *College Times* reported in 1968 that, "out of a student body of more than 20,000 only four percent or 800 students were accounted as Mexican American students."[16] However, since the school did not identify the specific nationality of Spanish surnamed students, it is likely that the actual number of Mexican American students was less than 800. This speaks to a broader issue; Mexican American students could not relate to the campus and many of them did not even know the college existed. According to a *College Times* article, "in many cases, the kids living in the immediate area have no idea what this complex of buildings is. They often confuse the college with the Sybil Brand Institute for

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[13] Ernesto Chávez, *"¡Mi Raza Primero!" (My People First!)*: *Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles 1966-1978* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 43.

[14] Eric Avila, *Popular Culture In The Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy In Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 51-52.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Dennis Coffey, "Mexican-American Studies Focuses on Cal State L.A.," *College Times*, November 15, 1968.

Women, a prison located on the hill across the freeway from CSCLA."[17]

CSCLA Chicano students actively sought each other out to create a sense of community. Perez, like most other Chicanos at the time, tried to figure out where he fit in within the institution. "So I got involved in UMAS. It had started out as a social club. Philip Castruita was the guy who recruited me," recalls Perez. Castruita approached Perez in an attempt to build Chicano *camaradas* (camaraderie) by inviting Perez to socialize off-campus with other Chicano students already involved with UMAS. "So I said sure," Perez recalls, "it was a social environment, not political. That's how we started."[18] UMAS students had concluded that they represented a minority on the CSCLA campus and understood their need to move this social club into a more political role of student advocacy and community engagement. According to Perez:

> In 1967, we decided that we wanted to be engaged with the community. We also decided that we wanted to recruit more students to CSCLA, more Mexican American students, so we created UMAS. We had 25 to 30 Mexican American students from Cal State L.A. come together. We then met with the Mexican American Student Association (MASA) at East LA College (ELAC). They formed before we did, UMAS formed in 1967, and they formed in 1965. So we went to ELAC and we told them that we wanted to do what they were doing, but we wanted to recruit more Mexican Americans to attend CSCLA.[19]

Perez's statement supports the notion that UMAS went from a loosely organized social group of Mexican American students to an advocacy organization that empowered them to become advocates for Chicanos' access to higher education. Perez asserts, "we felt a sense of advocacy, that we needed to step up and with all the stuff going on with civil rights. We felt that we were willing and able to take our rightful place as the students."[20] In its developmental process, the CSCLA chapter of UMAS began drawing ideas and organizational information from other student groups such as MASA at ELAC and other UMAS chapters in the region.

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Perez, interview.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.



Figure 1. UMAS meeting with MASA on the campus of East Los Angeles College, 1967. East LA Archive, Special Collections and Archives, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University, Los Angeles

Access to Higher Education

UMAS's initial goals to increase student enrollment and develop a curriculum relevant to their needs, prompted them to begin negotiations with the university administration. According to Perez, "we wanted to create programs that would address access, at the same time we were also looking at the curriculum. We were very upset at the fact that K-12 education didn't adequately address the history of Mexican Americans."[21] In the late 1960s, Chicano students arriving at CSCLA and other college campuses, many of them first generation college students, did not know their history because of the de-ethnicization and acculturation goals of the American education system. Prior to the 1960s, biological and cultural deficiency theories labeled Mexican American students as "too clannish" who "do not care about education" or as "language handicapped." For that reason schools sought to transmit to Mexican American students the dominant Anglo-American values, norms, and expectations early on in children's education.[22] This classroom colonization restricted Chicano students' knowledge of their own history and contributed to their unequal treatment in K-12 education. This was a major contributing factor in UMAS's decision to advocate for a Chicano Studies curriculum.

Chicano students allied with African American students to increase the number of Chicano and African American student

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Gilda L. Ochoa, *Learning From Latino Teachers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 32.

admissions on campus. While UMAS organized on the CSCLA campus, the Black Student Union (BSU) also began developing. African American students established BSU in March of 1967, several months before UMAS. UMAS and BSU students collaborated with each other to approach the administration. Both groups studied California State College admission policies and requested that the university enforce its policy for admitting minority students as special exceptions under the "2 percent rule." This admission rule permitted students who did not meet GPA requirements to continue their education beyond high school. Perez recalls:

> What we [UMAS and BSU] did is, we went to the administration and said that we know you have admission exceptions based on information we have. So we want you to give us fifty [admission] slots to any students that we decide belong at CSCLA. So the vice-president, [Dr. Kenneth A. Martyn] said 'you go find me 50 students and we will accept them!' So we went to local high schools and we asked students 'hey do you want to go to college?' they said 'sure', so we said 'okay, sign here and congratulations.[23]

In 1968, several other California State colleges began operating outreach programs, which were individually funded by each campus. "As we looked at access, access ended up being EOP, it was legislated in 1969, but we started our own EOP before that," adds Perez.[24] EOP focused on highly motivated low-income first generation college students. In the summer of 1968 CSCLA Associated Students voted to allocate $39,000 to BSU and UMAS's outreach program to pay for administrative costs and supplies.[25] The first wave of "scholarship students" who entered under the "Minority Student Program" was comprised of "a total of sixty-eight entering freshman." [26] Monte Perez of UMAS and Ralph Dawson of BSU served as co-coordinators of this pilot program. At other colleges, similar outreach programs failed. For example, at San Fernando Valley State College, UMAS and the BSU pressured the administration to create an EOP program. This pressure erupted in the fall of 1968 when the assistant football coach used a racial slur against an African American student and kicked him during

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[23] Perez, interview.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Acuña, *Making of Chicano Studies*, 45.
[26] "Historical Time Line: Roots of The Educational Opportunity Program at California State University, Los Angeles," 2005, Booklet, CSULA Special Collections.

a football game. As students erupted, the Los Angeles Police Department swat team intervened, making nineteen student arrests.[27]

UMAS and BSU students owed their success in securing the admission of sixty-eight students to the admission criteria referred to as the "2 percent rule." This admission's rule was enacted statewide when the California State Master Plan for Higher Education became law in 1960. An excerpt from the Master Plan Admissions Policies states: "The University of California was to admit the top 12.5 percent of high school graduates. The California State Colleges were to admit the top 33.3 percent and the remaining student were to attend the community colleges."[28] The man considered the architect of the Master Plan, Dr. Clark Kerr, Chancellor of UC Berkeley states in his memoir: "At my suggestion, there would be "Special Procedure" admissions to the University of 2 percent."[29] Although the term "university" is used in this "Special Procedure" admission policy, the rule also applied to the California State Colleges. This is significant because most Chicano historians who have written on the topic argue that schools reserved this admission policy for athletes and children of alumni. However, Kerr asserts that, "I did think—as critics said—about places for 'tackles on the football team' but … I was also interested in students who had shown ability to overcome disadvantages and deserved 'equal opportunity' consideration."[30] This is the admission policy that UMAS and the BSU gained knowledge of in 1968 and put to use as Kerr partly intended it to.

Chicano students experienced culture shock when they entered CSCLA. According to Perez, "the majority of faculty members and the student body were Anglo."[31] Discrimination had left most Chicanos not only disadvantaged educationally but they also distrusted American institutions and promises of equality. According to sociologist William Sewell's 1971 study, Chicanos were likely to distrust educational programs coordinated or implemented by a White majority, which could lead to Chicanos' questioning the relevance of higher education for their personal and community needs.[32] In addition, required courses that ignored the Chicano experience compounded Chicanos' feelings of

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[27] Acuña, *Making of Chicano Studies*, 49.
[28] Clark Kerr, *The Gold and The Blue: A Personal Memoir of the University of California, 1949-1967, Volume One, Academic Triumphs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 183.
[29] Ibid., 184.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Perez, interview.
[32] William H. Sewell, "Inequality of Opportunity for Higher Education," *American Sociological Review* 36, no. 5 (October 1971): 805.

cultural alienation. Perez describes this experience as another driving force to create a curriculum for a Chicano Studies department.[33] Chicano students wanted a curriculum and pedagogy that supported and fostered their cultural identity. Perez articulates the connection between access to higher education and curriculum: “We wanted to know what is our history? Where are we now? Where are we going? So, Chicano Studies was not created just for cultural or historical reasons, it was created to be supportive of EOP so that our students would be successful.”[34]

Educational and Community Praxis

UMAS and BSU students also worked with the college to establish two community centers to provide tutoring and counseling services for minority students. At these community centers, following CSCLA administration's recommendation, UMAS motivated Mexican American high school students to attend college. The center located at 3045 East Whittier Boulevard in East Los Angeles served the Mexican American community, and the other opened in South Central Los Angeles at 4506 South Western Avenue to service what they called the "Negro community."[35] These community centers received funding through a $135,000 Rockefeller Foundation grant, which paid for office space, supplies, and the salaries of the UMAS and BSU students who assumed responsibility for the administration of these off-campus facilities. A 1968 CSCLA Press Release explained, “the purpose of these community centers is to bring minority high school students in contact with young men and women already attending the college who faced similar problems at one time.”[36] Carlos Muñoz, a graduate student in government describes the progress taking place at these centers, “these centers were open to all students. We provided counseling for black and brown students who sought help here but maybe lived far from the campus.” Muñoz also states that the East Los Angeles Center structured tutoring study sessions for Chicanos whose teachers failed to do their jobs. According to Muñoz, “we wanted to

[33] Perez, interview.
[34] Ibid.
[35] California State College, Los Angeles, Press Release, August 28, 1968, CSCLA Special Collections.
[36] Ibid.

help those who didn't acquire the same tools as the kids in West Los Angeles."[37]

UMAS also found other creative ways to increase the engagement of the Mexican American community on campus. For example, on May 18, 1968, UMAS held a family event fittingly titled, "Community Day on Campus." This occasion was "planned and organized by UMAS, [and] the day gained notable support from Educational Progress in the Community, the Associated Students, the administration, and several other campus offices."[38] UMAS invited theatre performers, like Luis Valdez and "El Teatro Campesino," to entertain and educate the event's attendees. Valdez, the best-known Chicano cultural artist at the time, played *corridos* [Mexican songs themed in history, oppression, or peasants] that popularized the Chicanos struggle for liberation in the United States.[39] Through this event, UMAS sought to introduce the Mexican American community to the campus and vice versa. UMAS worked with the college to attract and empower students to apply for admission. UMAS secretary Herlinda Quintero, for example, urged high school student guests to "enroll here to make the college more representative of the Mexican American community."[40] Addressing the 700 mostly Mexican American guests who attended the six-hour program of entertainment, feasting and straightforward talk, UMAS president Muñoz remarked, "whatever our political beliefs, we must face the fact that our people need our help." In addition, CSCLA President Robert A. Greenlee pointed out that "Cal



Figure 2. Poster from UMAS-sponsored Community Day, May,18 1968. Claudia Baltazar Poster Collection, Special Collections and Archives, John F. Kennedy Memorial Library, California State University, Los Angeles

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[37] Andrew Merrill, "UMAS Seeks to Upgrade Community," *College Times*, July 12, 1968.

[38] "UMAS Brings 700 from community to campus," Pamphlet, May 18, 1968, CSULA Special Collections.

[39] Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*, 6th ed. (New York: Harper Collins Press, 2007), 266.

[40] "UMAS brings 700," May 18, 1968.

State L.A. had been located in East L.A. to attract Mexican American students especially."[41] Events like "Community Day" brought to the CSCLA campus, adults and students from the Mexican community, where they received education through song, music, and theatre. High school students returned to their community with knowledge they had received, which proved significant because community involvement become part of the curriculum development process of the nascent Chicano studies department.

Developing a New Department

Muñoz, in negotiation with Black Student Union leader Bobby Smith, initiated the process of developing a Chicano Studies Department. Muñoz remembers, "Once we started thinking about establishing a department, I was working closely with the Black Student Union since they were also working on establishing a Department for Black Studies. So when I was president I got together with [Smith]."[42] Muñoz and Smith worked together to map out a framework to design a curriculum for each proposed department. Only then did they feel prepared to begin negotiating with the college administration. On November 26, 1968, the *College Times* reported, "Mexican American students were talking about the need to make [CSCLA] more meaningful to the Mexican American people who surrounded it. They negotiated with the faculty and began exploring ways and means to bring this about." [43]

Muñoz understood the need to develop a professional academic proposal that would be acceptable to the college administration. Muñoz recalls, "When we started thinking about who was on the faculty that was going to be willing to help us prepare our proposal, we thought of Ralph Guzman." Guzman, an East L.A. native and one of the only Mexican American professors on campus, took over writing the proposal while Muñoz was dealing with the Los Angeles County Court system for his participation in the East Los Angeles High School walkouts. Muñoz, Sal Castro and eleven other Mexican American advocates had been arrested and imprisoned for several days that summer.[44]

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Muñoz, interview.
[43] "State Funds Hoped for Minority Studies," *College Times*, November 26, 1968.
[44] Andrew Merrill, "Muñoz Explains Arrest as Absurd," *College Times*, June 25, 1968.

UMAS worked with the governing organization of the student body, Associated Students, on the difficult process of securing funds. The college administration would not pay for the setup of such a program until courses were offered and a proper proposal was submitted. In other words, UMAS needed to get the project off the ground with limited funding. UMAS approached the Associated Students at a Board of Directors meeting to make their case for student government funding. "If the State won't pay for it, the CSCLA students will," seemed to be the prevailing attitude at the Board of Directors meeting. Associated Students approved $39,000 to be allocated for the Minority Studies Program. [45] These funds, also used for community events, were made possible by cuts to other student-sponsored programs. The Art Department took a small cut while the Student Handbook, *Interchange Magazine*, and the Model United Nations were canceled. Additionally, the homecoming budget was reduced to just $20.[46] Perez, president of UMAS at the time, recalls receiving the funds, "[the money] helped pay for [Guzman's] consulting fees."[47] UMAS was able to secure funding by working with the Associated Students.

With funding secured and the end of summer quickly approaching, UMAS returned to the issue of Guzman's proposal. According to Muñoz, "the agreement was that it would need to be approved by UMAS prior to its submission to the College administration."[48] UMAS quickly rejected the proposal. The professor proposed a Mexican-American Studies Center, which was not going to have a curriculum component. The proposal reads, "This program is designed for students who elect to study this important minority group through the interdisciplinary approach or plan to engage in such professions as government service, education, social work, or others where knowledge of this subject would enhance professional opportunities."[49] Guzman called for a center similar to those that existed in Latin American Studies. There were no courses to be offered by a Mexican American Studies Department.[50] Ultimately, UMAS sought the creation of an autonomous department equal in status to

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[45] Joseph Korpsak and Mathan Zeitlin, "Interim Comparison of 1958-59 and 1968-69 A.S. Revenues and Expenditures" (Los Angeles, CA: The Associated Students, INC., California State College, Los Angeles, January, 1969, Photocopied), 15.
[46] Charlie Roblin, "Students Pay for Program," *College Times,* July 12, 1968.
[47] Perez, interview.
[48] Muñoz, interview.
[49] Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 159.
[50] Muñoz, interview.

other academic departments.[51] The students held a meeting to address the rejection of the proposal and voted to remove Guzman from his position as coordinator. According to Muñoz, "It didn't work out, we held a meeting and Ralph got angry and stormed out." [52] Perez recalls Guzman's departure, "We were students and at the time, very anxious and very impatient, [and] we wanted change now…I was the one that had to tell him [his] services were no longer needed."[53] The Chicano students had a framework to create a department. Unfortunately, with the removal of Guzman, they needed a new connection to the administration.

Later that summer, UMAS asked Muñoz to take over the process of developing the department. Still working on his Master's degree, Muñoz reluctantly accepted. He felt a sense of responsibility to follow through on the project he and other UMAS members helped to initiate.[54] Muñoz shouldered the responsibility while UMAS entered into negotiation with the CSCLA Vice President of Academic Affairs, Leonard G. Mathy. According to Muñoz,

> They agreed to give us a department…I would be the guy to provide the direction, the guidance to contact faculty and recruit them…I was hired on I don't know what kind of funding but I was not as a professor…I was hired as staff to do these particular preliminaries, and then in the fall I was hired as an instructor to teach one of the first classes. This all happened very fast, so I hired another graduate student named Gilbert Gonzales to teach the second class.[55]

The college administration supported the idea and began to design a structure that would officially support the establishment of a Minority Studies Department.

With CSCLA at the forefront, student activists working with sympathetic faculty, developed proposals for the creation of Chicano Studies Programs on several California State University campuses during the 1968-1969 academic year. The faculty of these fledgling departments consisted often of students who faced the nearly impossible task of creating a curriculum and developing an academic program.[56] The proposals varied widely; UCLA suggested a more research based Chicano Studies Center while San Francisco State

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[51] Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 159.
[52] Muñoz, interview.
[53] Perez, interview.
[54] Muñoz, iInterview.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Soldatenko, *Chicano Studies*, 12.

pushed for Raza Studies. At San Fernando Valley State College, Acuña called for the creation of a Mexican American Studies Department with a traditional department status.[57] Finally, San Fernando Valley State College followed suit and established their Chicano Studies Department in the spring of 1969.[58]

History Is Made

CSCLA's Chicano Studies program began in the fall of 1968 with four classes, two lower and two upper division courses, designed to examine Mexican American communities. Muñoz taught Mexican American 100, a lower division introductory course oriented toward incoming Chicano high school students EOP brought to the campus, which helped them transition to college level work.[59] Gonzalez taught Mexican American 111, a course on Mexican American History and culture from Pre-Columbian Mexico to contemporary barrio culture.[60] Guzman taught the two upper division classes through the Government Department. According to Guzman, "This [was] the first time anywhere in the United States that a course of study [had] been set up on a scholarly level which directly [pertained] to Mexican American problems and education."[61]

After its founding, the Mexican American Studies Department stayed in touch with the Mexican American community. Acting chair Rudy Holguin invited Louise Negrete to teach a class, but first Negrete needed to get the approval of the community-based *La Mesa Directiva* (board of directors). According to Negrete, "La Mesa Directiva was an organization made up of community members, activists, faculty, and student activists such as UMAS on campus. They met in the basement of the campus library and whoever showed up had a vote, it was loosely organized." The Mexican American Studies Department did not want the college administration to know the integral role assumed by *La Mesa Directiva*. They told the administration they were an advisory group with limited input. When Negrete met with *La Mesa Directiva* to interview for the Chicano Studies position there were no questions regarding his academic or professional background. Instead, they

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[57] Muñoz, *Youth, Identity, Power*, 160.
[58] Acuña, *Making of Chicano Studies*, 58.
[59] "State Funds Hoped," *College Times.*
[60] California State College, Los Angeles General Catalog 1969-1970, CSCLA Special Collections.
[61] Coffey, "Mexican-American Studies."

placed more emphasis on his commitment to the Chicano Movement.[62] *La Mesa Directiva* had a similar relationship with other Chicano Studies Departments in the area. At San Fernando Valley State College, for instance, prospective faculty interviewed with *La Mesa Directiva*, the department chair, and MECHA. Those hired and later requested to resign by *La Mesa Directiva* did so out of respect for the community underscoring the level of authority the community-based organization unofficially wielded in the administration of Mexican American Studies programs in California. [63]

Early curricula revolved around contemporary articles from newspapers and magazines. Negrete recalls, "We created this from nothing. Very few books were written about the Mexican-American experience.[64] Negrete, who also served as the Director of California Project Head Start in the Los Angeles area, continues, "I started teaching one class, Chicano Politics, because I had past professional experience working in Sacramento as a consultant to the Assembly State Personnel and Veterans Affairs Committee so I knew what the Democrats were doing at the time."[65] In the 1969 catalog, the college offered a course titled Mexican American 150, "Mexican Americans and Contemporary Politics."[66] Traditional Mexican holidays, such as Cinco de Mayo, Mexican Independence Day, and Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead), were also integrated into the curriculum. From 1968 to 1971, Mexican American Studies could not award undergraduate degrees. In 1971, Negrete wrote a proposal asking for the authority to do so. The faculty continued to work on improving the department curriculum and developing an academic identity of its own. Yet, the department was still negotiating with the college administration to obtain official department status.

Administrative Action Follows

In the fall of 1968, the administration was passing resolutions through formal channels to grant official status to the department. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic pace at which CSCLA committees operated, delayed the official establishment of the Mexican American Studies Department. Nevertheless, the college administration was true

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[62] Louis Negrete, Interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, 4, November 2013.
[63] Acuña, *Making of Chicano Studies*, 92-93.
[64] Negrete, interview.
[65] Ibid.
[66] California State College, Los Angeles General Catalog 1969-1970, CSCLA Special Collections.

to their promise to Muñoz; the movement in the academic senate had begun prior to fall semester. In a November 12, 1968 Fiscal Affairs Committee memorandum to Dr. Charles Clark, Chairman of the CSCLA Academic Senate, the committee passed a resolution stating,

> The Academic Senate at CSCLA has requested the Vice President for Academic Affairs to exert every effort to develop, without delay, a viable program of minority studies, thus making clear the college's commitment to and intention of meeting the needs of all its students… The due process of academic government obviate the immediate and hasty establishment of new administrative academic entities…[and] that the proposed minority studies programs be placed under the jurisdiction of the School of Letters and Science, resolved, that the fiscal support be shared equitably by all schools of the college.[67]

The college admitted to being slow in meeting the needs of their minority students. The resolution bid the Vice President for Academic Affairs to "develop a viable program for minority studies." [68] The VPAA, however, had already hired Muñoz to create such a program in the summer 1968. What is more, in preparation for department status, the committee designated a college building to house the "proposed minority studies programs." The committee applied the term "programs" to leave room for the establishment of a Black Studies Department in addition to the Chicano Studies program already in the works.

This resolution garnered approval by the Academic Senate on November 26, 1968. In a final move, President John A. Greenlee approved the resolution regarding minority studies on December 27, 1968.[69] The 1969-1970 General Catalog reads, "The program of this newly established department is administered by acting department chairman, Gilbert Gonzalez, Instructor, Mexican American Studies…Students should consult the departmental office for information about additional courses and/ or degree programs (major and minor) which are being developed."[70] Department status had already been given while the Mexican American program was still in the developmental stage. This information however, did not make into

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[67] California State College, Los Angeles Fiscal Affairs Committee Resolution, October 12, 1968, CSULA Special Collections.
[68] Ibid.
[69] California State College, Los Angeles Academic Senate Memorandum, January 16, 1969, CSCLA Special Collections.
[70] California State College, Los Angeles General Catalog 1969-1970, CSCLA Special Collections.

the 1967-1969 college catalog which had been published in 1967.CSCLA established the first Mexican American Studies Department in the nation in the fall of 1968.

This article has examined the development of the first Chicano Studies Department in the United States at CSCLA. It has shown that the Chicano student group United Mexican American Students (UMAS) established the Chicano Studies Department with the assistance of the community, other university programs, and the university administration. UMAS students acted as their own educational advocates, who in collaboration with BSU students, requested that the college administration admit more minority students under the "2 percent rule." UMAS also engaged with the community by organizing events such as “Community Day” to raise awareness about the lack of Chicano students attending CSCLA. Working together to establish a presence in the community, UMAS and the college administration created community centers to provide tutoring and counseling support for minority students. Moreover, to receive initial funding for a proposed department, UMAS negotiated with the student government body, Associated Students, while working with BSU students to discuss ideas about forming an academic department. UMAS also worked with faculty by, for example, recruiting Ralph Guzman to develop a framework for a departmental proposal. Lastly, UMAS students negotiated with the college administration, as Carlos Muñoz organized and hired instructors to introduce the nation’s first Mexican American Studies Department in the fall of 1968. The academic senate and CSCLA president’s approval followed, giving official departmental recognition in the 1969 college catalog.

This case study calls for further research as the department continued to develop in the following decades. A decade after its founding, the Chicano Studies Department witnessed a deterioration of its connection with the community, which had been instrumental in its founding. Factions between part-time and full-time faculty emerged, as the latter sought tenure status. Part-time instructors, who constituted the majority of the Department's faculty, had strong ties with the community, while tenure-track faculty members had a stronger commitment to scholarship. In March of 1982, violence erupted on and off the CSCLA campus as one Chicano Studies professor had his car vandalized in a campus parking lot and his house garage fire bombed.[71] These developments demand further research to expand upon the story of this historically significant Chicano Studies Department.

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[71] Claire Spiegel, “Feud Among Professors May Not Be Just Academic,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1982.