Our University to Shape

October 22nd, 2018

The following document has been produced by Hispanic/Latinx students at the University of Virginia. Thank you to all who have supported us in our efforts to ensure the University becomes an equitable and inclusive environment for the Hispanic/Latinx community.

We would also like to acknowledge Towards a Better University, a proposal created by Black students at the University of Virginia. That document was our inspiration and paved the way for minority voices to be heard for generations to come.

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Afro-Latinx Student Organization

DREAMers on Grounds

Hispanic American Network at Darden

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Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc.

Latino Medical Student Association

Latino Student Network

Latinx Graduate Student Alliance

Latinx Leadership Institute

Latinx Student Alliance

Minority Rights Coalition

Multicultural Greek Council

Political Latinxs United for Movement & Action in Society

Sigma Lambda Upsilon/Señoritas Latinas Unidas Sorority Inc.

Student Council

Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers

Towards a Better Latin America

University Salsa Club

UVA Graduate Coalition for Liberation

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

This is a transformative and historical time within the University of Virginia. As we welcome the bicentennial and the arrival of UVA's ninth president, we must reflect on how far we have come as a University and evaluate how far we have yet to go. Throughout the past two hundred years, the University has seen waves of progress and periods of backlash to that progress. Oftentimes, students at the University have been the primary drivers of this progress. Students elected their first black Student Council President in 1969. After the support of student activists and empathetic allies in administrative offices, women were finally allowed to pursue higher education in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1970. Recently, the students of UVA elected their first Latinx Student Council President in 2017. At an institution founded on student self-governance, students can build bridges that help support the community at large.

This year, the University has just admitted its "most diverse class" in history. Of the 3,837 students within the Class of 2022, 1,130 of them self-identify as a minority, which is a 35 percent increase in minority student enrollment since 2013[1]. This is a notable achievement towards improving diversity at the University. However, the University cannot celebrate this when many marginalized students at the University feel underserved, underrepresented, and isolated. It is not enough to simply pursue a diverse student body. Embracing diversity must be part of the ethos at UVA, not just a box to be checked. In 2013 at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, James E. Ryan began a community-wide conversation on "Fulfilling the Promise of Diversity." This promise was intended to prepare students for careers working in diverse environments, and it resulted in new courses, prominent speakers, and teaching workshops related to diversity and inclusion. Ryan stated, "Teachers need to understand the ways in which they can enable students to feel welcome and like they truly belong."[2] Similarly, the University of Virginia needs to fulfill its own promise of diversity. We must not rest until we foster a truly supportive and welcoming environment for our minority

[1] UVA Today, "Inside the Class of 2022"
https://news.virginia.edu/content/first-year-class-largest-most-diverse-uva-history
[2] Harvard Graduate School of Education, "Fulfilling the Promise of Diversity"
https://conversation.gse.harvard.edu

students. In order for this environmental transformation to happen, a series of comprehensive steps must be taken.

We turn towards the future with our proposal entitled "Our University to Shape." We intentionally released this proposal after the Inauguration of the University's ninth president, James E. Ryan. We urge University administration and other members of the University community to utilize this proposal as a guide for how to begin improving the experiences for Hispanic/Latinx students at the University of Virginia. These strategies include 1) intensified efforts to increase the percentage of Hispanic/Latinx students at the University and 2) developing a sufficient and comprehensive infrastructure to support Hispanic/Latinx students after their admittance to the University. We call on administrators to use this proposal as a guide in order to work from within, to serve as allies to all minority students. Each class of students is transient in nature, but the desires and interests of the Hispanic/Latinx students span across generations. We hope that the strategies and solutions within this document will propel the well-being and success of the Hispanic/Latinx community forward and provide us the freedom to shape the University into one that is truly our own.

SECTION II: LATINX PRESENCE ON GROUNDS

Latinx Student Center

The Hispanic/Latinx community at UVA currently shares a multicultural space with other minoritized groups. The Multicultural Student Center (MSC), is a space that aims to be "a student-centered, collaborative space that supports underrepresented and marginalized communities, while cultivating the holistic empowerment of all students."[3] Although the staff in the Multicultural Student Services work tirelessly to provide resources for students, the space is incapable of truly addressing the distinct experience and needs of the Hispanic/Latinx community. The Hispanic/Latinx community at UVA requires its own center to specifically address the

[3] Multicultural Student Services, "Multicultural Student Center" https://multicultural.virginia.edu/multicultural-student-center

socioeconomic barriers, cultural stereotyping, and institutional marginalization that often impact the Hispanic/Latinx college experience. Academic, social, and financial stress that may come with being a Hispanic/Latinx college student stems from various sources: language barriers, immigration status, the first-generation college experience, competing community-based pressures, a severe lack of reliable cultural capital that one can depend on, etc. This space would serve as a location for students in the community to feel accepted, supported, and build a stronger sense of community.

The Hispanic/Latinx cultural and community center envisioned is not a new concept and has been accomplished by other universities. Virginia Tech, for example, established its own Hispanic/Latinx cultural and community center in July 2016. Known as El Centro, this space serves as Tech's safe space and resource hub for those who identify as Hispanic and/or Latinx as well as for allies.[4] It must be noted that Virginia Tech's Hispanic/Latinx population makes up a similar proportion of the student body (6.44%) as the Hispanic/Latinx community at UVA does[5]. Many other universities have ensured that their respective Hispanic/Latinx students are provided with a space. These universities include but are *not* limited to the University of Illinois at Chicago who established its Rafael Cintrón Ortiz Latino Cultural Center in 1976, Northeastern University who established its Latinx Student Cultural Center in 1997, Purdue University who established its Latino Cultural Center in 2003, and Emory University who established its Centro Latino space is 2015. A space similar to these would be more than just a location to study or hold social events on Grounds. The enactment of this space would serve as a measure of support and acknowledgement of our growing presence.

Guided tours given in Spanish and Portuguese

Students have been told by the Office of Admission that the University does not provide tours in Spanish, but students may pay a significant amount to hire a professional interpreter. At the same time, members of the University Guide Service (UGS) at the University of Virginia do provide

[4] Virginia Tech, "Cultural and Community Centers: Student Affairs" https://ccc.vt.edu/advocacy/Cultural_Community_Centers/hispanic-latino-cultural-center.html
[5] Virginia Tech, "On Campus Race/Ethnicity Enrolllment - All Virginia Tech" https://irweb.ir.vt.edu/webtest/EnrollmentSummary.aspx

tours translated in Spanish. Although UGS does provide these translated tours, the responsibility of this charge should not solely rest on the few student guides who speak fluent Spanish. The Office of Admission should provide professional translators that are able to translate important information about the University's services, history, and programs to students and their families. In addition to providing these resources, the Office of Admission needs to improve their communication of available services.

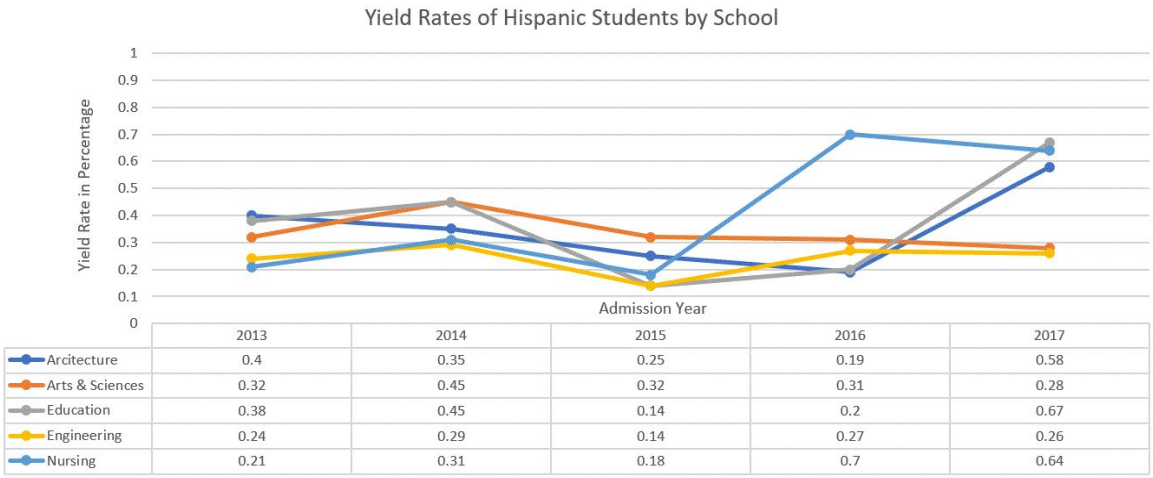
The purpose of admission events is to engage students and encourage their matriculation into the University. It is not possible for students to be fully engaged if they are acting as translators for their families in an English-dominated landscape. While admissions is responsible for organizing these services, the Outreach Office of Admissions is already limited in funding and manpower. The President's Office should provide additional resources to this office in order for them to ensure effective reaching and welcoming of Latinx students and families.

Improving yield rates of Latinx students

In order to continue increasing diversity within the student body and improving matriculation rates of minoritized students, the Office of Admissions must assess its strategies in community outreach and recruitment. Hispanic/Latinx community members must collaborate with the Office of Admissions to ensure that outreach in urban, rural, and low-income communities is being adequately conducted. It is also imperative to discuss the improvement of prospective student events to guarantee that both students and families have the necessary documentation, resources, and information about student services on Grounds. Multicultural student organizations should be involved with the development and implementation of admissions events; however, the Office of Admissions must take charge in bolstering the event programming and resources it offers to its prospective and admitted minority communities.

After evaluating the yield rate for Hispanic/Latinx students over the past five years at the University of Virginia, it is clear that Hispanic/Latinx yield rates have fluctuated greatly throughout

the years.[6] (Figure 1). This is evident when analyzing the decrease in all schools yield rates of Hispanic/Latinx students in 2015, the increase in yield rates for the nursing school in 2016, and the sharp increase in the Architecture School and Curry School of Education in 2017. While there have been recent improvements in the Architecture, Education, and Nursing schools, there have been little to no changes in the yield rates for the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the College of Arts and Sciences. In fact, the School of Arts and Sciences has been experiencing a decrease in their yield rate for Hispanic/Latinx students since the 2014 admission year.



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Arcitecture	0.4	0.35	0.25	0.19	0.58
Arts & Sciences	0.32	0.45	0.32	0.31	0.28
Education	0.38	0.45	0.14	0.2	0.67
Engineering	0.24	0.29	0.14	0.27	0.26
Nursing	0.21	0.31	0.18	0.7	0.64

Figure 1: *Yield Rates of Hispanic Students by School from 2013-2017 at the University of Virginia*

When comparing the yield rates of all ethnic groups across the University's schools, Hispanic/Latinx yield rates tend to be lower compared to all other groups, with the exception of non-residents and Native Americans.[7]

Based on these statistics, it is clear that there is a need for improvement in the recruitment process for Hispanic/Latinx students. By increasing recruitment efforts and providing more resources that are accessible and beneficial to students and their families, the Hispanic/Latinx community may hopefully see an increase in yield rates because students may be more inclined to

[6] University of Virginia, "Institutional Assessment and Studies - Undergraduate Admissions" https://ias.virginia.edu/university-stats-facts/undergraduate-admissions
[7] University of Virginia, "Institutional Assessment and Studies - Undergraduate Admissions" https://ias.virginia.edu/university-stats-facts/undergraduate-admissions

accept offers given to them by these schools. These recruitment efforts should take place in both rural and urban areas across the country, as well as across different socioeconomic backgrounds. The main goal of these recruitment efforts should be to raise the percentage of the Hispanic/Latinx community in order to reflect the demographics of the Commonwealth of Virginia - nine percent of the population of Virginia[8]. These recruitment efforts should focus on giving prospective students information on scholarships, academic programs, and diversity initiatives to ensure the inclusion of our community.

SECTION III: LATINX IN ACADEMICS

Revamped curriculum to include more courses on Hispanic/Latinx topics, as well as underrepresented and minoritized groups

For the 2018-2019 academic year, there will be a total of five Latinx studies courses. The majority of these classes are taught by the same professor. The Hispanic/Latinx community needs more courses offered on topics surrounding the Hispanic/Latinx identity. This is not only an opportunity for students to learn more about Hispanic/Latinx history, but it would also offer students with an opportunity to foster academic discussion on the diversity of history and cultures of Latin America, the Caribbean, and U.S. Latinxs. As a liberal arts and top academic institution, UVA has an obligation to its students to provide a wide breadth of courses that cover a variety of cultural identities. This issue not only pertains to the Hispanic/Latinx community, but also to all underrepresented minoritized communities on Grounds (Asian-American, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, LGBTQ+, etc.).

The University of Virginia can be acclaimed for developing a diverse and inclusive curriculum that truly represents the demographics of the students it admits. Department chairs and school deans must consider topics relating to minoritized groups when constructing their hiring plans and proposing their budgets from the upcoming academic year. The process of constructing

[8] United States Census Bureau, "Quick Facts - Virginia" "https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/va/RHI725217

these hiring plans must be mindful that input from students of certain communities, such as the Hispanic/Latinx community, must be sought out, respected, and implemented. This is an urgent need in the fields of the social sciences and the humanities, particularly in the disciplines of history, politics, anthropology, sociology, American studies, and media studies. The Hispanic/Latinx and broader community, deserves the opportunity to learn about themselves and their histories as others can and have. The ability to learn about oneself in the realm of academia is inherently empowering for marginalized communities.

A Latin American Studies program currently exists; however, the ability for students in the Latin American Studies major to complete their course requirements becomes more difficult as the amount of students who are interested in the program increases, while faculty numbers in this program remain stagnant or decrease. The University needs more faculty who can teach in fields related to Latin American studies.

Creation of a Latinx Studies program

The Asian Leaders Council is planning on releasing a proposal to advocate for the departmentalization of the American Studies Program. Through the establishment of the American Studies Department, the creation of the Latinx Studies major program is feasible and practical. Although a Latinx Studies minor currently exists, many community members have voiced their desire for a robust and structured academic curriculum centered on Latinx Studies.

Across the country, particularly where there exists high populations of Latinx students, there are Chicanx/Latinx Studies programs in place. In many cases, these programs attract students to their universities because of the attention and resources afforded to the programs and faculty there. The University of Virginia would benefit from having a Latinx Studies program that would attract potential Hispanic/Latinx students and signal that the University values their culture and history. As the University prides itself in its academic excellence, it should broaden its horizons to include ethnic studies programs such as Latinx Studies.

Increasing Latinx Faculty and Staff

According to the UVA Diversity Dashboard statistics, approximately 2.82% of University of Virginia faculty members[9] and 1.71% of staff identify as Hispanic/Latinx.[10] It is imperative that the University prioritizes increasing diversity in its administrative and professional offices in order to ensure Hispanic/Latinx student success and admission. This University cannot adequately serve and provide for Hispanic/Latinx students if its faculty is not representative of Hispanic/Latinx experiences. A Journal of Student Affairs study, shows that the creation of support networks of peers and increasing Latinx faculty role models are strategies that reduce stress among Hispanic/Latinx students.[11] An increased presence of Hispanic/Latinx faculty offers Hispanic/Latinx students and their families a sense of comfortability knowing that a part of the UVA institution may be able to resonate with their own personal experiences. It is beneficial for the University community to have diversity in faculty throughout departments and disciplines because Hispanic/Latinx students fare better academically and socially with Hispanic/Latinx faculty and mentor networks.

In order to improve diversity in faculty, the University must increase its recruitment efforts of Hispanic/Latinx representation amongst faculty and administrative staff. Potential solutions to addressing this issue may be the use of an outside consulting firm that specializes in minority recruitment and hiring. A reevaluation of the diversity plans enacted by each school at the university can help ensure that UVA is offering a structure that not only successfully recruits a diverse pool of candidates, but also offers them the resources that may encourage these professionals to accept and remain at the University.

[9] Diversity Dashboard of the University of Virginia, "Faculty - All - 2017" http://diversitydata.virginia.edu/Home/Details/Faculty
[10] Diversity Dashboard of the University of Virginia, "Staff - All - 2017" http://diversitydata.virginia.edu/Home/Details/Staff
[11] https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2202/1949-6605.1360?needAccess=true

SECTION IV: ALLOCATION OF SERVICES AND RESOURCES

The expansion of Multicultural Student Services and Multicultural Student Spaces

When Multicultural Student Services (MSS), in coordination with Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA), constructs its yearly budget in the fall, there must be greater attention to ensuring that funding for services that directly impact Latinx students is given the appropriate attention it deserves. For example, there are currently three professional staffers in MSS tasked with supporting students who identify as multicultural. The staff at MSS has gone to amazing lengths to help support the multicultural community, but it should not rest on the shoulders of two current staff members and one future staff member to support approximately a fifth of the undergraduate population at UVA**.** Therefore, it is necessary that VPSA and the Office of the Dean of Students (ODOS) provide more funds to the MSS as they consider their annual budget proposal. Increased funding will aid in the increased positions for professional staff, opportunities for student organizations, and assurance that programs like the Latinx Leadership Institute (LLI), the Hispanic/Latinx Peer Mentoring Program (PMP), the Women's Asian American Leadership Initiative (WAALI), the Asian Pacific American Leadership Training Institute (APALTI), and the Muslim Institute for Leadership and Empowerment (MILE) are protected. These student directed programs are at the pinnacle of minority student self-governance and should therefore receive the institutional support of a comfortably-funded Multicultural Student Services.

Multicultural Student Services also manages the Multicultural Student Center, located in the lower level of Newcomb Hall. Although the Multicultural Student Center is a beloved and a valued location on Grounds, the size is insufficient for the needs of multicultural students and organizations. Knowing that space is at a premium at UVA, it is understandable that expanding beyond the MSC is no small task; however, the MSC currently is not sufficient to "fulfill the promise of diversity" in empowering and supporting all students that identify as multicultural. Potential areas for expansion include the current University Guide Service office once UGS moves back into Pavilion VIII, spaces vacated after the Emmett-Ivy Corridor expansion is complete, and the renovated Student Activities Building.

Translation of important University of Virginia documentation into major languages

Student Financial Services, like the majority of University offices, only provides financial aid documentation in English. The University must require that all major offices, especially Admissions and Student Financial Services, have their documentation translated into major languages. Students and their families should feel confident about the process of applying and their arrival at the University. It is not the responsibility of students to act as translators for their families. Language at a University that offers robust language programs should not be a barrier for any person at this university, whether student, community members, faculty, or staff.

The University must hire a professional translation service to translate University documentation into major languages. It should no longer be the role of students to translate these comprehensive and complicated documents for a top academic institution. We, as students, do value student self-governance, but the UVA administration must be vigilant as to when student self-governance becomes free labor for the university.

Implementation of mandatory UndocuAlly, Safe Space, and Multicultural trainings for all UVA faculty and staff

All University faculty and staff must be trained in UndocuAlly, Safe Space, and Cultural Competency. These trainings are transformational in several ways. First and foremost, they transform the student experience. Students must feel confident that their professors support them despite differences in their ideologies, cultural/ethnic identities, gender, sexual orientation, or race. New faculty orientation ought to contain in-depth conversations about how professors must support minority students, including undocumented students. Conversations with students over lunch is a good first step, but the Provost's Office and all of the University's Deans should affirm their statements of Diversity and Inclusion by training their faculty to treat students with respect and empathy.

For students to fully engage in the classroom, they must also feel comfortable and supported in their learning environment. The language used by a faculty member, whether in lectures or

personal conversations, may drastically impact a student's experience inside and outside of the classroom. Faculty members who understand the unique barriers faced by undocumented, LGBTQ+, and multicultural students will offer more comprehensive assistance and accessibility to students. These trainings also transform their members as they are often the very first introduction that trainees have to issues specifically regarding these marginalized communities. As they work to transform both faculty and students, these trainings push the University to lead the way in diversity, equity, inclusion, and empowerment.

Financial Support

In the wake of August 11th and 12th, the Board of Visitors enacted considerable expansions to the Blue Ridge Scholars and University Achievement Award (UAA), both scholarship programs that help underrepresented and underserved students.[12] The University should thoughtfully consider a continued investment in these programs in order improve accessibility for deserving students who struggle with affordability. In addition to the expansion of scholarship programs, the University must also consider the development of scholarships and grants for the continued education of minority students. It is especially important that the University provides grants and scholarships to support undocumented and other minoritized students.

Additionally, many low-income and out-of-state students must enroll in the UVA Aetna student health insurance, which creates an additional financial burden for students in need. During the last academic year, Student Financial Services was not able to provide sufficient grant funding to cover the expansion of financial aid due to the enrollment of Aetna. The University must provide grants for students who cannot afford the financial burden of purchasing the Aetna insurance. There should be money allocated to ensure that the University is able to provide this grant every year so that students do not have to stress over whether there is a grant available or not. Student Financial Services should also make a greater effort to publicize these grants and other resources when they

[12]UVA Today, "Board of Visitors Announces Expanded Scholarships, Other New Funding" https://news.virginia.edu/content/board-visitors-announces-expanded-scholarships-other-new-funding

are available and improve their methods in communicating with the students that have the most need.

In addition, the University should also seek out grants and allocate money for academic support through tutoring programs to serve marginalized students. Students would benefit from accessible group and private tutoring by professional tutors. With the success of the Office of African American Affairs (OAAA) peer tutoring services, the Office of the Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity, in addition to Multicultural Student Services, we should be able to allocate resources to provide the space and funds for this program to be expanded to all minority students, specifically through an increased budget for the Chief Officer of Diversity and Equity.

Many multicultural organizations on Grounds function as representative bodies that are responsible for providing programming and community engagement to their constituents. These organizations ensure that their representative communities feel welcome and supported at the University. Despite the central role certain organizations possess, not all multicultural organizations have the financial capabilities to produce adequate and quality programming for their communities. The University should provide increased funding for organizations that function in a critical, supportive role for minority groups. Although Multicultural Student Services provide an allotment of $1000 per month to multicultural organizations, this is often the sole source of funding for organizations. All minority organizations that hold a supportive and institutional role in their respective communities must be provided with consistent funding opportunities from the University.

Acquire Counselor in The Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life for minority Greek organizations

The Multicultural Greek Council consists of seven different organization that represent the Latinx community, Asian American community, and LGTBQ+ community. The National Pan-Hellenic Council consists of seven organizations that embody the African American community. The minority community has no staff members within the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life that have experience with the membership process of these minority organizations.

The addition of knowledgeable staff members is crucial because the number of minority Greek organizations has been decreasing over the past three years. The first Latino Greek organization, La Unidad Latina, Lambda Upsilon Lambda Fraternity, Inc, that played a key role in the creation of the Latinx Student Alliance and the Multicultural Greek Council has been inactive for the past two years. Due to the lack of presence of this important organization, the Multicultural Greek Council has become smaller, decreasing its capability of serving minority students.

Although the office has tried to accommodate Hispanic/Latinx needs, their proposal of requiring at least three active members to be considered an active organization has shown the lack of consideration from the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life has for the Hispanic/Latinx community. As previously discussed, the Latinx population is only 6%, which means that the percentage of Latinx students who consider joining the groups is naturally much smaller. It is essential to have a faculty staff member who can be an advocate for minority Greek organizations at the University. This staff member needs to have sufficient experience gained through membership in one of these organizations in order to best serve our respective communities.

Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion

As it stands, the current Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, Marcus Martin, MD, is set to retire in December. There is currently no executive search committee created in order to replace the retiring Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion, which is concerning for the future of marginalized communities at the University.[13] If there currently is a plan for his replacement, students should be made aware of it. If there is no set plan for appointing a successor, a search committee must be formed, and it must include students from both standard self-governance organizations and organizations that represent minority communities. Students deserve a seat at the table for discussion about this important position that will ultimately impact the whole University community. Because the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion is to serve as an advocate for

[13]Executive Search Group and Strategic Reasoning, "Upcoming Searches" http://executivesearch.virginia.edu/upcoming-searches

marginalized communities amongst administration, it is essential to ensure that this position is being filled.

SECTION VI: CONCLUSION

As the University community welcomes a new President, Provost, and Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, we have an opportunity to apply these recommendations and ideas to combat persistent issues that affect the Hispanic/Latinx community. In this new era, we see a future where Hispanic/Latinx people can feel supported and valued at this University. While this proposal and its suggestions are not exhaustive, we hope that through collaboration with the University of Virginia administration, this academic institution will be shaped into a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for Hispanic/Latinx communities. We may be six percent, but we are present, powerful, and prepared. This is our University to shape.