



# LACSI Newsletter

Fall 2011 • Latin American and Caribbean Studies Institute • UGA

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*LACSI's Director, Dr. Robert Moser, welcoming at the LACSI Open House event, held on September 16th.*

## Greetings from the Interim Director

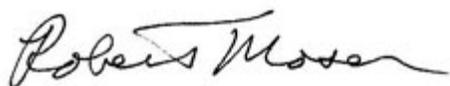
La Casa Amarilla has been a busy place since the last newsletter. After three years as LACSI's director, Doris Kadish retired last summer. We are grateful for her steady and exceptional leadership and wish her the best. Since 2006 the annual number of LACSI majors has grown from 5 to 30, while the number of UGA faculty affiliated with the Institute has increased from 54 to 76, thanks largely to the hard work of its former directors and outstanding staff: Paul Duncan, Kathleen Schmaltz, and Sergio Quesada. A graduate certificate program has also been added to LACSI's offerings, and a proposal for a minor is in the works. We are especially proud of the many achievements earned by LACSI's undergraduate, graduate, and former students. See, for example, the diverse research projects of the ten graduate students who received Field Research Awards in 2011 and the impressive endeavors of former LACSI majors. In an effort to recognize LACSI's most talented students and to promote its curriculum, a new Student Award Program has been established, thanks to the generosity of Dr. Kadish and the initiative of some key LACSI faculty. I encourage faculty to spread the word about this merit-based program to interested and deserving students. Also noteworthy are the many impressive awards received, and publications produced, by LACSI faculty. The Institute has some new faces. Join me in welcoming Dr. Pablo Lapegna, a joint hire with Sociology and LACSI's first tenure-track position; Martina Kloss, LACSI's new graduate assistant

currently pursuing an M.A. degree at Romance Languages; and Martha DeHart, the curator of the Latin American Ethnobotanical Garden since last July. LACSI is also pleased to host two new student interns from Earth University in Costa Rica.

The fall semester started with a bang this year. LACSI sponsored or supported numerous Hispanic Heritage Month activities, exposing the university community to a rich diversity of Latin American and Caribbean culture and pertinent socio-political issues. Thanks to the hard work of Amélia Hutchinson and the Portuguese program, the annual open house was once again a success. The theme of this year's Film Festival (organized by Diego del Pozo and others), "Immigration and Transnational Experiences", was particularly timely given the passage of HB-87 in Georgia, and the USG Board of Regents decision to ban enrollment of undocumented students in the system's most selective universities. The proactive steps taken by UGA's Hispanic student organizations and UGA faculty who have spearheaded the Freedom University initiative to educate the public about the ramifications of such policies are laudable.

Two important developments promise to benefit LACSI for some time to come. First, we learned in late September that UGA was awarded a grant from the National Security Education Program to establish the nation's first and only Portuguese Flagship program, thanks to a joint LACSI/ROML proposal. This renewable three-year grant in the amount of up to \$1.3 million (pending congressional approval in years 2 and 3), will be used to significantly enhance UGA's Portuguese offerings for highly motivated undergraduates striving to acquire high proficiency in the language and to apply that language in a professional context. It will also support the creation of a year-long study abroad program for Flagship students at São Paulo State University (UNESP). Acquiring this prestigious grant was a collective endeavor brought about through the efforts of not only the Portuguese program, but also the LACSI staff, as well as key faculty across campus - a true demonstration of multidisciplinary collaboration. This is at the heart of what LACSI does, and does well. LACSI majors, and other UGA students, will benefit immediately from this unique opportunity.

Secondly, the dean of the Franklin College has reauthorized the national search for a permanent LACSI director. Hiring an outstanding director who is budgeted solely at LACSI is a key step towards solidifying LACSI's future leadership and prominence as a dynamic institute both nationally and internationally. I will be working with a search committee, as well as the newly constituted Executive Committee and Advisory Board to ensure that this search is a success. In the meantime, I wish everyone a productive and enjoyable semester and invite you, when you have a moment, to stop by LACSI for a friendly cafezinho. Abraços,



Robert Moser



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