



Resolution In Support Of The Student Body Of The Latin American, Iberian And Latino Cultures Phd Program

Adopted by the DGSC on November 20, 2020

WHEREAS, the Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures PhD Program (LAILAC) is a department consisting in the majority of professors and students with Hispanic and Latin American/Latinx backgrounds, despite their status as international students or US citizens; and

WHEREAS, Professor Carlos Riobó has acted as interim Executive Officer (EO) of the program in 2019-2020 academic year and was appointed by the President Muyskens, in Spring 2020, as the EO for the period 2020-2023; and

WHEREAS, there have been departmental discussions that have been taken to the GC Administration in Spring 2020 concerning lack of leadership and abuse of power by the EO; and

WHEREAS, the students' assembly politely communicated the desire to have a meeting with the EO and the faculty at large at the end of Spring 2020 to discuss their concerns regarding the program, but the EO refused to meet and accused students and supporting faculty members of bullying him; and

WHEREAS, the EO refused to recognise a written communication signed by the LAILAC students' assembly, in which students pointed out their concerns, arguing that he was not required to recognise said communication because it did not bear the specific names of the students who participated in the aforementioned assembly; and

WHEREAS, the GC administration reaffirmed their appointment of Dr. Carlos Riobó as the EO despite the students' and professors' letters, communications and complaints; and

WHEREAS, the student body was not informed of the appointment of Paul Julian Smith as Deputy Executive Officer (DEO), which undermines the Graduate Center mandate of shared governance; and

WHEREAS, the EO and DEO have openly refused to explain the intellectual project or vision they want to drive in the program, despite being queried on the subject on multiple occasions by both individual LAILAC students and the community, passively and actively; and

WHEREAS, the situation has deteriorated during the Fall 2020 semester and students have expressed concern regarding the lack of communication from the EO and DEO about GC policies resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, which is particularly distressing to international students; and

WHEREAS, since the discomfort has reached a critical point, the students considered it necessary to convene a meeting with the EO and DEO, who responded by agreeing to a one-hour meeting with the student body, which took place on November 13th, 2020; and

WHEREAS, in the meeting a majority of attendees experienced multiple forms of condescension, belittling, linguistic violence, and intimidation directed toward them by the EO and DEO, who constantly

demonstrated their positions of power over students, using authoritative statements, laughing, and making sarcastic gestures while the students were expressing their opinions; and

WHEREAS, during the meeting, both the EO and the DEO exhibited a disrespectful attitude toward the students concerning the means by which the meeting was taking place, i.e. allowing a very limited time for a virtual meeting, scheduling the meeting right before an important department event, and, more concerningly, questioning who lost connection to the meeting due to technology issues should be granted access to the meeting again; and

WHEREAS, the DEO openly refused to readmit the student to the Zoom meeting, claiming that they left of their own volition. The student had previously been providing constructive criticism regarding the situation with faculty and courses being offered in the department. The DEO openly laughed at her. She was finally granted access after the student body insisted, many times, that the DEO readmit her to the meeting. The EO did not intervene to readmit the student to the meeting; and

WHEREAS, in the meeting many students asked to have a second meeting to continue the dialogue with the EO and DEO, they responded with the authoritative argument that they have already “granted” the one meeting that the handbook states. The EO said that he wanted to rush to finish the agenda in the five minutes left. The students insisted on scheduling another meeting, in the context of the unprecedented times, critical situations and shared discomfort. The EO and DEO said that they were going to “check their calendars” but that they could not promise another meeting anytime soon. They insisted that it was unprecedented for the EO to meet with student representatives and the student body in general; and

WHEREAS, some student representatives have experienced other forms of discrimination, such as linguistic violence in another meeting when student representatives were not informed that the EO invited the Vice President of Student Affairs to participate in said meeting. Because they were not notified in advance, student representatives were put in a vulnerable conversational position because they had not prepared themselves to have that meeting in English, as internal LAILAC business is typically conducted in Spanish, the language of professional practice in our field and the language in which the great majority of the members of our community develop their careers; and

WHEREAS, in the November 13th, the EO and DEO reacted to the subject of linguistic violence by saying that they would think the students speak English because they are required to do so in the GC, without taking consideration of the inequalities and power relationships of the administration with students who are international students and not native speakers of English. Additionally, the EO and DEO made sarcastic comments regarding the students English language skills during the meeting, implying that the students do not speak proper English, and saying English is an official language of the program since it includes “Latino Culture”, ignoring the wider phenomenon on linguistic discrimination that forms a dimension of significant social inequalities in the US; and

WHEREAS, some students pointed out that during the meeting the DEO was disrespectful towards the student body because of his sarcastic gestures and laughing while they expressed their concerns about the program, and that the EO, instead of using his delegated authority to reinforce the GC policies on discrimination and violence, tried to excuse the DEO and avoid any dialogue by saying that the DEO might have had visitors at home and was probably not laughing at the students; and

WHEREAS, some students have been experiencing mental health consequences since last semester because of the situation, i.e. anxiety, panic, stress. Students are afraid of how this situation at large can affect their academic progress and graduate studies; and

WHEREAS, faculty members and staff have been sharing with students their own concerns regarding the situation and pointing out that they are victims of the same discrimination, intimidation, symbolic violence and abuse of power, and have been experiencing mental health distress as well, and

WHEREAS, some of the discriminatory forms that the community at large have been experiencing include, but are not limited to, not receiving emails with critical information, not being part of decision making in regards to the program, not receiving a responsive attitude from EO or DEO regarding routine bureaucratic proceedings (i.e OPT signatures, workloads, employment verifications, etc.); displays of favoritism; recording of zoom meetings without asking for permission, contravening not only the norms of that platform, but also those proposed by the GC; let it be

RESOLVED that the Doctoral and Graduate Students' Council (DGSC) urges the Graduate Center administration to address LAILAC situation and to advocate for the student body of LAILAC; and let it be

RESOLVED that the DGSC urges the Graduate Center administration to attend students' and faculty's call to restore leadership and healthy environment in the workplace; and let it be

RESOLVED that the DGSC urges that the Graduate Center President and administration to address the reports made by students and faculty of discrimination, intimidation, abuse of power and verbal violence; and let it be

RESOLVED that the DGSC urges the Graduate Center President and administration to ensure that LAILAC's administration is aligned with the Graduate Center's commitment to diversity, equal opportunity, anti-racism and affirmative action policies; and let it be

RESOLVED that DGSC calls on the Graduate Center President and administration to protect LAILAC students from any and all forms of retaliation, intimidation or harassment, which may occur as a consequence of the current climate of abuse of power; and let it be

RESOLVED that the DGSC urges the Graduate Center President and administration to appoint a new EO and DEO that represent the diversity of LAILAC and honor the GC's commitment to diversity and inclusion; and let it be

FINALLY RESOLVED that the DGSC urges the Graduate Center President and administration to appoint a new EO and DEO that can ensure the wellbeing of the LAILAC community and the complete functioning of the academic program.