Letter from Outgoing Chair

In 1969 a small group of committed faculty members and students from San Diego attended the historic Santa Barbara conference where the Plan de Santa Barbara was born. This document established the blueprint for developing Chicano Studies departments. Since then almost every major public and private university or college in California has developed a Chicano Studies program or department. We are proud to be among the first departments established, and now celebrate our 38th year. In these past thirty-eight years, many struggles have been waged and many changes have taken place. Our department has seen its faculty grow to reflect new directions tied both to demographic changes in the U.S., as well as to changes in the broader field of Chicano/a Studies. What remains the same is our commitment to social justice and the empowerment of our students and the diverse communities from which they derive. The recent growth in the ranks of our faculty has been bittersweet, however. While we welcomed our newest member, Dr. Victoria Gonzalez-Rivera, we said goodbye to Rene Nunez, one of the first professors and Chairs of our department. After a lifetime of commitment to educational reform, Rene passed away in the spring of 2006. Our department joined with hundreds of people to pay tribute to him and to his legacy of struggle both at Chicano Park and at a University sponsored remembrance and "call to action." Certainly, this was a time of solemn reflection about where we have been and the many things that remain to be done. Jorge Mariscal, Ethnic Studies professor at UC San Diego and one of the speakers at the SDSU tribute to Rene, suggests that a re-imagining and re-invigoration of Chicano/a Studies needs to take place, given the new demographic and social realities. Among those realities, is of course, the incredible growth in the Mexican immigrant population and its dispersal in barrios and colonias, not only in the Southwest, but increasingly across the entire United States. Many of these migrants are women, who increasingly are employed to perform intimate labors for families in this country. The increased migration of women in the post-1965 has changed the complexion of Mexican communities, and has provoked anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. These led to the unprecedented Immigrant Rights Marches across the country last spring,
and particularly here in Southern California. Many of our faculty and students were actively involved in organizing, documenting, supporting, and bearing witness at the many events and marches. This year, likewise, immigrant rights supporters across the country and our community came out.

In our attempt to re-imagine and re-invigorate our Department, we take these social and demographic changes to heart and move in the direction of greater attention to issues of gender and transnationalism. Dr. Victoria Gonzalez-Rivera thus represents a very important addition to our faculty and to our re-imagining. Professor Gonzalez is a historian who specializes in Chicana and Latin-American Women’s history, and whose research addresses among other things--right-wing politics, race, sexuality, masculinity, and HIV/AIDS. She is currently teaching history and research methods courses for the department, and is in the process of creating new courses as part of our revision and expansion of the undergraduate curriculum. Other faculty members, likewise, are working on redesigning the undergraduate curriculum. Some of the new courses we now offer include "Critical Issues in Chicana Studies" and the CCS Capstone course "Critical Discourse in Chicana and Chicano Studies."

Additionally, as part of our attempt to re-invigorate our Department, we are pleased to let you know that our Master’s Program in Gender and Transnational Studies is now in its third year. For more information visit our web-site at http://aztlan.sdsu.edu.

In the midst of all these many and necessary changes, I will be retiring as Chair. After thirty-two years in the Department, I have decided to cut down on my full-time teaching obligations and join the ranks of the professor emeriti who are FERPing-returning from retirement every other semester to teach. This does not mean that I will lessen my involvement with Chicana/o Studies since I plan to devote more time to my research and writing as well as volunteer in the community. I have been very fortunate to be a member of this department and to work with all the individuals who have lent their efforts to our larger mission.

The recent election of our new incoming Chair, Dr. Adelaida Del Castillo, represents a pivotal moment: she is the first woman Chair in the history of the department. She will without a doubt continue to guide the department in our new directions and ensure that Chicano/a Studies remains a vital and visible force in educating our youth and providing intellectual leadership in our communities.

Dr. Richard Griswold del Castillo
Commencement Speech Honoring the Chicano Studies Graduates

By Salvador Roberto Torres, Fine Artist and Master Muralist

Honorable graduates of 2008, parents, friends, colleagues and community members. Welcome!

The message I have for you on this memorable day is about some of the most powerful tools La Raza Cosmica can posses for knowing ourselves. It is our Intuition, Imagination and our Divine Creativity.

Let me share some examples of the many Victories we as faculty and students have accomplished in our Chicana/Chicano Movement here in San Diego of the past 40 years.

I enrolled in this fine university in 1968. In 1973 I became one of the first graduating Chicano EOP students to receive a Masters Degree in Painting while writing my thesis on Chicano Art and receiving a 4.0 average. This educational odyssey became a series of collective imaginative advancements of mass demonstrations by faculty, students, community and the labor working class, in creating some of the these Victories.

In March of 1969 the students of MAYA imagined and proposed to Dr. Love, the then president of San Diego State College, a plan for a Center for Chicano Studies which has become the realized Chicana/Chicano Studies Department of today.

In the same period our intuitions and imaginations proposed the creation of the Barrio Station an outreach for communications between universities to recruit students for higher education. Arturo Cazares, was the first director. Then the establishment of the High School Conferences Recruitment Program began here at SDSU. The second Director, Rachael Otriz advanced the Barrio Station into a corporate nonprofit Youth Center with a wonderful history of community service.

Students and faculty intuition imagined and organized our first Mother’s Day March. Thousands of students and community members participated. Guillermo Aranda’s imagination created our first flag of Aztlan that led the march to the San Diego Community Concourse and back to Chicano Park. Our intuitions guided us to successfully organize the Brown Berets throughout Aztlan to Observe, Serve and Protect our communities. Viva la Causa! The students and faculty gave support to Cesar E. Chavez and the United Farm Workers Union. Viva La Huelga! Viva la Raza! Long live Humanity!

The imaginative conception of the Centro Cultural de la Raza is proposed by San Diego City College students, and faculty. This need for a Centro Cultural De La Raza resulted in the occupation of Camp Oliver in Descanso, Ca. by Los Angeles and San Diego Catolicos por la Raza. The result was the arrest of 6 Chicanos and Chicanas. With the support of artists, students faculty, and community I occupied for the Ford Building (which is now the Space Museum in Balboa Park) to protest and further the cause of creating El Centro Cultural De La Raza,to create Fine Arts, Crafts, Teatro, Music, Dance and Art Exhibitions relevant to our bilingual bicultural renaissance. I became its first Director, appointed and voted by Totlecas En Aztlan, artists of San Diego, Califaztlan.

The imaginative organization by community, faculty and students sparked the student’s intuition to create the walkouts of April 22nd 1970 resulting in the creation of the now world famous Chicano Park in Barrio Logan. The outcome was the imaginative conception of the Indigenous Gardens, with all its park amenities and extending the park “all the way to the bay”, complimented with the creative use of all the columns of the San Diego Coronado Bay Bridge to reflect imaginative and wonderful monumental murals and sculpture that grace the San Diego Bay. This imaginative waterfront park is now created it is called the Cesar E. Chavez Waterfront Park.
The imaginative occupation of the Neighborhood House led by Lura Rodriguez and Jose Elijo Gomez, who led the takeover of land with his hard labor and a dedicated spirit. Louis Hernandez Espinosa, proposed imaginative sculpture for Chicano Park and assisted to create the first Chicano Free Clinic in San Diego. My intuition is to further create a Chicano Free Hospital that would imaginatively utilize herbology, alternative medicine and sobadores combined with traditional and advanced healing practices. Today this concept is still germinating. The community today needs Chicanos/Chicanas who are excellent, talented bilingual and multicultural doctors and nurses as soon as possible.

As a community in the 1980’s our intuition imagined the use of the building that was supposed to be a Highway Patrol Substation be converted from the Chicano Federation Inc. and the Chicano Park Steering Committee Inc., to the Cesar E. Chavez Educational Center, a San Diego Community College site. I can imagine one day this to be the site of our first Chicano University.

Abran Quevedo a student in planning at SDSU intuition imagined a Mercado Del Barrio under the bridge that would serve the Chicano communities’ needs in marketing, commerce and low and moderate income housing has been created today as one of the anchors of for redevelopment, free of dangerous pollutions, in Logan Heights, Barrio Logan.

Our intuitions directed us to create a Chicano Moratorium against the War in Vietnam. On August 29, 1970 students, faculty and community participated in a colossal march to stop the atrocious war in Vietnam, by demonstrating in solidarity with our beloved comrades who sacrificed their lives for their country. Our news and TV commentator Rueben Salazar was killed at the hands of a Los Angeles Sheriff; however, we stopped the War. Raza Si! Guerra No!

Lastly, today NOW, is your graduation ceremony this is one of your Victories in our movement to reclaim our cultural contribution and renaissance. Your faculty, parents and friends love and respect you for this accomplishments.

Yes, looking over the last 40 years we have endured a long way. My beloveds, by using our intuition, imagination and creative determination many victories were achieved.

There are still many more victories to come. You will need encouragement to succeed in the future. May you be blessed by realizing all your dreams for yourselves, the communities, this university and this country's future? May you go forward with the courage and determination that inspired us in the last 40 years.

Please give your self a good strong Chicano/Chicana Hand Clap!

Gracias.
First Asian American Graduate

May 28, 2008

Dr. Adelaida Del Castillo
Chicana and Chicano Studies
San Diego State University
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-7425

Dear Chicana / Chicano Studies Department::

On May 23, it was my honor to see my daughter, Holly Utsunomiya, graduate from San Diego State. The reception for the Chicana / Chicano Studies graduates was a very enjoyable event and a very personal way to recognize the graduates.

I wish I had the spontaneous speaking skills to have expressed the way I felt to the gathering at the reception. When Holly told me she was changing her major to Chicano Studies, to be honest, I was a little disappointed. But, when I saw Holly graduate and knowing how much determination and perseverance she had to have to overcome some personal adversities, like the passing of her mother two months into her freshman year, I was overwhelmingly happy and proud of her.

Now I see that there is no more fitting major for Holly. Chicano Studies exemplifies pride in one's self, overcoming adversity and hardship, and making the world a better place to live. I'm very happy and very proud to say "mi hija esta graduada de Chicana y Chicano Studies de San Diego State Universidad."

Thank you and the faculty for providing Holly the opportunity to learn some things that are just as or more important than things like business, science, and math. Please pass this on to anybody in the department or school that you feel would appreciate this positive feedback from my heart.

Sincerely,

Wade Utsunomiya
Scholarship Winners

The Cesar Chavez Memorial Scholarship is offered by the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies and is open to all majors with at least a 2.0 GPA. The awards are for a total of $800.

In 2008 we selected the following 3 applicants as recipients of the scholarship.

Dania Cabrera
Dania is a Liberal Studies major with a specialization in Spanish and will be the first in her family to graduate with a B.A. She has been involved in working with at-risk elementary school youth in the San Diego area since she was in high school and has continued this work since she's been attending SDSU. After she graduates, she will attend the Bilingual Cross-Cultural Language and Academic Development Teaching Credential Program and hopes to become an elementary school teacher.

Tiffany Olson
Tiffany is a Social Science major with a minor in Social Work. Since high school she has been involved in community service work through AmeriCorps’ National Civilian Community Corps and served in lower-income communities in New York, Washington D.C., and Southern Virginia among other communities. In San Diego she has done volunteer work for the HIV/AIDS service center Being Alive and presently devotes her time to working with non-profit organizations who address sexual health issues especially in lower-income neighborhoods.

Jessica Romero
Jessica gives back to her community through her talent as an athlete and by coaching youth basketball leagues. She is the recipient of the Most Valuable Player Award of the Western State Conference, named to the First-Team All-State, and given the State Scholar Team Award for 2007. Next year Jessica will be the first in her family to graduate from college and receive a B.A.