

Fredy R. Rodriguez Mejia  
Interdisciplinary Inquiry and Teaching Fellowship Program  
The James Madison College  
Intellectual Application Project (IAP)

IAP Topic

Mentoring undergraduate students on preparing, submitting, and presenting conference papers at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies annual undergraduate conference at MSU in April 2009.

IAP initial stages: call for proposals from undergraduates

The Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies annual undergraduate conference (April 22-24, 2009) provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to develop and/or strengthen a particular set of skills useful not only for post-graduate education but also for several other work environments. These skills include: learning how to write a concise piece that raises and explores original research, submitting a paper proposal to conference committees, presenting data in a manner that is engaging and comprehensive within a limited period of time, and learning how to answer questions effectively. This intellectual application project focuses on working with students at the James Madison College interested presenting research papers at this undergraduate conference. During the spring semester 2009 Jose Gomez Moreno and I will issue a call for papers for the undergraduate conference. We will organize two or more student panels (4 students per panel), and work preparing students for the conference in three different stages. 1) Once we have received paper ideas in early February we will work helping students write abstracts, grouping abstracts (papers) into different panels and submitting the different panels by Feb. 27 to CLACS. 2) By March students should have completed rough drafts of their papers; Jose and I will review the papers and setup meetings with students for feedback, and begin thinking about presentation ideas. 3) Finally, during the month of April, two weeks before the conference we will hold a practice presentation session for the students as well as practice asking and answering questions, and provide them with the necessary feedback.

IAP update (March 2009)

After issuing a call for papers within the James Madison College on February 2009, we received responses from five students with whom we have been working during the last couple of months. During early February we held our first meeting. At this meeting students talked about different papers they had written. A topic that was prominent in students' papers was the concept of the nation in Latin America and its association with different identity-based social movements. We were able to compile a five-student panel with a focus on this topic. I met with at least three students and helped them write abstracts. I also helped one student write an abstract for the entire panel. We held a second meeting at the end of February to gather everyone's abstracts and individual paper proposals.

We also completed a proposal for the panel which I submitted on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2009. Our next meeting will take place on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2009. By then, students are expected to have a conference version of their papers (8-10 pages) and ideas for presentations. So far, students have done an outstanding job at working collaboratively and their papers deal with topics which are extremely relevant to the current state of social and political transformations in Latin America.