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April 20, 1994

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FROM: Lee Pelton *Lee Pelton*

Last term I promised to follow-up our earlier discussions regarding issues related to Latinø/Hispanic students on our campus. Over the last several weeks I have had an opportunity to meet with several faculty, students, and senior administrators of the College to discuss many of the issues that were identified as having an impact on the quality of experiences of Latinø/Hispanic students.

As you know by now, the College has established a pre-doctoral program for Latinø scholars, similar to the Thurgood Marshall program for African-Americans pre-doctoral program. The procedure for selection of the pre-doctoral candidates is now underway and the College anticipates appointing a person in this program for 1994-95. The Dean of the Faculty has also authorized the recruitment of a Mellon position in the United States Latinø Studies area. This search is being coordinated by the LACS Steering Committee chaired by Professor Marysa Navarro-Aranguren. In addition, the Dean of the Faculty continues to encourage departments to consider ways in which existing authorized searches might result in enhancing the presence of Latinø scholars at Dartmouth College. Most recently, the College has had success in making two Latinø appointments, one of whom will likely be teaching additional courses that relate to United States Latinø Studies. While there has been some discussion regarding the establishment of a Latinø Studies Program, it is very unlikely that such a program will be established in the near future. The discussions that I have had with the Dean of the Faculty and other members of the faculty who have an interest in this area suggest that College resources, both human and financial, will not permit the establishment of such a program in the near term. However, as you probably know, the Department of Spanish and Portuguese has been offering since last Spring a Latinø Studies Major. At this time it is primarily based on Cultural Studies and Literature, but it is designed to be interdisciplinary and to include into the major any Latinø courses that may be developed by other departments or programs in the future.

In the continuing effort to increase the minority enrollment at Dartmouth College, the Admissions Office has undertaken specific steps this year to recruit Latinø/Hispanic students. These efforts include: increased admissions officer recruitment travel to high schools with significant Latinø/Hispanic populations;

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financial assistance for travel to campus so that Latinø/Hispanic students, with demonstrated financial need, can attend the "Perspectives" program for admitted minority students in April; and revision of the admissions literature to broaden the scope of the publication for Latinø/Hispanic students, including text in Spanish. All of these efforts are designed to meet the specific needs of Latinø/Hispanic students and their families. The Admissions Office continues to review and modify its admissions strategy and programs on a regular basis in an attempt to be responsive to the concerns of various populations in the external environment in which Dartmouth competes for students. Additionally, as I mentioned last term, the Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid (CAFA) is on schedule to issue a report on the recruitment and admissions of Latinø/Hispanic students. This is a significant report which will be presented to the full faculty.

As some of you may know, Ramyar Rossoukh has been hired as a special intern in my office. His principle responsibilities will be to develop a resource booklet for students who have an interest in U.S. Latinø courses and issues. This booklet will include a listing of all courses whose subject matter is devoted, all or in part, to U.S. Latinø culture and history. The booklet will also identify faculty at the College who have the capacity to advise students in specific U.S. Latinø areas and subjects. Additionally, the booklet will list literature of special interest to U.S. Latinø students as well as the resources and administrative staff that are available to U.S. Latinø students for advice and counseling. It is our hope that such a booklet could be used not only for currently enrolled students, but might be of some use in recruiting students who have an interest in U.S. Latinø culture and history.

I have had several conversations with faculty and students regarding La Casa and its relevance to U.S. Latinø students. Some students have suggested that the College establish a cultural affinity house for U.S. Latinø students. As such, it is probably important for me to outline the objectives of the College's academic affinity program. Our academic affinity program seeks to integrate, in significant and meaningful ways, the residential and academic lives of our students. Each academic affinity house has a direct link to an academic department which agrees to provide a variety of resources to support the academic programming that occurs within the residence. Thus, the Asian Studies Center is linked with the Asian Studies Program; La Casa is linked with the Spanish and Portuguese Department, and so on. Because the College does not have an international relations department, the International House includes faculty advisors from a variety of academic departments. Likewise, the Native American House is supported by faculty from departments as diverse as anthropology and history. Currently the College is working to establish a formal link between the African and Afro-American Studies Department and Cutter/Shabazz House. And most recently, the College established a French House, which is, as the names suggests, linked to the French Department.

All of the College's academic affinity houses are open to any Dartmouth student who has an interest in the particular academic or intellectual subject which informs the activities of the house. Indeed, the International House has mandated that no more than sixty percent of its student residents can be foreign born because it seeks to provide a residential setting where international and U.S. born students may engage in cross-cultural understanding and learning. However, having said that the stated purpose of academic affinity houses is to enrich the intellectual lives of the students by providing them with occasions outside of the classroom where classroom lessons can be tested and made real is, of course, only part of the story. It is indeed true that many students who live in these facilities experience them as places where they can find free and easy expression of their personal cultures. For many of these students residing in academic affinity houses, the cultural affinity found in these living units is as important as the academic programming and intellectual exchange that occurs there.

Dartmouth is certainly proud of its academic affinity houses. They are based on one of Dartmouth's traditional strengths, namely the accessibility of its faculty and the value the College places on the engagement of students and faculty in intellectual activities outside of the classroom. Students and faculty in academic affinity houses work side-by-side to develop discussion groups, colloquia, dinners, lectures, and other activities within their residences. From my point of view, academic affinity houses epitomize college life, for they demonstrate that a student's education does not stop at the classroom door, but is rather a continuum that extends to other aspects of his/her life. These communities reinforce the important bond of learning that takes place between students and faculty outside of the classroom. They invigorate and enliven intellectual discussion within our community.

The principal problem with establishing affinity housing based on culture, rather than linkage with a program, is that it is impossible to establish priority needs based on culture alone. Currently, there are several student groups who have an interest in establishing cultural affinity houses. In addition, it is quite likely that the list of student groups desiring cultural housing will grow as the College becomes more diverse and as certain groups begin to strengthen their cultural identities on campus. In light of this growing trend, it is exceedingly difficult to establish a basis on which the preeminent claims of one group should have over another. As you well know, the College does not have enough free-standing housing to accommodate the proliferation of desired residential space by the cultural groups who request them. Third, under no circumstances will the College permit as a principle the establishment of residential space which is limited to students by race, ethnicity, or culture. All of the College's academic and residential programs are open to all students irrespective of race or culture. Academic affinity houses, while linked to academic programs, are open to students who have a sincere interest in the academic program which informs the house's activities.

I continue to believe that the needs of U.S. Latinø students can be met through an association with La Casa. Continued discussions of modifying La Casa, while preserving its academic affinity and objectives, are in order. Thus, there are a number of ideas which I would like to discuss with members of the Advisory Board. First, I would ask that the Advisory Board be expanded to include an administrator from my office or Office of Residential Life in order to take advantage of college officers who have a working knowledge of student life issues. Second, with regard to coordination, I would suggest that the Latinø/Hispanic student organizations work closely with their representatives on the Advisory Board to ensure smooth coordination between La Casa and the three Latinø/Hispanic group in planning and organizing events. Third, I would endorse the continued rotation of programming at La Casa. That is to say, I would continue to support a calendar which specifies programming for U.S. Latinø, Latin American and Spanish issues on a regular basis. Fourth, I would recommend that the College and the Advisory Board explore the relationship of the Latinø dissertation fellow to La Casa. There may be some useful ways in which this person could spend his/her time with La Casa without jeopardizing that person's ability to finish his/her doctoral work. Finally, I think that the College might revisit the issue of expanding the multi-purpose space at La Casa in order to enhance many of the programming activities.

There continues to be discussion regarding the establishment of a Latinø/Hispanic advisor. While I am unable to guarantee that such a position will be created, I will continue to talk with students, faculty, and others concerning establishing such a position. However, any such position could only be created out of existing budget resources. Additionally, if such a position is established, it must be made clear that this person will be an advisor to all Latinø/Hispanic students in the same way that Dean Sylvia Langford serves as an advisor to African-American students as well as African-Caribbean and some African students. Most important, the College needs to have further discussions regarding the specific responsibilities of such a person. The specific duties of such a person have not been clearly defined. I would encourage any students who have an interest in this matter to blitz me with their ideas or make an appointment to speak with me about how this position should be configured.

Much progress has been made during the current academic year. Nevertheless, there is still work that can be done in order to enhance the experiences of Latinø/Hispanic students. I look forward to continuing our conversations.

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