

TO: Douglas A. Girod
Chancellor

FROM: Barbara A. Bichelmeyer 
Provost & Executive Vice Chancellor

DATE: February 4, 2022

RE: Request to Discontinue the Latin American & Caribbean Studies Program

University Senate Rules and Regulations ([USRR](#)) [Article VIII](#) outlines procedures for program discontinuance of active programs. An active academic program is defined in USRR 8.1.2 as “a program which has accepted students within the last three years and in which there are currently pursuing a degree.” The Latin American & Caribbean Studies program is an active program for which the following have been submitted for discontinuance:

- BA/BGS in Latin American & Caribbean Studies (LAASA-BA; LAASA-BGS)
- MA in Latin American & Caribbean Studies (LASGA-MA)
- Graduate Certificate in Latin American & Caribbean Studies (LAMCRST-GC)

The submission noted that “While CLACS is fortunate in having numerous KU faculty affiliated with its center, their primary teaching responsibilities are to their home units. Having only .5FTE faculty assigned to the program has significantly hindered the Center’s ability to attract students.”

From 2016-2020 the undergraduate program has annually averaged 6 students enrolled and 4 graduates. For that same period the graduate degree annually averaged 4 students enrolled and 1 graduate. From AY 2017-2020 one student has graduated from the certificate program. Total student credit hour production for the Center has decreased from a high of 931 in AY 2012 to 466 in AY 2021. Affiliate faculty offer a rich array of expertise and support to LACS, though this has not translated into enrollment.

Also included with the discontinuance submission was a plan to offer the undergraduate program as a concentration within the BA in Global & International Studies (GIST) and the graduate program with the MA in GIST as a concentration, pending approval of the discontinuance. The minor in Latin American & Caribbean Studies, first offered in AY 2004, continues to be available to students.

Recommendations From University Governance

The request to discontinue the Latin American & Caribbean Studies program was submitted to the Committee on Academic Policies & Procedures (AP&P). AP&P recommended the program continue. On December 2, 2021 University Senate concurred with AP&P’s recommendation, with the following rationale:

- “The administration’s recommendation for discontinuance described integrating these programs into Global and International Studies (GIST). However, these plans are not finalized, so adequate provisions have not been provided for affected students and faculty, as required in USRR Article VIII for discontinuance.

- A merger with GIST (or worse, the unclear transition to GIST) diminishes the competitiveness of the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS) as it seeks continued Title VI funding, which supports students and faculty and contributes to KU's AAU standing.
- Furthermore, discontinuing these programs diminishes CLACS and therefore undercuts KU's efforts to "prepare students for lives of learning ... in an increasingly complex and diverse global community" and foster "a multicultural, inclusive environment."
- The information provided to AP&P indicated that discontinuance is more likely to cost KU grant dollars than save money. The program review submitted to KBOR reports that this unit is cost-effective and, through external grants, funds instructional and GTA support in other departments, research, travel and student tuition."

Provost's Recommendation

As part of shared governance, I appreciate AP&P's and University Senate's careful review of the discontinuance request to determine the impact of the proposed discontinue based on academic and educational considerations. An important educational consideration for our students is to have a strong cohort of peers in a program. We know peer-to-peer learning is an important part of an engaging educational experience offered by high-quality learning communities and critical to KU's mission of offering the "highest quality undergraduate, professional and graduate programs." That is why I support discontinuing programs in Latin American & Caribbean Studies (LACS) and support approval of the high-quality LACS concentrations faculty have designed for a proposed merger with Global & International Studies (GIST). Proposed LACS concentrations within the BA and MA in GIST will retain the high-quality curricula offered by the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies (CLACS) while offering students a more robust peer-to-peer experience.

While I understand the concern raised that the integration plans of programs in LACS and GIST have not been finalized, such finalization cannot predate your decision to either discontinue or continue the program. While University Senate indicates that adequate provisions have not been made for faculty and students, such reasoning appears to be based on desire to first finalize programmatic mergers and then approve discontinuances – an order of operation that is inconsistent with USRR. Furthermore, only one tenured/tenure-track faculty member is with the CLACS, and that person is appointed to the Center as Director – a position that will continue. Students will be able to complete their degree as courses will continue to be offered if the programs are merged.

While University Senate found no financial savings would result from discontinuing these programs and that the unit is cost effective, both issues are outside the scope of USRR VIII as neither are a bone fide academic or educational consideration that can be used to evaluate a program for discontinuance. I agree with and support University Senate's focus on KU's internationalization efforts and our ability to remain competitive for Title VI funding. Such funding supports research, travel, and education for faculty and students.

To ensure the CLACS remains competitive for funding, I recently committed the Provost's Office to invest four years of funding to create and support the Institute for International and Global Engagement (IIGE). This new institute will provide an inclusive institutional structure that connects our campus's internationalization efforts. CLACS, along with other area centers, will be part of IIGE. The Institute will provide the Centers with additional support and resources when applying to renew Title VI funding and will further facilitate international academic, research, and service activities within KU that serve our University community as well as external stakeholders in Kansas and abroad.

Next Steps

USRR VIII requires that you evaluate the recommendations and communicate your final decision for or against program discontinuance to the appropriate faculty, dean(s), and governance bodies. To aid in your decision-making the following documents are included in this packet:

- 1) A copy of the discontinuance request which provide the rationale for the discontinuance along with how such discontinuances will impact students, faculty, and staff; and
- 2) A copy of the memo from University Senate President Hossein Saiedian and Faculty Senate President Rémy Lequesne outlining University Senate's recommendation for the program.
- 3) A copy of the memo from AP&P outlining its recommendation for the program.
- 4) A copy of proposals for the Latin American & Caribbean Studies concentrations within the BA and MA in GIST, which has been approved by the CLAS.

Your signature and the date of your decision are required on page 3 or 4. The Provost's Office can communicate your decision to the relevant units. If you approve this request, our office will also inform the Kansas Board of Regents and the Higher Learning Commission that this program has been discontinued and with plans to merge the degrees in Global & International Studies in progress.

Cc: Rémy Lequesne, Faculty Senate President
Hossein Saiedian, University Senate President
Jean Redeker, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Matt Melvin, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management
Nick Stevens, Chief Data Officer
Brian White, General Counsel & Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs
Kathy Reed, University Governance Executive Assistant
Jenn Anderson, Director of the Policy Office
Jen Roberts, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs & Graduate Studies
John Colombo, Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Tamara Falicov, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Brent Metz, Interim Director of the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies
Luciano Tosta, Interim Director of the Center for Global & International Studies

Your signature and the date of your decision are required for one of three options. A discontinuance date of June 1, 2026 is recommended (Option 1) though USRR allows you the discretion to lengthen the phase-out period for discontinued programs beyond June 1, 2026 (Option 2), or to continue the programs (Option 3).

Option 1: I approve discontinuing the following active academic programs effective June 1, 2026:

- BA & BGS in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- MA in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Latin American & Caribbean Studies

Chancellor: _____ **Date:** _____

Option 2: I approve discontinuing the following active academic programs effective _____:

- BA & BGS in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- MA in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Latin American & Caribbean Studies

Chancellor: _____ **Date:** _____

Option 3: I approve continuing the following active academic programs:

- BA & BGS in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- MA in Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- Graduate Certificate in Latin American & Caribbean Studies

Chancellor: _____ **Date:** _____