



¿Hablas Español?

Pacific's InterAmerican Program prepares students for professional success in the Spanish-speaking world.

BY GENE E. BIGLER '67

School of International Studies student Veronica Chavez '10 will be the first to earn the InterAmerican Certificate, awarded through Pacific's new InterAmerican Program (IAP). The program allows students to build the competence to practice their profession anywhere in the Spanish-speaking world without linguistic and cultural barriers. Currently, more than 20 students in a variety of majors are working toward their InterAmerican Certificates.

The IAP was launched in 2008 with the ceremonial visit of César Gaviria, former president of Colombia and ex-secretary general of the Organization of American States. Students first enrolled in fall 2009. At this time, the certificate program is offered to students in College of the Pacific, the School of International Studies, Eberhardt School of Business and Benerd School of Education. Professor Susan Giráldez, the program's academic director, is working to expand it to students in the Conservatory of Music and the School of Engineering and Computer Science by fall 2012.

The program evolved from the roots of former Elbert Covell College, one of the cluster colleges which existed from 1963 to 1985. The unique program offered a structured curriculum in InterAmerican studies taught entirely in Spanish, with more than a dozen required courses in specific majors, such as business and bilingual education. Most students lived in Spanish-speaking dormitories, and half of the students were from Latin America. Then Colombian President Alberto Lleras Camargo extolled the Covell College program, saying it provided "education for life in

the Americas in the 20th century." Today, close to 1,000 former "Covellianos" live and work in Latin America.

In February, Provost Phil Gilbertson led a trip to Venezuela to meet with Covell College alumni and visit high schools and universities to further exchange programs and internships for the IAP. In October of this year, Pacific President Pamela A. Eibeck will host a meeting with Covell alumni in Ecuador and conduct a series of outreach activities to reinforce the recruitment of students there. Covell alumni in Latin America continue to make a significant contribution in assisting the University to connect with high schools, universities, government, businesses and other organizations in support of Pacific programs.

For the certificate program, students complete approximately four courses on Latin America or the Latino experience in the U.S. that are taught in Spanish or involve the use of Spanish in the course. They receive training in intercultural communications and must achieve advanced competence in the use of Spanish in their field of study. IAP students complete a required internship related to their major, either in Latin America or in a Spanish-speaking environment in the U.S.

Students participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities throughout the school year, such as the annual Cinco de Mayo celebration, and clubs such as Familia Latina, MEChA and the Hispanic sorority Gamma Alpha Omega. Chavez was president of Pacific's MEChA chapter and carried out many outreach activities



Veronica Chavez '10 will be the first student to receive the new InterAmerican Certificate after completing her internship this fall in Tlaxcala, Mexico.

in the Latino community. The annual Latino graduation ceremony prior to Commencement recognizes student achievement. There is also a Spanish-speaking living community. Named to signify the program's roots in Elbert Covell College, Casa Covell housed 48 students this year, with the potential for 61 this fall.

Chavez, an ambitious student who double-majored in global studies and Spanish literature and minored in ethnic studies, is among the first cohort of IAP students. She will complete the program in fall 2010 through an internship with the Asamblea Nacional de Ex-Braseros in Tlaxcala, Mexico, where she will participate in a study of migrant labor experience.

"The great thing about Pacific's new InterAmerican Program," says Chavez, "is that it prepares students today to be able to apply the skills they have learned in their majors and overcome the language and cultural barriers that have prevented the people, whether within the U.S. or in U.S.-Latin American relations, from working together as neighbors should."

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InterAmerican Cooperation at Pacific

1963 — Elbert Covell College (ECC) first opens its doors to students. Mexican government donates archeological artifacts to Pacific.

1970 — Study abroad partnership formed with the University of Costa Rica.

1971 — Pacific hosts the first of four annual InterAmerican Seminars for School Administration and Supervision.

1974 — Agreement reached to educate 220 Venezuelan students at ECC.

1976 — First ECC alumni reunion held in Guatemala. Pacific hosts the Model Conference of the Organization of American States. Students from University of Puerto Rico study at ECC.

1981 — Foreign student enrollment at its highest; the most (105) are from Latin America.

1986 — The School of International Studies (SIS) is established.

2004 — SIS Dean Margee Ensign travels to Latin America to meet with ECC alumni and explore reviving InterAmerican studies.

2006 — Global Center for Social Entrepreneurship established. Katalysis Bootstrap Fund, a nonprofit microfinance organization working with clients in Central America, moves its headquarters to Pacific. Students participate in internships in Latin American countries.

2007 — InterAmerican Program approved by the Board of Regents.

2008 — Campus visit of César Gaviria marks formal inauguration of InterAmerican Program. Pacific becomes first U.S. university to join the Union of Universities of Latin America.

2009 — Global Ambassador Corps program established. Five of 10 students in the first year do internships in Latin American countries.

2010 — Pacific delegation visits five cities in Venezuela to form exchange agreements with Venezuelan institutions. In her inaugural speech, President Pamela Eibeck recognizes the ECC experience and its role in the development of the InterAmerican Studies Program.