



Chancellor Gene Block mingles with members of UCLA's Latino Staff and Faculty Association.

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## Latino faculty and staff celebrate diversity

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**BY TERESA VALENZUELA**

More than 130 Latino staff, faculty, students, community leaders and other guests grooved to the sounds of the Salas Brothers — founders of the legendary Latino music group, Tierra — as they welcomed Chancellor Gene D. Block and his wife, Carol, to UCLA at an event organized by the Latino Staff and Faculty Association (LSFA) on Feb. 27.

"A UCLA Bienvenida" celebrated the newest chancellor's commitment to diversity and, at the same time, recognized the contributions of Latinos to the university.

"We're committed to working with you, Chancellor Block, and your administration to promote diversity and continue to make it a priority at UCLA," said LSFA President Letisia Márquez. "We all know the single most important factor in determining Latino success is education. Members of LSFA, day in and day out,



Guests grooved to the music of the Salas Brothers.

support this amazing educational institution, and by doing that we're ensuring that more Latinos will come to college, graduate and become successful."

Chancellor Block focused his remarks not only on his own diversity efforts, but also on the university's commitment to the larger Los Angeles community.

"UCLA has not peaked," he said. "There is a tremendous amount more we can do to make this university great. I'm inspired by all of you being here, and I'm looking forward to working with all of you. I hope that by the end of my term, we can look back and say that I've done the job you've expected of me."



Chancellor Gene Block (from left), Mrs. Carol Block and Professor Chon Noriega.

Faculty and staff leaders presented some eye-opening statistics about Latinos' representation and contributions on campus. Fourteen percent of UCLA freshmen are Latino, many of whom are first-generation college students. Food-service workers, custodial staff and housekeepers make up 50% to 60% of the Latino workforce at UCLA.

"Latino staff are represented throughout the UCLA workforce, in leadership positions and in professional, IT, technical and administrative clerical positions," said Linda Avila, director of the Staff Affirmative Action Office. "Within the Latino community we may come from different countries, backgrounds and experiences, yet we are all connected in spirit and aspirations. More alike than different, we share a fierce pride in our ancestral background, love of family and culture. These attributes in the Latino community define the manner in which we approach our work, plan for the future and contribute to the university."

David Hayes-Bautista, professor of medicine and director of the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture, gave a presentation on Reginaldo Francisco del Valle, one of the key figures in the founding of UCLA as a campus. Del Valle, an attorney, was a member of the state assembly and in charge of getting legislative approval, budgets and independent governance for the founding of the Los Angeles State Normal School in 1881 — which became the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1919. Despite that fact, del Valle was not invited to attend the founding ceremonies of the university.

"This is part of the Latino legacy for California," Hayes-Bautista said. "California will never fully achieve its future until it completely embraces its past, and we have a huge gap in our memory right now."

Chon Noriega, a professor in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media and director of the Chicano Studies Research Center, presented the Blocks with two gifts: an original painting by renowned Latino artist Patssi Valdez and a special hardcover edition of "Gronk," the first major book devoted to the influential Chicano artist.

"The event was spectacular," said Alfred Herrera, assistant vice provost for academic partnerships. "It represents exactly who we are as a people — warm, caring, loving and with a sense of community."

LSFA began as a volunteer organization in 1983 to represent and promote the interests of the Latino community at UCLA. If you would like more information about LSFA, contact membership director Teresa Yazdanpanah-Djedjro at [teresayaz@saa.ucla.edu](mailto:teresayaz@saa.ucla.edu).

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