

**Proposal for a Change of Name  
for the Center for Latin American Studies**

# Proposal for a Change of Name for the Center for Latin American Studies

## Brief

The Center for Latin American Studies, created within the College of Arts and Sciences in 2000, is proposing to change its name from the current “Center for Latin American Studies” to the “Miami Institute for the Americas.” The current document will outline the rationale for the requested change.

## Rationale for Name Change

The current name does not accurately reflect the unit’s mission and vision, as it hampers its efforts to further leverage the University of Miami’s unique position as the major research institution in a city that functions as the foremost economic, cultural, and social hub for Latin America and the Caribbean. There are three fundamental reasons for which we believe that a change of name to “Miami Institute for the Americas” will be the right decision:

### I. Leveraging Miami’s Unique Demographic and Geographic Position

Currently, the University of Miami’s Center for Latin American Studies is one of many such Centers at Universities around the United States (see Appendix A). While the creation of these Centers was once a forward-looking movement towards interdisciplinary approaches to area studies, the current name does not allow the unit to leverage Miami’s unique demographics and geographic position. Miami has grown to become an economic, social, and cultural core that connects the United States to the Caribbean as well as to Latin America. The city’s population is now predominantly of Latin American and Caribbean descent. Nowhere else in the United States do these regions flow together into one single hub of economic and social activity. The current name of the unit does not permit it to adequately tap into the dynamics of Miami’s social and economic diversity, as it merely mirrors approaches chosen by similar units around the country.

To rename the unit the “Miami Institute for the Americas” is to acknowledge the University of Miami’s unique demographic composition, its distinctive geographic position, and its tremendous importance as a heart for Latin American and Caribbean business, banking, media, and scholarly activity. The Miami Institute for the Americas would clearly set itself apart from the many Centers for Latin America around the United States as a unit that engages with Latin America and the Caribbean not merely as an object of study, but as a formative element in the city’s own economy and population.

The University of Miami is positioned in the midst of a hemispheric nucleus of economic, social, and cultural exchange. As such, it is imperative that this unit is identified by a name that clearly distinguishes it from those at competing institutions that study Latin America from afar rather than from within. Today’s reality of transnationalism and key phenomena shaping the region—such as migration—demand a conception that captures the wealth of economic, cultural, and social flows that shape the hemisphere.

While University of Miami guidelines do not distinguish between the terms “institute” and “center,” in common parlance an institute has a broader focus than a center, is more comprehensive, and more effectively leverages the wide range of backgrounds of the individuals connected to it. An

institute entails a body of researchers, students, and community stakeholders collaborating towards the generation and exchange of knowledge. An institute nurtures the development of projects that bridge the gap between academia and the rest of society. It promotes a more profound collaboration between the unit and the community.

## II. Advancing Inclusiveness

The proposed name change will allow the unit to position itself as one that celebrates the diversity of the hemisphere, while promising inclusiveness in its approaches to cultural dialogue and exchange, migratory patterns, and shared history. In this sense, the name change clearly communicates that studies and projects relating to migration, Latin@ and Caribbean populations in North America, as well as relations and exchanges between all three regions all fall within its purview without advancing North-South hierarchies and thus responding specifically to sensitivities prevalent among Miami's own highly diverse communities.

Miami is a space that boasts unique population dynamics, where the largest single share of its sizeable Latin American population happens simultaneously to be Caribbean in origin. Renaming the unit the "Miami Institute for the Americas" communicates the use of the term "Americas" to refer to a hemispheric understanding of North, Central, and South regions to which the term refers. Consequently, the use of the plural indicates an awareness of the diversity that characterizes the regions that are encompassed by that term. Likewise, the use of "for" in the proposed name denotes a willingness to engage and serve, rather than to merely observe from a distance, thereby strengthening the argument that the Miami Institute for the Americas will exist in the midst of all of the Americas.

The current name (Center for Latin American Studies) obscures the fact that diasporic populations of Caribbean and Latin American descent play an important role in the United States and are worthy objects of study. In this sense, the proposed name change resolves these type of issues by focusing on the Americas and thus communicating an inclusiveness that allows for interaction and dialogue with Caribbean, Latin@, and Latin American populations.

## III. Expanding Service and Connections

The mission of the unit is not only to create knowledge by fostering collaboration between over two hundred University of Miami scholars who work on Latin America and the Caribbean across most of the disciplines, but also to create practical applications for the knowledge that results from this effort and thus to serve as a networking hub that connects the University to businesses, corporations, non-governmental organizations, governmental agencies, and local communities. The name change will allow the Miami Institute for the Americas to more accurately communicate its mission as not only an observer but as an actor that helps to shape research agendas as well as policy and economic development. The new name allows the unit to position itself as an organization that participates and serves the needs of the very diverse community in which it operates. In this manner, it effectively communicates the following values: two-way relations with Latin America and the Caribbean, based on mutual respect and understanding; an effective integration of diasporic populations of Caribbean and Latin American descent in the United States; and a non-hierarchical dialogue with the Caribbean and the rest of the hemisphere.

## Appendix A

University centers in the United States named *Center for Latin American Studies* or similar

1. Center for Latin American Studies, *Brown University*
2. Center for Latin American Studies, *Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University*
3. Center for Latin American Studies, *Ohio State University*
4. Center for Latin American Studies, *Rutgers University*
5. Center for Latin American Studies, *San Diego State University*
6. Center for Latin American Studies, *Stanford University*
7. Center for Latin American Studies, *University of Arizona*
8. Center for Latin American Studies, *University of California Berkeley*
9. Center for Latin American Studies, *University of Chicago*
10. Center for Latin American Studies, *University of Florida*
11. Center for Latin American Studies, *University of Pittsburgh*
12. Center for Latin American Studies, *Vanderbilt University*
13. Center of Latin American Studies, *Kansas University*
14. David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, *Harvard University*
15. Roger Thayer Stone Center for Latin American Studies, *Tulane University*
16. Latin American Studies Center, *University of Colorado*
17. Latin American Studies Center, *University of Maryland*
18. Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies, *University of California, San Diego*
19. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *Duke University*
20. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *Indiana University*
21. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *Leiden University*
22. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *Loyola University New Orleans*
23. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *Michigan State University*
24. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *New York University*
25. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *New York University*
26. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *University of Connecticut*
27. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *University of Illinois*
28. Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, *University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

29. Center for Latin American and Latino Studies, *American University*
30. Center for Latin American Studies and Border Studies, *New Mexico State University*
31. Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies, *City University of New York*
32. Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies, *University of Massachusetts*
33. Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, *Northern Illinois University*
34. Center for Latino and Latin American Studies, *Wayne State University*
35. Latin American and Caribbean Studies Center, *State University of New York at Stony Brook*
36. Latin American and Caribbean Center, *Florida International University*

University institutes in the United States that include *Latin American Studies* or similar

1. Institute of Latin American Studies, *Columbia University*
2. Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, *University of Texas at Austin*
3. Kellogg Institute for International Studies, *University of Notre Dame* (International Studies with emphasis on Latin America)

## Appendix B

### Institutes in the United States and Canada containing *Americas* in their name

1. Institute of the Americas, *non-profit organization registered in the state of California*
2. Hemispheric Institute on the Americas, *University of California, Davis*
3. Institute for the Study of the Americas, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*
4. Observatoire des Amériques, Montréal, *Université du Québec à Montréal*

### Institutes in the UK containing *Americas* in their name

1. Institute for the Study of the Americas, *University of London*
2. Institute of the Americas, *University College London (UCL)*

Appendix C

To: College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) Council

From: Ariel C. Armony, Weeks Professor in Latin American Studies and Director, Center for Latin American Studies

Date: August 28, 2013

Re.: Proposal for a change of name for the Center for Latin American Studies

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to write to express my full support for the proposal to change the current name of the Center for Latin American Studies to the “Miami Institute for the Americas.”

This international center focuses on the twenty-first century issues that will impact and shape the Americas. In order to research, educate, and affect change in the region, the Center defines and studies agendas that require multidisciplinary approaches; develops partnerships with the academic, business, government, and non-profit sectors to produce knowledge for the common good; serves as a focal point for networking in the Americas; and provides real-world education and training for students to develop skills that carry into their careers.

The Center facilitates and increases the projection of numerous University schools and colleges, as well as various University initiatives, throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. More than just an academic unit, the Center is also posed to offer unique networking opportunities in the Americas and other regions for companies, entrepreneurs, researchers, governments, and non-profit organizations.

The Center has grown significantly in the last three years. It is well positioned to realize its vision as the leading knowledge hub for education, research, and networking in the Americas. Through the Center, the University of Miami can unite the talents and knowledge of more than 200 faculty members, who represent all of the institution’s schools and colleges. With its unique location in Miami—the gateway to the Americas—the Center is able to connect the University’s extensive resources with those in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In order to reach a wider audience and fully convey the Center’s mission and scope, we are proposing a strategic rebranding as the Miami Institute for the Americas. I strongly believe that this name change is a fundamental step in the process of building an organization that will excel in its field. I am delighted to count with the full support of both our faculty boards (see Appendix D). The new name has been presented to Dr. Thomas LeBlanc, University of Miami Executive Vice President and Provost; Sergio Gonzalez, Senior Vice President for University Advancement and External Affairs; Dr. Leonidas Bachas, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. All of them have expressed their support for the proposed change of name.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Ariel C. Armony

**CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES  
FACULTY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
FEBRUARY 26, 2013**

**Ariel Armony, CLAS**  
**Israel Alonso Chavez, CLAS**  
**Jennifer Dias, CLAS**  
**Joselyn Garcia, CLAS**  
**Daniel Suman, RSMAS**  
**Eduardo Elena, Department of History**

**Yolanda Cooper, Otto Richter Library**  
**Leopoldo Raij, Miller School of Medicine**  
**Joseph Ganitsky, School of Business Admin.**  
**Maria Guerda Nicolas, School of Education**  
**Jean-Francois LeJeune, School of Architecture**

Re: New name presentation

The agenda of the meeting included a presentation and a discussion to propose changing the name of the Center for Latin American Studies to Miami Institute for the Americas.

The presentation included a timeline that described the process through which the new name was created. This process included extensive in-house discussions and feedback from two focus groups, which included University of Miami professors and students and Miami-based professionals (including UM alumni).

During the Faculty Advisory Board meeting, the Director of the Center, Dr. Ariel Armony described the reasons and implications associated with the change of name of the Center. Board members asked questions for clarification, discussed the expected impact of the new name, and expressed their views according to their own disciplinary background.

A vote was taken and the Board voted unanimously to adopt the proposed name change.



**CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES  
CAS COUNCIL MEETING  
MARCH 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

<b>Ariel Armony</b> , CLAS	<b>Steve Buttermann</b> , Women and Gender Studies
<b>Israel Alonso Chavez</b> , CLAS	<b>Timothy Watson</b> , American Studies
<b>Jennifer Dias</b> , CLAS	<b>Henry Fonte</b> , Department of Theater Arts
<b>Joselyn Garcia</b> , CLAS	<b>John Murphy</b> , Department of Sociology
<b>Otavio Bueno</b> , Dept. of Philosophy	<b>Amy Weisman</b> , Department of Psychology
<b>Tracy Devine-Guzman</b> , Modern Languages and Literatures	

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The Director of the Center, Dr. Ariel Armony, described the reasons and implications associated with the change of name. There was a lively discussion about the different meanings and expected impact of the new name. Some members of the Council expressed reservations about a proposed tagline ("research and studies"), but there was a very positive reception to the new name (Miami Institute for the Americas). Dr. Armony mentioned that the issue of the tagline had been mentioned in previous presentations and that it was likely that the proposed tagline would be discarded (Note: The tagline has been eliminated.)

A vote was taken and the Council voted in favor to adopt the proposed name change.

Appendix E

To: College of Arts and Sciences Faculty

From: Ariel C. Armony, Weeks Professor in Latin American Studies and Director, Center for Latin American Studies

Date: October 14, 2013

Re.: Faculty Forum to Discuss Proposal for a change of name from "Center for Latin American Studies" to "Miami Institute for the Americas"

Dear Colleagues,

On October 9, 2013, the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) held an open forum with faculty members to discuss the proposal for its name change. We sent an electronic invitation to faculty and circulated the proposal. The forum provided an opportunity to obtain valuable input, exchange ideas, and promote the dialogue with faculty members.

A total of 11 faculty members attended and 7 others could not attend but sent their comments via email.

I opened the meeting by offering a summary of the proposal, the rationale behind it, and an overview of the process required to change the name of the Center. We discussed in detail the implications of each of the words in the proposed name and referred to examples of institutes with similar names at other academic institutions.

The majority of the faculty members who attended and/or sent their comments were in favor of the name change as an opportunity to expand the visibility and exposure of the Center. A few faculty members disagreed with the proposed name change, and some expressed their concerns about the possibility of a change of focus from academia to the private sector.

As part of the discussion on the inclusiveness of the new name, some colleagues stressed the importance of deepening our involvement with the non-Spanish speaking Caribbean and Cuba.

The input from colleagues was very valuable and we appreciate their willingness to take the time to participate in this type of forum. We will continue hosting similar forums to discuss other important issues related to CLAS.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Ariel C. Armony