As we end the spring 2019 semester reflecting on the PASO -TITLE V grant goals and objectives that supports First Generation, Low Income, Latinx students success is essential.

In this issue we are highlighting the efforts of PASO Scholars who enroll in the “Culturally Validating "PASO courses”. Faculty are trained to revise their curriculum to include culturally relevant strategies. Infusing the course content with readings, film, and speakers that resonate with students. PASO student focus groups and PASO course surveys, demonstrate that PASO Scholars are able to connect, are better motivated, and feel a sense of belonging when they enroll in PASO courses. To date we have 1,006 CSUSM students that have enrolled in PASO courses.

The PASO GEW, GEL, and GEO, courses demonstrate a higher than 4% pass rate when compared to the overall CSUSM student populations in similar courses.

Through the PASO grant, a Chicanx Studies pilot class was created and PASO Scholars overwhelming demonstrate enthusiasm in learning about the history of Chicanos in the United States. Future efforts to create a Chicano Studies major at CSUSM are in the works.

Additional collaborative efforts with the Faculty Center and the PASO Faculty Learning communities have trained faculty in “Culturally Validating strategies. Faculty represent multiple disciplines such as Human Development, Psychology, Sociology, Chemistry, Kinesiology, Physics, and Spanish. Institutionalizing these efforts is the goal of the Title V grant.

This year we have a total of 70 PASO scholars who will graduate in their fourth year of the grant. Fulfilling the PASO goals of retention and graduation rates of PASO Scholars.

These efforts are reasons to celebrate and acknowledge the success of PASO Scholars ending the year on a high note.
The PASO Office held a Valentine’s Day themed mixer for the scholars to come and enjoy some food, get to know each other, play games, and listen to our guest speakers.

**PASO SPRING EVENTS**

The PASO Office invited incoming students and parents to campus to learn more about PASO and CSUSM on April 27th and May 4th; over 153 attendees.

First year orientation registration opens April 16th and closes May 31st.

F.U.E.R.ZA had several events at the Latin@ Center throughout the spring semester.
Why did you agree to be a PASO instructor?
I was offered the opportunity to be a PASO instructor when another slated instructor went on emergency medical leave at the beginning of a semester, and it has been one of the greatest blessings of my teaching career. Prior to teaching, I volunteered with young people, facilitating communication among individuals from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds; the slogan of our organization was “I wish I knew you better.” This background instilled in me a sense that many people, and especially young people, genuinely want to understand the people around them more fully, even as they're seeking clarification of the own identities. Being a writing instructor in the PASO program allows me to be part of a community that examines the conflicting cultural messaging that surrounds us, too often creating division and discontent. As a PASO instructor, I empower my students to break down rhetoric and, more importantly, to grow into confident writers and speakers who see the value of their past experiences and to claim a future for themselves where their words and ideas matter.

How are you making an impact?
In a real and immediate way, the skills that I teach provide a foundation upon which students build their academic and professional careers. Students can leverage these skills into increasing their own access to opportunities. Beyond the skills that I teach, I engineer my classroom to be a safe space where students can practice expressing their authentic voices, where they can explore their ideas, their feelings, their experiences, and their beliefs. Our class gives students permission to think about what matters to them, to commit those thoughts to words with intention, and to organize those words into a structure that gives their ideas the power to make other people listen and understand.

What is the importance of including “Cultural Validation” in your curriculum?
So often, institutional structures, including universities, reinforce uniformity and conformity, thereby excluding individuals whose identities were shaped by anything other than a normative model. Students benefit from knowing that there is not just one set of experiences that prepares them for college—all background experiences have the potential to set students up for academic and career success, as long as they can be viewed critically in an analytical context. “Cultural Validation” encourages students to consider the chain of cause and effect, both individual and cultural, that led them to the place where they are, without shame or guilt. It legitimizes a student’s claim to a rightful place within academia.
FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Devan Romero, Assistant Professor, SHSHS Kinesiology Department

· Why did you agree to be a participant in the PASO FLC?
Being a part of the PASO FLC was attractive to me not only because of the positive and successful reputation the program has on campus, but because I was very intrigued to learn more about cultural validation in the classroom. Being a first-generation Mexican-American college student, who has never fit the traditional college student model, I had a personal interest to learn more about this pedagogy and practice. In addition, CSUSM is a very diverse campus and as a teacher I wanted to be able to better connect with our students in the classroom and ultimately support their learning success.

· What is the importance of including “Cultural Validation” in pedagogy?
Cultural validation is vital to improving student success, retention, and fostering a life-long learning experience. The transformation of students as collaborators in their learning processes and experiences enhance active learning in the classroom, connectivity in their academic environment, and supports students of all walks of life. The key here is the connection that is established when pedagogy includes cultural validation translates into not only succeeding in their academic career but have a positive experience that harnesses strengths and builds resiliency.

· How are you making an impact with the training you received from participating in PASO FLC?
I have added different components to my courses that include cultural validation pedagogy, which has been successful in creating an active learning and more inclusive learning environment. My next goal is to introduce and support other faculty in my Department and on campus to culturally validate their courses and include these key principles in their teaching practices in and outside of the classroom.

· Any advice you would give other Faculty/Instructors?
I would encourage Faculty to explore all the ways they can include cultural validation pedagogy in their courses and decide what would be most valuable and enhancing. We have a supportive PASO designated faculty and staff that can assist in the development of culturally validating courses and to seek out resources and support.

· Anything else you would like to add?
I would like to thank Dr. Kimberly D’Anna-Hernandez, Faculty Lead Director for PASO, for all the mentor ship she has provided me in realizing cultural validation as a teacher in and outside of the classroom.
PASO SCHOLAR HIGHLIGHT

Diego Orea, Biochemistry, third year
Vista, CA

- What are some of your future goals?
I am third year Biochemistry major at California State University San Marcos. I am a first generation student. My goal is to attend graduate school and obtain my PhD.

- What has most benefited you as a PASO Scholar?
The PASO program provided me with the opportunity to take courses design specifically for PASO students. Through these classes I was able to meet and interact with many other first generation students who I could relate with because they came from a similar background as me. These courses were invaluable, as they gave first generation students like me an environment where we could transition and become accustomed to the challenges and rigors of college. I am thankful for the PASO program as it was of great help during my first two semesters at CSUSM and continues to provide me with a community of people I can turn to when the need arises.

- Are you involved in any other programs on campus?
Recently I was also given the opportunity to join the TRIO McNair Scholars program at CSUSM. The McNair Program introduced me to the prospect of attending graduate school which was an option that I had only briefly considered. Through the McNair program I have learned about what is needed in order to have a competitive grad school application and the skills required to succeed once in grad school. Thanks to the McNair program I have developed greatly as a student and have come to realize that higher education is an attainable goal for first generation students. One of the things that make this such as great program is the incredible effort and support given to us by the McNair staff. The McNair mentors have been working closely with us throughout the entire process of our grad school or summer research applications. Thanks to the help of the McNair program, I will have the opportunity to participate in research as part of the REU University of Oxford, Miami this summer. I highly encourage anyone who is interested in pursuing graduate school to take into consideration the Trio McNair Scholars program.
What was your mindset coming into your first year?

I moved away from my home in Bakersfield to start a new academic journey here at CSUSM. From the start, I believed that my college path was going to be clear and easy to follow. However, that idea quickly fell apart when I started my first week of college. In the beginning, I was welcomed with the confusion of scheduling and finding my classes on campus. I also sought academic advising but was not sure where to go which resulted in constant worry of where that may place me in my academic path.

How has PASO helped you?

With PASO, I finally found a place to help me transition from the mindset of a high school student to a college undergraduate. Every time I step into their office I am greeted by the friendly and amazing PASO ambassadors who are eager to help fellow PASO scholars like myself. Being a PASO scholar has allowed me to take part in the many resources that they have to offer. These include academic advising, financial advising, time management, and computer services. Each and every one of these resources is crucial to a successful academic path in which I am honored to be able to utilize. Ultimately, because of PASO I no longer feel off-track or confused, but when I ever I do I know exactly where to go.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I am so grateful that I have been able to have the opportunities and resources that PASO has been able to provide me. I may not know what lies ahead in the rest of my college journey, but I do know that PASO will be there along the way to provide me with amazing pathways to academic success and opportunities.