

A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Bryan R. Roberts, Director
Teresa Lozano Long Institute of
Latin American Studies

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The present academic year is my last as Director, and on September 1 I will be succeeded by Prof. Charles Hale of the Department of Anthropology. Charlie Hale was appointed after a national search, which, as a side benefit, brought some distinguished Latin Americanists to campus. The year also was notable for the continuation of our efforts to develop academic relationships with Cuba through a conference on energy and trade issues and through arranging for Rafael Hernandez, the editor of the Cuban social sciences and humanities quarterly *Temas*, to spend the fall semester of 2009 with us at the institute as a Visiting Professor. A new initiative is that of developing relationships with China to promote Latin American studies. Jonathan Brown, LLILAS Associate Director, coordinated with Beijing University to organize a visit by LLILAS faculty together with colleagues from the Colegio de México. The delegation was led by the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Randy Diehl, and included six LLILAS affiliate faculty including myself. The two-day conference at Beijing University featured papers on the history and sociology of Latin America, international relations between China and the Americas, and Internet access to source material on Latin America. Benjamin Narváz's article in this issue focuses on the ties between China and Latin America (see p. 16). We also visited three other universities, China Agricultural University in Beijing and Shanghai and Fudan Universities in Shanghai. The latter is the alma mater of our Director of LANIC, Ning Ling.

The annual Lozano Long Conference this year was on *Contested Modernities*, which featured the distinguished Portuguese lawyer and sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos as the keynote speaker. Jossianna Arroyo provides a reflective commentary on the issues raised by the conference concerning new and resurgent identities among previously ignored populations (see p. 36). Another major conference focused on *The Origins, Implementation, and Spread of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs in Latin America*. These programs seek to combat poverty by using monetary transfers to encourage children to stay in school and families to engage in preventative health care. The best known examples are Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Familia in Brazil. The conference brought together the initiators of these programs, President Ernesto Zedillo of Mexico and Senator Cristovam Buarque of Brazil, along with government officials from both countries who have had lead roles in implementing the programs and academics from the U.S. and Latin America. President Zedillo's keynote address combined a focus on the details of the Progres/Oportunidades program and an analysis of the challenges to social policy in an era of economic globalization. James Lindsay's interview with Dr. Zedillo is featured in this issue (see p. 5).

The research clusters that were begun last year in the institute were important in developing workshop and conference agendas. The Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and Human Rights clusters combined to develop a series of seminars and were central to the planning of the *Contested*

Modernities conference. The Social Policy cluster provided the chair of the *Conditional Cash Transfers* conference committee, Joe Potter, and its other members. A new cluster on Migration has been active and has planned a major conference for fall 2009 on *Migration in an Era of Restriction*, which will be cosponsored by the Center for European Studies and the Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. The conference will look comparatively at migration policies and practices in the U.S., Latin America, Europe, and Russia. Nestor Rodriguez, its organizer, reflects on the “Age of Migration” in this issue (see p. 8).

A major event in the institute’s history was the gift by the Universidad Veracruzana of an exact replica of *El Rey*, an Olmec head located in the university’s museum in Jalapa, as described by Anabella Coronado Ruiz in this issue (p. 30). The head is of the same stone and dimensions as the original and now “signs” the institute, as this cover of *Portal* indicates. The installation of the head in November was marked by a ceremony attended by the governor of the state of Veracruz, the rector of the Universidad Veracruzana, and President Powers and Provost Leslie of UT. The Mexican Center and Texas State University, San Marcos, organized a conference on the Olmec as the origins of ancient Mexican civilization. In addition, Miguel Alemán Velasco, former governor of Veracruz, attended the ceremony and gave a talk on the new challenges facing Mexico, the subject of an interview with the governor by Renata Keller in this issue (p. 24).

In June of this year, LLILAS helped the President’s Office organize a series of events in Brazil to mark UT’s commitment to developing stronger relationships with Brazil through partnerships with government, academia, and the private sector. President Powers hosted two large receptions in Rio and in Brasília, with the Brasília reception marking the signing of an agreement between UT and the Instituto Brasiliense de Direito Público in Brasília. The President’s initiative coincided with the Latin American Studies Congress in Rio, which attracted more than 6,000 participants, half from Latin America, and included eight members of the LLILAS staff.

As a final note, I would like to express my thanks to the staff of LLILAS for their hard work, commitment, and professionalism. I have been lucky to work with such a talented group of people who make it possible to utilize fully the resources that we have at UT to further Latin American studies. Our affiliated faculty has been a considerable source of support, giving willingly of their time to help run the institute and its programs. And despite the crisis, this year has been an exceptionally good one for recruiting Latin American specialists throughout the university. I also have been fortunate to receive considerable support from the university administration and particularly from that of the College of Liberal Arts. Talking with colleagues elsewhere, it is clear that we are receiving unusually strong support for Latin American studies from the UT administration. Last, I would like to thank the members of our new Advisory Council for their energy and initiative in suggesting ways forward to meet our program goals. It has been an especial privilege to work with Joe and Teresa Long, who despite their many other commitments remain very active in promoting the institute. Looking back, these have been an interesting and rewarding three years, although I also look forward to giving more time to research, writing, and teaching.



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After serving first as Interim Director and then Director, Dr. Roberts is returning to the Department of Sociology and the Population Research Center at UT. He will be succeeded at LLILAS by Dr. Charles R. Hale, Professor of Anthropology at UT and former President of LASA, who becomes the new Director in September 2009.



Charles R. Hale