National Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic heritage has been celebrated annually since 1968. When the observance began, there was only one week dedicated to honoring the contributions that Hispanics have made in the United States of America. Former President Ronald Reagan expanded what was known as Hispanic Heritage Week – to Hispanic Heritage Month. The annual 30-day-long observance begins on September 15th and ends on October 15th.

The timespan of the heritage month is intentional to include the independence days of some Hispanic countries and Columbus Day. The countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua all celebrate the anniversary of their independence on September 15th. The independence days of Mexico and Chile are, respectively, September 16th and 18th. Columbus Day is on October 12th. Click here to view the gubernatorial proclamation and here to view the presidential proclamation of Hispanic Heritage Month.

Source: Hispanicheritagemonth.gov

October is also Disability Employment Awareness Month, click here to view the gubernatorial proclamation and here to view the presidential proclamation. Domestic Violence Awareness Month is observed in October as well, click here to view the presidential proclamation. Native American Heritage Month will be observed in November.

Know Your Protected Classes!
Veterans Status, Race/Ethnicity & Disability

Veteran status is defined as “those that served in the US military, ground, naval or air service.” Race is defined as “a group of people related by common descent or heredity.” Ethnicity is defined as “a group classification in which members share a unique social and cultural heritage passed on from one generation to the next.” Disability is defined as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.” Examples of inappropriate conduct based on a protected class include, but are not limited to, refusal to hire a qualified individual because of their protected class or making disparaging remarks about an individual’s protected class. ECU prohibits harassment and discrimination on the basis of all protected classes under the Notice of Nondiscrimination. To view the University’s policies and regulations, click here. For assistance with an issue related to a protected class, feel free to contact us at (252) 328-6804.
Employees are encouraged to verify or correct their Employee Profile.

Employees are not required to submit this information to the university; however, the information requested in the Employee Profile will be used to assist the university in its compliance with federal and state record keeping and reporting requirements. Responses will be kept confidential, except as specifically provided by law, and used in a manner consistent with law.

Ethnic Studies Film Series
Screening of the film “120 days”

The College of Arts and Sciences and the School of Communication co-hosted the screening of “120 Days” on September 22nd. The film is about a family of undocumented immigrants in Raleigh, NC and the four months — or 120 days — that Miguel Cortes is allowed to get his and his family’s affairs in order. The Ethnic Studies Film Series will focus on immigration aiming to connect with the selected Pirate Read “Enrique’s Journey.”

Faculty & Staff Spotlight:

Randy Gilland
ECU academic advisor and student organizations advisor

Randy Gilland is the director of the Department of Academic Advising here at East Carolina University. Gilland prides himself on being involved with many student organizations and the students he advises at ECU. Along with being an advisor, Gilland is Southeastern Cherokee and makes sure that ECU students are exposed to what being a Native American is all about.

Gilland grew up in Sanford, North Carolina and attended ECU for six years, earning a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology and a Master’s of Science in Counselor Education. Gilland says his friends are the reason he enrolled at ECU however, getting to Pirate Nation was an interesting journey. He says he almost didn’t attend ECU due to misinformation from an advisor at his former community college.

“I told him I took psychology in high school and thought it was interesting. He thought I should not do psychology because I was not good at math,” said Gilland. Gilland continued to explain that, at the time, ECU required Psychology students to complete two mathematics courses; college algebra and psychology statistics. Gilland trusted his advisor’s word and enrolled as an undecided major. Later Gilland realized he could not help his passion for Psychology and decided to “bite the bullet.” He looks back on this experience and aims to make sure no students he advises have the
same experience he did. “I want to make sure I’m giving students accurate information.”

“Looking back, I should have never let that guy deter me. I should’ve done my part to make sure (he was correct) but at the same time he should’ve known more about the major,” said Gilland. “I try to be that person who students can come to with questions. If I don’t know it, I’ll look it up.”

Today Gilland serves as an academic advisor, as he has since 2003. While he is employed by ECU, he also volunteers with student organizations. Gilland is the advisor for Native American Sorority Sigma Omicron Epsilon, a co-advisor for East Carolina Native American Organization, academic excellence advisor for the Phi Mu Fraternity and a member of Epsilon Chi Nu Inc. In addition to his different advisory roles on campus, Gilland, along with other Native American staff and faculty members, visit classes and discuss Native American culture. He says many students are often surprised about the information they do not know, and he tries to inform them about the stereotypes or how to make sure they respect the Native American culture.

“The funny thing is it’s all really basic human nature stuff, you kind of just have to point it out,” said Gilland. He continued to explain that if you go to a pow wow and you see an individual wearing their dress, (the outfit they’re going to wear to the arena to dance in) some say ‘I love your costume, it looks great.’ However, for that person, it is not a costume because they’re not pretending to be something that they’re not.

Overall, Gilland hopes to be a helping hand to the students he advises academically and through student organizations. He says that he and other Native American faculty and staff members look forward to helping students. “It helps them; just knowing that there is somebody here that is faculty and staff that they can go to if they have a problem.”

Astrid La Cruz
This student became a Pirate, then an American
By: Nichole Currie

Astrid Yesebel La Cruz Montilla, senior psychology major, is a Latina-American student at East Carolina University. She has been very active in student organizations and excels in her academics, which has led her to early graduation.

This is La Cruz’s third year at ECU and she will graduate this May. She is the president of the Student Association of Latino and Spanish Affairs (SALSA), the senior class representative for the Student Government Association (SGA), Programming Chair of the CULTURE Board at Ledonia Wright Cultural Center (LWCC) and is a member of the Psychology International Honors Club.

La Cruz, originally from Venezuela, moved to the United States when she was eight years old and received her U.S. citizenship last semester.

She explained the long process of becoming a citizen. La Cruz first came to America on a visitor visa and then later on her mother’s student visa until it expired.

“Once the student visa expired, we applied for a green card. That is basically
a status of legal resident alien or a residency card. With a residency card, you have to apply every two years. Eventually we got lucky and received a 10 year residency,” said La Cruz. According to La Cruz, once you are a resident in the United States for 7 years you are eligible to apply for your citizenship.

La Cruz says becoming a citizen is extremely expensive. The process consisted of many interviews, fingerprinting, criminal background checks and an assessment testing her and her family's knowledge of U.S. history.

“It was awesome. It was a great feeling because I've always considered this my country. I've lived here my whole life, basically, and it just felt natural to be naturalized and get my citizenship,” said La Cruz. “I think its 100% worth it.”

La Cruz describes her life in Venezuela as “comfortable.” She said the currency exchange rate was “ridiculous” and that was one of the reasons her family moved to America.

La Cruz describes the move to America as challenging. “My first few years here were very hard. Coming from a comfortable lifestyle to a country where I did not know any English was difficult,” said La Cruz. “I did not have any extended family here and it was also a different standard of living.” She says that in Venezuela extended family was a crucial part of her life. When she arrived in the U.S., La Cruz moved in with her father that she hadn’t seen in two years.

“It was hard because I didn’t have an adult looking after me most of the time,” said La Cruz. “Overall I think it made me stronger and more independent.”

La Cruz enrolled in ECU following high school. She describes her first year at ECU as a culture shock in many ways. The high school she attended before ECU was very small and her graduating class was only 37 people. According to ECU’s 2014-2015 fact book, as of the fall 2014 snapshot date, 6 percent of undergraduate students were “Hispanic of any race.”

“At my high school I was the only Latina student in my class. I didn't really have a lot of Latino friends growing up. I didn't really have a chance to explore my own identity or culture as a Latina-American,” said La Cruz. “I had my sense of Latina culture come from my mom and my upbringing with her but I never really had a chance to connect with other people who were from a similar background.”

La Cruz said, once she found the student organization SALSA, she became more active on campus. La Cruz said some people in SALSA knew the similar struggles she went through. She found people on campus who related to the experience of being an immigrant or having immigrant parents. La Cruz says the students in SALSA understood that moving to America to pursue an education were “big shoes to fill,” and this is one of the reasons she remained in the organization.

Through La Cruz’s involvement with SALSA, she was able to meet two inspirational ECU employees, Drs. Cynthia Ann Bickley-Green, coordinator of art education, and Melissa Haithcox-Dennis, former director of LWCC. La Cruz says these two women stood out to her because they took an interest in her and her authentic interests.

“Dr. Bickley-Green really took an interest in my background. She really pushed me to find out exactly what I wanted to do. She saw my passion for arts and for working with kids, especially within the special needs community. She connected me with people who guided me in the right direction, career wise,” said La Cruz.

Bickley-Green enjoyed the fact that La Cruz wanted to reach out to students in the community with different disabilities. “Because she is a gifted artist, she created numerous
ways to adapt the art lessons for students with different abilities,” said Green. “She also worked with me on various creative research projects.”

“Astrid La Cruz is a very gifted person in many areas,” said Green. “She has boundless energy, a great work ethic, and generous spirit!”

Dr. Haithcox-Dennis connected La Cruz with people involved with her major and also offered a job opportunity at LWCC. “She realized I was really passionate about working on campus and getting to know people or getting involved, “said La Cruz.

La Cruz is very passionate about Latino-Americans pursuing a secondary education.

“I think people like me who are in school, and who are really involved are setting the example for those kids who are getting older and are considering going to college,” said La Cruz.

La Cruz has had quite an experience here at ECU. She believes being a Latino student leader inspires those of her own ethnicity to do the same.

“That’s what made me really want to come to school,” said La Cruz. “I hope to see ECU grow in numbers in terms of Latino students and I hope to see those students get involved, thrive and do well.”

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**Equity & Diversity in History**

**70th Anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

The U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy observes the 70th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month this October. This year’s theme is “My Disability is One Part of Who I Am.”

The observance began as “National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week” during October 7-13, 1945. The original proclamation was signed by former President Harry S. Truman on August 11th. The word “physically” was removed from the name of the observance in acknowledgement of contributions of the individuals who have different types of disabilities.
Ledonia S. Wright Day
There will be an open-house event at Ledonia Wright Cultural Center (LWCC) from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on October 15, 2015. There will be tours and refreshments available to attendees, in preparation of LWCC’s 40th anniversary celebration to be held February 2016. For more information, contact LWCC at 252-328-6495.

25 Years of ADA: The History, the Law, the Future
In celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Office for Equity and Diversity is sponsoring “25 Years of ADA: The History, the Law, the Future.” Brenda Dixon, from the Office of State Human Resources, will be the speaker at this event scheduled for October 23, 2015. All faculty, staff and students are welcome to attend the event. Contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at 252-328-6804 if you have questions about the event.

Intersecting Identities: Race, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Gender
Reverend Dr. Jamie Washington will be the keynote speaker and panel host of the kickoff event for the Let’s Talk about Intersecting Identities series. The keynote and panel event will be on November 2nd, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., in the Mendenhall Student Center Great Rooms. Contact the Office for Equity and Diversity at 252-328-6804 if you have questions about the event.

Transgender Day of Remembrance
There will be an opportunity for faculty, students, and staff to participate in the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 19th from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The event will be held in the Croatan Green Room. There will be speakers and a vigil to honor those who have died. Contact the LGBT Resource Office at 252-737-2514 for more information about this event.

In the News...
Things Not to Say to American Indian Coworkers
This article provides a list of what not to say to American Indian employees in the workplace and provides guidance of how the given phrases are deemed inappropriate. To read the list, click here.

Frenk Takes the Helm as University of Miami’s First Hispanic President
Dr. Julio Frenk recently became the first Hispanic President of University of Miami. Click here to read more about Dr. Frenk and his achievements leading up to this historic point of his career.

Administrators: Institutions Must Continue to Push Diversity Efforts
Hampden-Sydney College President says that, as a nation, America still does not “have it right” as it relates to racial issues. To read more about why diversity efforts are still a need, click here.

$5.3M in Grants Issued to Combat Native Americans Education ‘Crisis’
Native American tribal organizations will receive financial assistance, from the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Department of Education, to assist tribal youth prepare for college. Click here to read more.

Source for articles: Diverse Issues in Higher Education and Diverse,Inc.
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