

Honors Student Karina Hernandez Serves on Latinx Panel at Community Event

Cassidy Gummersall

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photo courtesy of Dr. Crescencio López

Dr. Crescencio López, from the USU Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies, welcomed USU students, faculty, staff, and members of the community to a screening of the USU Latinx Creative Society's documentary *¡Logan, Somos Tus Vecinos! (Logan, We Are Your Neighbors)* on Thursday, November 2, 2017. The documentary highlights Logan's Latinx community culture and represents creative academic work by USU students involved with the Latinx Creative Society.

Honors student Karina Hernandez is a member of the society, and she worked on the documentary and served on the panel discussion as part of her "Honors in Practice" contract work. Dr. López was her faculty mentor.

Dr. López said, "The principal goal of the Creative Society is to document the Latinx experience in Cache County through literary and media arts such as poetry, short story, documentary, and filmmaking. As a mentor, my goal is to teach undergraduate Latinx students to embrace their cultural heritage and to ... become aware of the issues affecting the Latinx community. I feel that I am investing in the future of our community.... In our meetings, I advocate the notion that Latinx culture is intrinsically valuable to the growth of our community and our society as a whole."

Following the documentary, four members of the Latinx Creative Society, all students or graduates of USU, conducted a Q&A session. Most of the panel members were first-generation college students.

When asked about his greatest struggle in college, Iván Cardona, USU alumnus and LatinX society member, responded jokingly, "Coming to class."

After pausing for laughter, he explained the challenge of attending class and working enough to pay for tuition. The other panel members agreed. Cristina Carreño, recent USU graduate and LatinX society member, commented that on top of her own responsibilities, her parents asked for translation help at home, and Karina mentioned her family's struggle to understand the process of moving away and working so hard to earn a college education.

Thinking about how this project was part of her honors education, in particular, Karina said, "I never thought of incorporating film-making into my academic research or scholarly work, but helping with this project has given me more insight into the numerous kinds of projects/presentations that can be utilized to present research. The same is true for students who participate in the Honors Program and are looking to complete their capstone projects—there are so many different methods to present the research or scholarly activity that honors students are involved in. We just have to think outside the box...."

One community member asked the panel about faculty support, and Karina immediately thanked Dr. López for his advocacy on behalf of Latinx students. She then shared ideas about how faculty could productively—and transformatively—involve minority students in opportunities beyond the classroom. Cecilia Vargas, another panel member, stressed the importance of understanding Hispanic culture more broadly.

When a student asked the final question of the evening—"In what forms do you face racism and how can we help?"—the panel agreed that community support and understanding of different cultures are the best ways to overcome prejudice. The packed Taggart Student Center Auditorium at this event suggests the broad interest in being part of this support network.