

New Latino club aims to be social, not political

Organizer Juan Garzon says the club fulfills the need for a social group for Latino students

By Christopher Kenning
Student Activities Reporter

Juan Garzon considers himself a very political person.

He's an active member of Movimiento Estudianti Chicanos de Aztlan, the national Chicano political movement. He's also working toward entering law school so he can practice immigration law.

So when Garzon recently formed a new student group called Latin Pride, many assumed it would be a forum for addressing political issues.

"Latin Pride is not political, it's purely a social club," he said, explaining that the campus' newest

student group was formed to give Latinos a place to come together for dances, potlucks and trips. Garzon's inspiration for forming the group was the need he saw for a Latin American group that wasn't politically oriented.

"There's between 500 and 600 Latinos on campus, but only 75 active members of MEChA," he said. "So where's the rest? There's a need for a group that's more social and cultural."

Jim Garcia, acting director for the Office of Multicultural Affairs, also said there is a need for a group like Latin Pride.

"MEChA is a national movement which deals with issues of social change, like farmworkers' conditions and discriminatory legislation like Proposition 187 in California," he said. "Latin Pride is a support network, and I think there's a need for this kind of so-

cial and cultural networking in the Latino community."

Garzon said that because MEChA is a Chicano organization, which advocates mostly for Mexican-Americans, there is no viable pan-Latino group.

"I see a lot of different Latino nationalities sticking together," he said, explaining his hopes to bridge the gap between various Latin American cultures.

Garcia said many MEChA members are also involved with Latin Pride. "The two groups are supporting organizations."

Alma Llamas, a sophomore originally from Jalisco, Mexico, is in charge of recruitment for MEChA, but she also helped found Latin Pride.

"With doing all the boycotts and stuff, we need time to relax and hang out," she said. "It's all about having fun. You don't have

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to be Latino, but it's cool if you are because we all share a common culture."

The forming of social and cultural groups to complement political groups continues to be a trend at the University. For example, there are five groups that represent a range of Jewish student interests, said Elissa Greenberg, program-

ing president of B'nai B'rith Hillel, a Jewish religious group.

Other multicultural groups, such as the Native American Student Union, have supporting groups like the Native Women's Research Interest Group, said Lorraine Brundige of NASU.

At the first Latin Pride meeting many present were part of a close Latino community, but some non-Latino students also came to learn more about the culture. One of the first events will bring in a salsa dancer. "I can't wait to learn to salsa," one student commented.

While the group is not yet recognized by the ASUO, Garzon plans to apply for funding as soon as possible.

Latin Pride's next meeting will be Tuesday, Nov. 24 at 6 p.m. in the EMU Gumwood Room. For more information, call Garzon at 718-9577.

University post office may become contract station in '98

Some postal workers say the change could limit on-campus mailing services for students

By Teri Meeuwse
Higher Education Reporter

Postal workers at the University post office are predicting the office will turn into a contract station once the two-year rental contract with the University ends in 1998.

The implementation of a contract station would make regular postal services inconvenient for students, said Rich Buehrig, a postal worker and member of the American Postal Workers Union.

The price of renting space from the University has gone up from \$13,416 a year to \$21,396 for the new contract. This increase would give the postal service management "enough ammo" to change the post office into a contract station, Buehrig said.

However, postmaster John Hardin said there hasn't been a formal discussion of changing the University post office to a contract station. If it did change, however, it wouldn't change the services offered by the U.S. Postal Service.

"It's not in the foreseeable future," he said. "But I can't give a guarantee that it wouldn't change [at the end of the rental contract]. All it would do is reduce the cost of [running the post office], and it would still provide efficient services."

A contract station is identical to a post office minus a few services, said Ashleigh Hempel, a worker at the contract station located in Hiron's on Franklin Boulevard. These services include delivering international packages and express mail, but other contract stations might not include metered and registered mail.

If a contract station replaces the current

post office, the University would have to staff it with state employees or work study students instead of postal workers. APWU President Gary Jarvis said the lack of training for employees in the contract station would be inconvenient for students.

"Part of the problem is that generally a contract station is in a store of some other kind like the bookstore and places like Hiron's," Jarvis said. "It's a sidebar business for them and their people are not trained. So if you go to try to mail something international, it's not that they don't try, but being it's not their first line of business, it's not something they take the kind of pride in doing that we take the pride in doing."

On campus, this would be a big problem for international students, Buehrig said.

"Most of our business in that post office is because they're so many international students on campus; we're a link for them

for home," Buehrig said. "A lot of them are there every day."

Hempel said even if she didn't receive a lot of training, the Hiron's contract station hasn't received a lot of negative feedback.

"I've never done anything with the post office before," she said. "There is a lot to know and we're always having to call and get info. We can always call the main post office and ask them for information."

"When I was hired I know I wasn't told everything, but I wouldn't say the overall quality isn't good. It just depends on who's back there. We haven't had a lot of problems."

If the decision to turn the post office into a contract station is made at the end of the rental contract, students and the public are given 90 days to give feedback to the postal service.

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