CLAS integrates teaching, research, and outreach

Founded in 1947 at Vanderbilt University, the Center for Latin American Studies (CLAS) has received Department of Education Title VI funding for Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) training since the late 1960s. Since 2006, CLAS has been designated a Title VI National Resource Center (NRC); the most recent four-year renewal grant totals $1.64 million.

As a comprehensive NRC, CLAS maintains a remarkable concentration of Latin Americanists, with special strengths in Brazil, Central America, the Andes, and the Black Atlantic, and supports programs that educate students, teachers, the business community, and the general public about Latin America. Through its public outreach efforts, CLAS reached over 190,000 people last year, promoting greater understanding of Latin America’s history, economy, and social organization.

CLAS integrates research, teaching, and outreach to further the study of Latin American languages (Portuguese, K’iche’ Mayan, Haitian Creole, and Quechua), economic development, and democracy building, as well as offers educational opportunities on Latin American language and culture at the local, state, and national levels.

CLAS provides instruction for languages critical to our national need

Vanderbilt is committed to supporting less commonly taught languages, especially those deemed critical to national security and economic prosperity. CLAS provides language instruction beyond Vanderbilt University through virtual classrooms and other distance learning programs.

- **Portuguese** is the sixth most spoken language in the world, and Brazil is an emerging global power with the world’s eighth largest economy; this has led the U.S. State Department to consider Portuguese a “critical language.”

- **K’iche’ Mayan**, spoken today by more than 1 million people, most of whom are native to Guatemala, is of great historical importance; CLAS established the first program in the country teaching K’iche’ Mayan.

- **Haitian Creole** is of growing importance, with an increasing number of speakers in the U.S. and the ongoing crises in Haiti, and has been identified as an “area of national need.”

- **Quechua** is an indigenous language spoken by people in the Andes region and complements CLAS’s growing expertise in the region.

CLAS works with governments

CLAS provides educational seminars, advice, and counsel on Latin America to governments at all levels – local, state, national, and international. CLAS has worked with the Tennessee Attorney General’s office and Vanderbilt’s Law School to host workshops on international arbitration, drug trafficking, and gang networks. CLAS has also provided language and culture training for Military Foreign Area Officers from U.S. Southern Command based on the region where they will be posted. CLAS’s Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) works on democracy and trust in institutions and is widely employed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, Inter-American Development Bank, U.N. Development Programme, and more.
**CLAS partners with local businesses**

CLAS works with the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the World Affairs Council to share the expertise on Latin American markets with the local business community. CLAS hosts events with the Owen Graduate School of Management on conducting business in Latin America for leaders in global businesses based in Tennessee, including Nissan, Bridgestone, and Caterpillar. Through these partnerships, CLAS has reached over 700 members of the business community over the past five years.

**CLAS supports local arts institutions**

CLAS supports city-wide events including the Día de los Muertos with Cheekwood Botanical Gardens, the Celebration of Cultures with Metro Parks, and Celebrate Nashville. CLAS has partnered with the Nashville Opera to present *Florecencia en el Amazonas*, Nashville’s first Spanish-language opera, and is working with the Nashville Children’s theater to commission a play. With the Nashville Public Library, CLAS created a marionette show - *The Amazing Twins: Ancient Maya Tales from the Popul Wuj*. The show, which brings to life a mythical version of the creation of the world, has been presented at hundreds of schools and events around the region. In total, CLAS-supported cultural events have been enjoyed by over 15,000 people over the past five years.

**CLAS collaborates with area schools**

CLAS provides professional development workshops for teachers from across the state (and nation) and has been working closely with Metro Nashville Public Schools recently to help teachers better understand their increasingly diverse student population. CLAS collaborates with Fisk, Tennessee State University, and Middle Tennessee State University to support their teaching on Latin America and language instruction. With these and other universities, CLAS has held educator workshops, cultural arts events, and international conferences. Over the past five years, K-16 programs have had over 6,000 participants and have impacted over 247,000 people.