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 training since the late 1960s. Since 2006, CLAS has been designated a Title VI National Resource Center; the most recent four-year (2018–2022) 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 private sector, and the general public about Latin America. Through its public outreach efforts, CLAS informed more than 140,000 people nationwide in 2019, 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. It also offers educational opportunities on Latin American language and culture at the local, state, and national levels.

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

• Haitian Creole has been identified as an “area of national need” because of the ongoing crises in Haiti and an increasing number of speakers in the U.S.

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

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 to students at Vanderbilt University, partner universities, and in the broader community through virtual classrooms and other distance learning programs.

• Portuguese is the sixth most-spoken language in the world and the official language of Brazil, the most populous country in Latin America and an emerging global power with the world’s ninth largest economy. The U.S. State Department considers Portuguese to be a “critical language.”

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 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, tailored to the region where they will be posted. CLAS works with the Latin American Public Opinion Project to disseminate research on democracy and trust in institutions across the Americas to K–16 educators; LAPOP is widely employed by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Inter-American Development Bank, the U.N. Development Programme, and other organizations.
**CLAS partners with local businesses**

CLAS works with the Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce and the World Affairs Council to share 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 public and private partnerships, CLAS has advised more than 800 members of the business and government communities over the past five years.

**K-16 instructional resources**

CLAS works with K-16 educators and Vanderbilt faculty to produce curriculum resources for direct use in the classroom. All of these resources are openly accessible on the CLAS website and available for free download. Since 2017, CLAS has collaborated with Readworks to produce more than 80 English- and Spanish-language articles on Latin America for their reading comprehension program. Since then, 131,196 students and teachers from across the country have used these articles. CLAS also houses a lending library of books with Latin American content accessible to teachers. CLAS curates Culture Boxes with items from various Latin American countries and ships them nationwide; these have been used by more than 6,000 teachers and students in the last five years. In total, nearly 140,000 students and teachers have engaged with CLAS Instructional Resources over the past five years.

**CLAS collaborates with area schools**

CLAS provides professional development workshops for teachers from across the state and the country. Recently, CLAS has been working closely with Metro Nashville Public Schools to help teachers better understand their increasingly diverse student population. CLAS collaborates with Fisk University, 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 been attended by 18,000 educators and students and have impacted many more.

**CLAS supports local arts institutions**

CLAS supports city-wide cultural events including the Dia de los Muertos with Cheekwood Botanical Gardens, the Celebration of Cultures with Metro Parks, and the Celebrate Nashville Cultural Festival. CLAS has partnered with Nashville Opera to present Florencia en el Amazonas, Nashville’s first Spanish-language opera. With the Nashville Public Library, CLAS created a marionette show—The Amazing Twins: Ancient Maya Tales from the Popul Vui. This year, CLAS worked with Nashville Children’s Theatre to commission Return to Sender, which was seen by more than 3,200 students and teachers in 2019. In total, CLAS-supported cultural events have been enjoyed by more than 150,000 people over the past five years. The goal of these programs is to introduce Tennesseans to a variety of topics related to Latin America and to the rich artistic and cultural traditions from this diverse region of the world.