

Statement opposing the closure of Loyola University Chicago's M.A. Program in Hispanic Studies

July 2026

Dear Provost Douglas Woods and Vice-Provost and Dean of the Graduate School Michael Rozier,

We write on behalf of the Latin American Studies Association to express our deep concern at your decision to close Loyola University Chicago's M.A. program in Hispanic Studies, which effectively ends graduate-level research and teaching of Hispanic literature, language, and culture at your institution.

Loyola's Hispanic Studies MA program has earned a global reputation for excellence over more than eight decades; it now stands as a bastion of world-class research and teaching in the Midwest and beyond. Its graduates regularly go on to PhDs and lectureships at preeminent institutions across the United States and internationally, cementing Loyola's global academic reputation. Crucially, Loyola's Hispanic Studies MA also stands as a much-needed beacon of academic and socio-cultural diversity, providing an entry point to graduate education for first-generation and minority students from Chicago and beyond. In all these ways, the program directly furthers both Loyola's commitment to academic excellence and its broader Jesuit mission to serve the public good.

We are concerned that the decision to "sunset" this exemplary program was reached without significant opportunity for program leadership to feed into the decision making process. We also note that no concerns about the program's financial foundations were raised prior to the decision to close the program; that proposals to make the program self-funding were rejected without explanation; that program leaders were explicitly barred from raising financial or mission-based arguments for the program's continuation; and that in 2025 Loyola's administration withdrew from a diversity fellowship program for low-income minority students that had previously funded several of the program's MA candidates. In a time when both academic freedoms and minority populations are under threat, the rushed closure of a successful Hispanic Studies program raises serious questions about Loyola's commitment to academic freedom and to cultural, intellectual, and socio-economic diversity.

Hispanic Studies is a fast-growing field that equips students to meet the needs of the modern world, and that is increasingly relevant to the pressing political, economic, and societal challenges we now face. From preserving Latin American and Latinx cultural heritage, to enabling effective and representative leadership in diverse communities, to navigating the

social, political, and commercial realities of our globalized world, graduate education in Hispanic Studies has never been more urgently needed. For Loyola—an institution rooted in the Jesuit tradition of transformative education, and based in a city that is one-third Hispanic—to turn its back on this field is short-sighted and sends a dangerous signal that risks eroding the standing of Hispanic Studies—and the humanities writ large—in the U.S. and global academy.

Though small, Loyola's Hispanic Studies MA program has historically made an outsized contribution to our field and directly bolstered Loyola's standing as a hub for world-class education and research. As your own evaluation process underscored, this is the moment to invest in and grow such programs, not to shutter them. We urge you in the strongest possible terms to reconsider your decision to close Loyola's Hispanic Studies MA program.

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