



Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students:

It is National Hispanic Heritage Month, when USC Upstate, our region, and our nation acknowledge and celebrate the important and outstanding contributions, diverse cultures, and extensive histories of the Hispanic/Latinx communities.

This national observation began in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded to a month — Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 — in 1988.

Earlier today, I had the joy of being drafted by Andrés Villegas to paint the Rock near the media building to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. I was concerned about using oil-based paint and painting the Argentina flag in a suit and tie. Fortunately, no mishaps, just a lot of fun.

Reflecting on the many painted flags on the Rock, I appreciate that certain days of the month have special significance for our Hispanic/Latinx students, including Sept. 15, the anniversary of independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on Sept. 16 and Sept. 18, respectively.

At USC Upstate, we celebrate the Hispanic/Latinx communities all year long. For example, South Carolina Centro Latino (El Centro) at USC Upstate (directed by Dr. Araceli Hernández-Laroche and Maria Francisco-Montesó) continually elevates the Latinx community through civic leadership, mentoring, and activism and has been invited to speak at Harvard University, USC Columbia, and the University of New Hampshire. The organization has also been nominated for Excelencia in Education's 2023 Examples of Excelencia, the only national, data-driven initiative recognizing higher-education programs' ability to accelerate Latino student success.

But Hispanic Heritage Month is a special time to closely recognize the work and achievements in our Hispanic/Latinx communities.

Here is a look at some of the events planned for the celebration:

- 11:30 a.m., Sept. 19, outside the media building: The Latin American Student Organization (LASO) will Paint the Rock to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. The current leaders are Andrés Villegas and Jasmin Elizalde.
- 4 p.m., Sept. 21, Sparty's Den: LASO hosts a game night.
- 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., Sept. 21, CLC Ballroom: Voter Education & The Youth, a panel of state and local community leaders, faculty, staff, and students. Two USC Upstate's Avanzando students (Alex Sánchez and Charmeyne Medero)—who also traveled to Chicago in July for the national UnidosUS conference—are serving on the panel.
- 4 p.m., Sept. 26, CASB 117: LASO will host an event related to mental health awareness.
- 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sept. 28; Oct. 12 and 26; and Nov. 9 and 30; location to be determined: The Líderes Avanzando Through College program (funded thanks to UnidosUS and directed by Dr. Susannah Waldrop) brings together about 25 first-generation Latino students for two-hour sessions of fellowship and discourse designed to keep these scholars in school. They share a meal, receive curriculum from UnidosUS, are mentored, and meet with civic leaders.
- 11:30 a.m., Sept. 28, between HPAC and CASB: LASO will host a Latinx Festival.
- Noon, Sept. 29; Oct. 6, 13, 27; Nov. 3; Library 247: Hispanic Heritage Month Film Festival, in collaboration with the USC Upstate Library and Dean John Barnett and John Siegel.
- 4 p.m., Oct. 3: Attend a Zumba dance-fitness session with Spartan Rec sponsored by LASO.
- 4 p.m., Oct. 10: Learn to dance with LASO.
- 6:30 p.m., Oct. 12: LASO hosts "Latinx Prom."
- Time TBD, Nov. 2, Nickelodeon art house theater, Columbia: "Celebrating Our Connections in South Carolina" panel discussion with Latino Communications after viewing [Coco](#).
- 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., Nov. 9: "A Gender Line: A Multidisciplinary Show of Female Artists and Poets." In collaboration with Diana Farfán Valente and Begoña Caballero-García, the Wofford Department of Art and Art History, the Wofford Cultural Affairs Committee, and USC Upstate's "El Centro." This event will also feature a panel discussion at Wofford College's Rosalind Sallenger Richardson Center for the Arts, room 112, and a reception in the Gallery.

I look forward to celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with all of you. Thank you for living and teaching our values and recognizing that embracing diversity matters.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bennie L. Harris  
Chancellor