

## Know the LARES ASP Instructors Mitzi Ramos & Terry Mankus

### Mitzi Ramos:

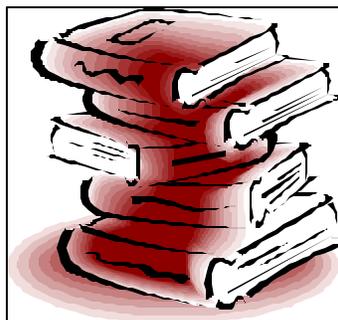
Can you please tell us a bit about your background (i.e., education, work experience, where you are from, etc.)? I was born and raised in Chicago and have dual citizenship in the US and Costa Rica. I went to Our Lady of Mercy Elementary School and Good Counsel High School; both of which are no longer in existence. I have a BA in Spanish and English from WIU and an MPA from SIUC. In addition, I am currently wrapping up my Ph.D. work in political science here at UIC. As it stands, I am ABD and am trying to get my dissertation done.

As for my work experience at UIC, I have worn many different hats during my time here. Through the Political Science Department, I worked as a graduate assistant (GA) for the Rainbow Push Coalition. I was a teaching assistant for several POLS 101 courses, and I also taught POLS 101 as an instructor. I have also worked with the Graduate College as a SROP Research Team Leader. As for LARES, I began as a GA for CCSL. I was then recruited to work as an English instructor for the Summer Success Seminar (SSS), and this summer I served as the SSS Coordinator. Currently, I am working as an Academic Skills Specialist and teach several ASP Writing Across the Curriculum courses.

Of what are you most proud? As a senior in high school, I had no intentions of going on to college. It was not that I lacked a desire to further my education. But, I did not believe I could afford it.

Since I am first generation and the first in my family to be born in the US, I was unaware that financial aid existed to help further my studies. I also doubted my ability to succeed in college. However, my parents balked at the idea of me joining the workforce after high school. One way or another, they were determined to see me in college. I am quite proud of where I am. I am proud of my academic achievements, my determination, and the fact that I have been able to overcome many obstacles to get where I am at today. To find myself a breath away from obtaining my doctorate is quite a feat.

What is your favorite movie or book? Why? I am a huge fan of English literature. I would have to say



that my favorite author is Jane Austen and, of all her books, my favorite is Pride and Prejudice. I love her work because she was a woman who never let her station in life determine her future. She wrote novels at a time where women were subjected to being housewives and nothing else. Her heroines were always strong determined women who were unafraid to challenge

the norms of society and speak their minds. As a Latina, I can see myself in her characters. Though society may doubt the ability of Latinos to succeed, I challenge these notions by proving that we can be just as strong, determined, and intellectual as anyone else.

If you had the opportunity to travel anywhere in (continued on page 2)

## A Career in Public Policy

After graduating from UIC in 2006, I worked over the summer for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in their Chicago Regional office. This was the second internship I did through the Hispanic National Internship Program ([www.hnip.net](http://www.hnip.net)) which pairs students with paid government and private sector internships throughout the year. I completed my summer internship with the BLS and began a Masters in Public Policy at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government ([www.ksg.harvard.edu](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu)). I was able to do this with the support of a generous scholarship from the Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship Program ([www.ppiaprogram.org](http://www.ppiaprogram.org)). The program seeks to bring students with diverse backgrounds and interests into public policy positions both domestically and internationally.

At the Kennedy School of Government, I chose to focus on Business Government Policy from the many different concentrations it offers. During my first year, I had the opportunity to go on several official study trips to various countries including Korea, Pakistan, Costa Rica, and Japan. This travel experience was incredible. In addition to learning about other cultures we were able to meet heads of state and government officials. I took advantage of a seventy-two hour get-out-the-vote campaign and was flown to Seattle by one of the national parties to work for several days on a very close Congressional election.

One of the strengths of the Kennedy School is that it offers several joint degree options with (continued on page 4)

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**the world where would you go? Why?** I would love to go to the Netherlands to visit Amsterdam. Amsterdam has very radical drug policies which most Americans would find disturbing. In order to understand the implications of these policies, I would like to see it firsthand. I would also love to visit the pyramids in Egypt and castles in England.

**What is the most interesting thing about yourself that you would like students to know?** I love body art... I like to commemorate every milestone in my life with a tattoo or piercing... These things help me immortalize accomplishments or obstacles I have overcome. They are not about vanity, but longevity.

**What has been the biggest challenge you were confronted with and overcame?** My biggest challenge occurred during my doctoral studies in the Political Science Department here at UIC. Although I had completed the majority of my coursework, I was having a great deal of trouble passing my statistics courses. This was extremely vexing for me because - if I did not pass my stats courses - I would be asked to leave the department. It did not help that I had already witnessed several people being dismissed because of their inability to pass stats.

Although I sought help from my professors, little help was offered. Since the stats courses were so advanced, I had a great deal of trouble finding someone to help me with the material. Perhaps if my peers weren't so competitive, they would have been willing to help me out. However, I quickly learned that my department is very cutthroat.

After getting Cs both times I took these classes, I ended up spending a year auditing these courses. In the end, two stats courses took me five semesters to complete. I wasn't going to allow myself to be dropped from the program when these were the only courses I had left to complete!

**When you were growing up did you see yourself working with students in higher education?** I have always enjoyed the "school" setting and saw a future in teaching. However, I was originally going to be a Spanish high school teacher. In fact, I did not change my major until my senior year of college. After doing my observation hours at my alma mater, I realized that I did not have the patience to be a high school teacher. High school teachers have to deal with crime and violence in schools, disrespectful students, and way too much apathy from the school system and students in general. I decided to double major in Spanish and English but was unsure what to do next.

I stayed at WIU and worked on an MA in Political Science with a concentration in international relations (IR). However, after completing my coursework, I did not finish my thesis because I discovered - too late - that I was not interested in IR. I then decided to go to SIUC because I wanted to be a lawyer. But, I bombed the LSAT both times I took it. Since I already had an apartment leased, I decided to pursue an MPA degree instead.

Based on my coursework at SIUC, I developed an interest in public policy - especially employment policy. Since UIC offered a doctoral degree in public policy, I decided to venture into the Ph.D. program. However, things never turn out as one expects. I was the last batch of students allowed into the Public Policy Analyses program because the department was weeding out this concentration. Since there were never enough courses offered, I decided to switch to political science and began TAing POLS 101 courses. Thus began my career teaching in higher education.

After several years of working as a TA, I was given my own sections of POLS 101. During this time, I was also teaching English SSS classes for LARES. Because I had maxed out the number of years I could work in the department as a GA, I accepted a job teaching the LARES ASP courses. Let's just say I never intended to teach in a university setting, but fate tends to have other things in mind for you. I guess I was destined to teach, but I never imagined I would find my fit in a university classroom.

**What do you do at the LARES program?** I teach, I tutor, I coordinate, I mentor...

**What was your first experience with the LARES program and how has the program evolved or changed since then?** My first experience with the LARES program was working as a grad assistant for the CCSL. Though the faces of counselors change over time, the mission and work of LARES has changed little. LARES continues to fight battles on behalf of the rights of minority students and the program is still concerned with the recruitment and retention of Latino students. It is amazing that, year after year, the dedication of the program never waivers. After one battle is fought, the program moves on to tackle the next big obstacle.

**From all your experiences in working with students is there one moment that stands out the most?** I cannot say that a single moment stands out because there are just too many to list. For instance, I feel proud when LARES students take an interest in politics. I feel proud when my former students come to me and let me know that they are succeeding in their classes and I feel proud when I see my former students at the annual Latino Graduation Banquet receiving their well-deserved recognition for their upcoming graduation.

**What have you learned from working here at LARES?** I have learned that Latino students at UIC have a vast network of support. I have learned that people work hard to ensure the success of Latino students and I have learned that people here at LARES truly care about the lives of their students.

**In your perception, have the needs of students changed from year to year? If so, in what ways?** As the education system declines, the needs of the students increase exponentially. In specific, I have noticed that the quality of writing exhibited by my students has declined with each passing year. However, I never blame my students. It is difficult to blame them for their writing weaknesses when one hears about their high school experiences. It is difficult to expect high standards from my students when many of their high school teachers failed to encourage them to work hard and, more importantly, did not even bother to teach them.

**What bit of advice would you like to give to all the students?** If you ever feel like you are struggling and have no where to go, remember that you are not alone. LARES is a family. Like family, we look out for one another.

**If you only had the opportunity to teach a student one thing what would that one thing be?** I would teach my students to be persistent. If they do not understand an assignment, ask for help. If they are struggling in a class, visit a professor or a tutor. If they are told that they are never going to understand the material, prove that they can.

**What do you feel students can do to further improve their college level writing skills?** Students who are struggling with their writing should visit the Writing Center or a writing tutor. The more you work with others on your writing, the more you will be

**(continued on page 3)**

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able to identify your weaknesses as a writer. Once these areas are identified, you can develop ways to improve these shortcomings.

Also, never turn in the first draft of a paper for a grade! Work on numerous drafts for any given writing assignment. If time permits, the ideal thing to do is work on a writing assignment one day, and set it to the side. The next day, review the assignment and make changes. Repeat this process one more time. Every time you look at your assignment with a fresh set of eyes, you will be able to pick up more and more errors.

As with any new skills you want to learn, practice makes perfect. If you want to become a better writer, take more English classes. The more writing classes you take, the more you will be required to write. The more you write, the stronger your writing will become.

**How can students seek your assistance?** With each passing semester, I have more and more students seeking my assistance. To make it fair to everyone, I highly recommend that students contact me via e-mail to make an appointment as soon as possible. If a student is trying to schedule a meeting the day before an assignment is due, I may already have an appointment in place. If I cannot meet with a student during my office hours because our schedules conflict, I normally send students feedback and comments via e-mail. However, students will need to give me at least a week to get back to them. Since I teach four sections of ASP, I may have grading to do before I can respond to student requests. When in doubt, students can send me an e-mail and we can take it from there.

### Terry Mankus:

**Can you please tell us a bit about your background (i.e., education, work experience, where you are from, etc.)?** I have my BS, MS, and PhD from UIC. I have worked at ice rinks as a skate guard, weekend manager, and I drove the Zamboni, the ice making machine. I was born in Chicago, and live 4 blocks from where I was born.

**Of what are you most proud?** Pride is an unusual word, something with which I am not comfortable. But I can say I take satisfaction in the fact that I was a very good hockey player, having had try-outs with two different professional hockey teams. I take satisfaction in completing my PhD. And I am very satisfied that LARES students are not afraid to ask me for assistance.

**What is your favorite movie or book?** My favorite book is "DUNE," a science fiction novel. My favorite movie is "Star Wars Episode IV."

**What do you like to do in your spare time?** I enjoy playing computer golf.

**If you had the opportunity to gain a superpower/skill what would it be?** I would like to have the power of polyglotism, the ability to speak many languages.

**If you had the opportunity to travel anywhere in the world where would you go? Why?** I have a fantasy of traveling to London (very historic), Paris (very beautiful) and Moscow (very mysterious).

**If you could go back, what one thing would you have done differently in college?** As an undergraduate I didn't always give the best effort to my studies so, if I could, I would go back and be more studious.

**What do you do at the LARES program?** I am the math tutor and ASP math instructor.

**What was your first experience with the LARES program and**

**how has the program evolved or changed since then?** Many years ago LARES was seeking a math person to teach some specially scheduled math classes for LARES students. At that time I was a TA in the Math Department and was asked if I wanted to interview with LARES. I did and was chosen to teach the special classes. I have been teaching for LARES ever since. The program has changed by its people who have come and gone, replaced by others, but the heart and spirit of LARES remains the same – the students are the number one concern.

**From all your experiences in working with students is there one moment that stands out the most?** There have been very happy times, such as when graduating students come back to thank you, and very very sad times when promising young students pass away. All experiences have been important to me.

**In your perception, have the needs of students changed from year to year? If so, in what ways?** No. They still will always seek guidance and stability.

**What bit of advice would you like to give to all the students?** Don't waste time. Once it has passed you can never get it back.

**If you only had the opportunity to teach a student one thing what would that one thing be?** Be kind and understanding to others.

**What do you feel students can do to further improve their college level math skills?** Do much more homework and studying, spending at least 3 hours a night on their lessons.

**How can students seek your assistance?** I am available for tutoring at LARES. Anyone interested can call the LARES office and ask for my schedule.

## African American and Latino Research Forum Announcement

We are pleased to announce the African American & Latino Research Forum. This event, cosponsored by the Illinois African American and Latino Higher Education Alliance (IALHEA), will be held in the spring semester 2008. The forums were created to showcase the scholarly work of African American and Latino students from Illinois universities. African-American and Latino undergraduate and graduate students from all majors are invited to submit abstracts or papers. To receive more information about the upcoming forum, please send a note to [gradinfo@uic.edu](mailto:gradinfo@uic.edu).

If you have any questions, comments, or would like to contribute to this publication, please contact our LARES Newsletter Coordinator Alfredo Estrada at 312.996.3356 or via email at [aestra4@uic.edu](mailto:aestra4@uic.edu).

## A Career in Public Policy...(continued from pg. 1)

business, medical, and law schools that allow students to complete programs jointly in a shorter amount of time. I decided to take advantage of this opportunity and apply to several MBA and international relations schools. On a side note, an excellent resource for applying to non-mba graduate schools is a program called Project1000 ([www.asu.edu/project1000](http://www.asu.edu/project1000)), which allows you to apply up to seven schools using one application and paying no application fees. Also, for MBA schools the Consortium ([www.cgsm.org](http://www.cgsm.org)) is a great resource that allows you to use a common application for MBA schools with a heavily reduced fee and offers full tuition scholarships to help fund students seeking an MBA. The Management Leadership for Tomorrow program ([www.ml4t.org](http://www.ml4t.org)) is also an excellent resource. While unfortunately my options for an MBA program did not

work out, I decided to do a joint degree with the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) located in Washington DC ([www.sais-jhu.edu](http://www.sais-jhu.edu)). I selected this program because it is considered to be one of the top schools of international relations and has a very strong international finance and development program.

This summer I decided to practice my Spanish and through a Kennedy School Alumni connection I was referred to an opportunity to work for the Office of the President of Mexico. I worked on an alternative energy project for rural electrification of low-income and isolated communities in southern Mexico. As part of my work, I conducted a field visit to Oaxaca and completed interviews and collected data.

Currently, I am taking pre-term

economic courses at SAIS and will be leaving shortly for Bologna, where I will be studying in the fall at the SAIS campus in Italy. This spring I plan to return to the DC campus and attempt to pursue a co-op job opportunity in the Washington DC area. I have had exciting experiences preparing for a career in public policy and am glad to share the resources that have been helpful to me with UIC students.

### - Gonzalo D. Escobar

Candidate for Masters in Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School of Government and a Masters of Arts in International Relations, John Hopkins SAIS  
E-Mail: [Gonzalo\\_Escobar@ksg08.harvard.edu](mailto:Gonzalo_Escobar@ksg08.harvard.edu)

## Latino students offer tutoring services

CLAS (Confederation of Latin American Students) was founded in 1974 by a group of UIC Latino students with the need to unite and help each other with academic support and tutoring. Today, CLAS continues its mission by tutoring students for free in various undergraduate courses. The organization for the most part is managed by students with the support and guidance from the LARES program. CLAS is known for its friendly environment and commitment to assist students.

From the hours of 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, CLAS tutors can be found in Room 476 over in Student



Center East (SCE), located directly above the inner circle. The organization is always there to answer questions in the following subjects: math, chemistry, biology, electrical engineering, computer science, French, Italian, Spanish, German, and economics. The current undergraduate staff include: Lourdes Gonzalez (sophomore in mathematics), Jesus Guillen (senior in history), Natalia Pablo (senior in bioengineering), Christian Torres (senior in biology), and Rigoberto Torres (senior in Teaching of Spanish and Italian).

If you can't understand some of your professor's notes and have trouble completing some question or homework

assignment please feel free to contact our office. To become a more successful student schedule a tutoring appointment by calling the CLAS office at 312-355-5185 or stop in during our office hours. Walk-ins are welcome, but appointments are preferred to assure that someone will be there to better assist you. Many of our students collaborate with tutors on an individual basis or in a study group with classmates who are enrolled in the same course. We highly encourage you to take advantage of our free tutoring services now!

- Natalia Pablo  
*Bioengineering Major*

## Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP)

The Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) was first established in 1986 by the Graduate Deans of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC). The goal of SROP is to introduce domestic underrepresented sophomores and juniors to academic research experiences. Student participants work one-on-one with a faculty mentor giving them an opportunity to experience research and the graduate student

experience. The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) launched its SROP in 1986, with a total of six minority undergraduate students. In its twenty-year history of hosting this program, UIC has had more than one thousand student participants.

In the Fall semester, the Graduate College invites undergraduates to apply for participation in SROP. The student may apply to the program already having a research project in mind and a committed

faculty mentor or simply by having a research area of interest. In cases where a student has an experienced interest but no mentor, the SROP staff will try to facilitate a match. The SROP Staff and faculty advisory committee are responsible for the selection process, the allocation of funding, and the evaluation of the program. Faculty or students interested in participating in the program should contact Allen Bryson at (312) 413-2558 or [ajbryson@uic.edu](mailto:ajbryson@uic.edu).

## Twenty-Second Annual Recognition Dinner for Latino Graduates

The Latino Committee on University Affairs (LCUA) promotes the development of educational, professional and career opportunities for all Latinos at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). Since LCUA's inception, the committee has established several annual events to fulfill the needs and recognize the accomplishments of UIC's Latino population.

One of the most celebrated events organized by LCUA is the annual Recognition Dinner for Latino Graduates.



The event provides a special opportunity for all Latino graduates to celebrate their achievements together with their families and friends. At the event, each graduate receives a certificate of achievement and has the opportunity to say a few words of appreciation.

On Friday, May 9, 2008, UIC & LCUA will proudly celebrate the Twenty-second Annual Recognition Dinner for Latino Graduates. The event will be held at the Chicago Hyatt Regency located at 151 East Wacker Drive from 6:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m.

LCUA encourages all Summer 2007, Fall 2007, and Spring 2008 Latino graduates to participate in the celebration. Each graduate will receive two complimentary tickets, one for themselves and another for a family member or guest. Additional tickets can be purchased and will be available for pick up and/or purchase beginning in March at the LARES program office. Please contact Roxane Lopez at 312-996-3356 for details or if you have any questions.

## Sign up for tutoring services next semester !

### C.L.A.S. Tutoring - Room 476 SCE

Monday - Friday 9:00am - 5:00pm

Phone: 312-355-5185

Tutors available for various subjects including:

*Math 070 through Math 310*

*Biology 100 and 101*

*Chemistry 100 & 101*

*Italian 101-104; French 101,102*

### Honor's College Tutoring

Burnham Hall Room 220

For more info log on to:

[www.hc.uic.edu/tutoring/tutorintro.htm](http://www.hc.uic.edu/tutoring/tutorintro.htm)



### English Composition

The UIC Writing Center: 312 413-2206  
Grant Hall (GH) - Room 105  
<http://www.uic.edu/depts/engl/writing/>

LARES English Composition Tutor:  
Mitzi Ramos  
By appointment only: 312-996-3356

### Math

LARES Math Instructor/Tutor: Terry Mankus  
E-mail: [tmanku1@uic.edu](mailto:tmanku1@uic.edu)  
Call the LARES program at 312-996-3356 for his office hours and availability.

## Check out these websites !

### Scholarships:

Fiesta Del Sol Scholars - [www.fiestadelsol.org](http://www.fiestadelsol.org)

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities - [www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)

Hispanic College Fund - [www.hispanicfund.org](http://www.hispanicfund.org)

Hispanic Scholarship Fund - [www.hsf.net](http://www.hsf.net)

Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE) - [www.ilache.com](http://www.ilache.com)

LINC TELACU Education Foundation - [www.telacu.com](http://www.telacu.com)

UIC - LARES Program - [www.lares.uic.edu](http://www.lares.uic.edu)

UIC - Office of Special Scholarship Programs - [www.uic.edu/depts/oa/ssp/](http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/ssp/)

### Graduate and Law School Resources:

Council on Legal Education Opportunity (CLEO)  
[www.cleoscholars.com](http://www.cleoscholars.com)

National Society of Hispanic MBA's  
[www.nshmba.org](http://www.nshmba.org)

Public Policy and International Affairs Fellowship Program (PPIA)  
[www.ppiaprogram.org](http://www.ppiaprogram.org)

### Professional Development:

Society of Women Engineers  
[www.swe.org](http://www.swe.org)

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT  
CHICAGO**

Latin American Recruitment and  
Educational Services Program (LARES)  
Suite 2640, Student Services Building  
1200 West Harrison Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Phone: 312-996-3356  
Fax: 312-413-2903



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## **SPRING 2008 Calendar**

January 14, Mon.	First day of class! Spring semester courses begin.
January 21, Mon.	Martin Luther King, Jr. HOLIDAY. No-classes; offices closed.
January 25, Fri.	DEADLINE for late registration and drop/add period. NOTE: Courses dropped after this date will appear on your academic record and transcript with a grade of "W". This is also the last day to: * Complete spring semester late registration. * Add courses or make section changes. * Withdraw from UIC and receive a 90% refund, less the administrative charge. * Apply at the college offices for permission to take a course under the "Credit/No Credit" grading option. * Drop a course without receiving a "W" on your academic record. Individual courses dropped after this date, but no later than Friday of the sixth week of the semester, can only be done with college approval. A "W" grade will be recorded on the student transcript.
February 10, Sun.	Last day to submit online petition to waive coverage, reinstate coverage, or enroll dependents for CampusCare.
February 22, Fri.	Last day for undergraduate students to use optional late drop in college offices and receive a grade of "W" (Total of four allowed to undergraduate students.)
March 24 - 28, Mon. - Fri.	Spring Break; no classes.
May 2, Fri.	Spring Semester instruction ends.
May 5 - 9, Mon. - Fri.	<b>Final Exam Week.</b>
May 10, Sat.	Semester officially ends.
May 7 - 12, Wed. - Mon.	College commencement ceremonies.
May 19, Mon.	Spring semester grades available on-line through the Student Self-Service system.