

Sunrise on the Southside (8): Connecting with the Hispanic Center

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(Latest in a series of posts about Lehigh University and the Southside)

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Gadfly continues his leisurely stroll through the Southside through the eyes of Lehigh's promotional video about its contributions there, something which, in truth, is not always without controversy.

- Victoria Montero, executive director of the Hispanic Center, says the partnerships with Lehigh faculty, staff and students and other organizations help the center to serve more people and improve its operations. Lehigh faculty also have forged relationships there. The goal is to improve the quality of life for South Side residents.
- “There is a lot of work to be done, so it is important that we continue to work together,” says Montero, who grew up on the South Side after immigrating from Mexico at age 14.
- “If we continue to work together, we are going to make an impact on the community. We can’t do it alone, we can’t. The Hispanic Center can’t do it without its partners.”

The example Lehigh gives of connection with the Hispanic Center is the internship program through the Health, Medicine, and Society program.

- The Health, Medicine, and Society program at Lehigh . . . brings faculty from across colleges together to offer courses in medical sociology, bioethics, and a host of other fields.
- In the classroom, students learn that people's health is influenced not only by their body processes, but also by social determinants.
- At the [Hispanic] center, {interns} Akinci and Kravitz learn firsthand about those complexities of health, such as the difficulty in accessing programs for those who lack transportation.
- "What I have learned from working with people in the community, and just interacting, both here and at the clinic, is that you just have to listen to people and give them your attention and just be there for them," Akinci says. "They really appreciate that."
- For the four years that students are at Lehigh, [Akinci] says, the South Side is their home. "Part of making a home your home is making community."

"Making community" — a Gadfly medal for that girl!