

# Centennial Center Spotlight

## The Special Projects Fund: Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of el Sector Latino de Ciencia Política

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In 2018, el Sector Latino de Ciencia Política, also known as the Latino Caucus of the American Political Science Association, celebrated its 20th anniversary. For two decades, they have worked to promote the professional development and well-being of Latina/os in political science, and those interested in the study of Latina/o politics through the annual Latino politics workshops, panels, and receptions at the annual meeting, as well as working with APSA to award the Fund for Latino Politics Awards each year. Their commemorations

kicked off with a day-long pre-conference at the 2018 APSA Annual Meeting in Boston, MA. The “Looking Back and Moving Forward” conference featured several workshops on research, scholar activism, public intellectualism, a mentoring lunch, and plenaries featuring Mario Barrera (University of California, Berkeley), Carol Hardy-Fanta (University of Massachusetts, Boston), former APSA president Rodney Hero (University of California, Berkeley), Carlos Muñoz (University of California, Berkeley), and Christine Sierra (University of New Mexico).

Reporting back after the event, then-president of the caucus Valerie Martinez-Ebers (University of North Texas)

described the conference as “without a doubt the largest gathering of Latino/a political scientists and those that study Latino politics that I have ever seen.” She emphasized the important role of travel grants—also funded through the Special Projects Fund—that enabled scholars from all career stages to attend, from graduate students to junior faculty, tenure track, and emeritus. As Valerie explained, “it was a historic event with everyone from brand new graduate students to some of the founders of the first Latino caucus.”

The pre-conference program was designed to make new scholars feel welcomed and to re-energize more experienced scholars. One of the most popular events was the plenary session, where junior scholars presented on the impact of the Latino/a politics literature, each speaking about a book that “ploughed the field” in Latino politics. The junior scholars then presented awards to the authors of those books and had the opportunity to meet the scholars whose work they had been studying.

There was also a great deal of time for formal and informal networking, and organizers saw great promise for new collaborative research, new mentoring relationships, and for Latina/o scholars to feel more welcome at APSA.

In Valerie’s words, the pre-conference “laid the groundwork for the Annual Meeting to become a week of community and collaboration.”

Following the commemorative conference and under the leadership of incoming president Melissa Michelson (Menlo College), the caucus is working to create a new book award to recognize seminal books in Latino politics, and is looking forward to their next 20 years.

To learn more about the Special Projects Fund, please visit <https://connect.apsanet.org/centennialcenter/grants-awards/special-projects-fund/>. To learn more about the ongoing work of the Latino Caucus, please visit <http://latinocaucus.weebly.com/>. ■



**Top-Left:** Eric Gonzales Juenke (Michigan State University), right, presenting the Latino Caucus 2017 Best Book Award to Heather Silber Mohamed (Clark University), left, for her book, *The New Americans? Immigration, Protest, and the Politics of Latino Identity*. **Top-Right:** Graduate students Yanira Rivas Pineda de Melendez (PhD Candidate, UC Santa Barbara), Angie Bautista-Chavez (PhD Candidate, Harvard University), Catherine Wineinger (PhD Candidate, Rutgers University), and María Laura Veramendi García (PhD Student, Syracuse University) show off their People of Color Also Know Stuff swag. **Bottom:** Ronald Schmidt (California State University, Long Beach) presents during the afternoon plenary session, “Early Latino Politics Research and Its Impact Today.”