



24th Annual Conference Program
En Comunidad, We Rise:
In CoMO, We Lift Each Other Up!

June 3 - June 5, 2026, at
The State Historical Society in Missouri (SHSMO)
605 Elm Street Columbia, MO 65201



Supported by:



Department of Human Development and Family Science | Graduate School | Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security | International Programs | Kinder Institute on Constitutional Democracy | School of Languages, Literatures, and Culture | UMKC's Institute for Human Development

Partners and Volunteers

The Cambio Center would like to thank all of our partners, sponsors, advisory board members, and all our Cambio fellows, friends, and volunteers who helped make the 24th Cambio de Colores conference possible!

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Ricardo Rojas, Rocío Romero Gaona,
Sabina Aghayeva, Shania Montufar, and
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Cambio means change. The Cambio Center at the University of Missouri was founded in 2004 to lead research and outreach about Latin American populations, immigration, and integration in partnership with communities undergoing demographic change. To understand processes of integration and community change, the Center supports interdisciplinary research projects and a thriving network of Cambio Fellows, who come from fields as diverse as community development, economics, education, health, human development and family studies, history, language acquisition, law, and psychology. To ensure that research is useful to communities, the Center regularly facilitates outreach efforts, including community conversations, professional development, and the annual Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) conference. In all of its work, the Cambio Center aims to develop a shared community of practice among academics and practitioners — researchers and community members — focused on building bridges and creating strong, integrated, caring communities.

The Cambio Center and this conference aim to:

- Contribute to the University of Missouri’s mandate to provide education and enhance the welfare of all residents in our state in the context of the demographic changes that are resulting in dynamic, multicultural, and diverse societies.
- Develop a premier source of knowledge, scholarship, outreach, and education, to respond to the effects of globalization in local communities, both rural and urban, following the land-grant model.
- Support sustained research to understand the immigration process in Missouri in particular and the Midwest in general.
- Provide knowledge and best practices to facilitate a smooth integration of economically vulnerable newcomers to Missouri and the Midwest.
- Provide an institutional scholarly base to extend the Cambio de Colores initiative beyond the scope of the annual conferences, sustaining immigration-related research and outreach work of the university.
- Understand the international nature of the immigration process, particularly through study of the cultures, economies, and social institutions of Latin America.
- Collaborate internationally and develop comparative studies of the push and pull immigration processes in collaboration with Latin American universities.
- Provide enhanced opportunities for global education and connections among our faculty, students, and communities.



24th Annual Conference Theme

En Comunidad, We Rise: In CoMO, We Lift Each Other Up!

This year, the theme for Cambio de Colores takes inspiration from the hosting city, Columbia, Missouri, affectionately known as CoMO. We'll meet at the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO, 605 Elm St.). We build from the city's passion in creating something bigger than expected, and we recognize that *como*, or how, we do this matters: in community. This year, we emphasize that our strength to achieve something bigger – to truly integrate – lies in our unity. En Comunidad, We Rise reflects on how we lift each other up in challenging times, how we respond through mutual support and care, and how we build on one another's power, to create an unstoppable, integrated community that thrives. En Comunidad, we become a family — a family that learns how to navigate never-ending change and extends beyond recognition and acceptance of multiple identities and backgrounds, to work towards justice, healing, and transformation.

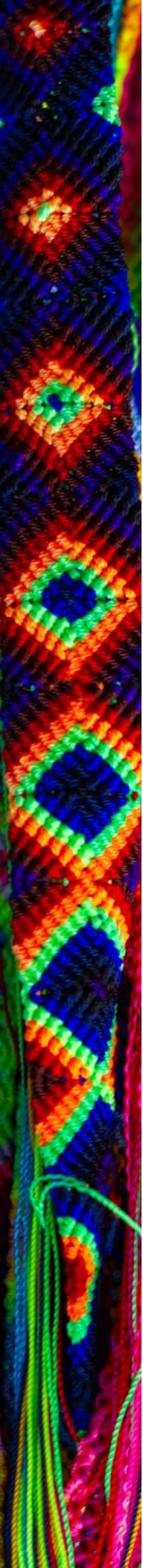
This theme honors how we each got here and the deep roots of our cultures and traditions. We purposefully recognize the Indigenous and African languages and traditions in Latin America, and follow their teachings of how to be in community, in order to rise, grow, uplift, and thrive!

Therefore, at this year's conference in CoMO, we want to explore how to:

- Be resilient through our research, practice, and networking.
- Be vulnerable, stay united, and become stronger together.
- Honor our backgrounds and identities and share them with the world.
- Be seeds for social change.
- Join in collective action and develop shared values across differences.
- Co-create a future rooted in representation, healing, and hope.
- Rest and rejuvenate en comunidad.
- Lift each other up, and ...
- Let others lift us up!

The conference is organized into four main tracks that participants can follow based on their main interests:

- **Health:** Being healthy is complex and challenging and requires resilience and adaptation in newcomer communities. Health is shaped by differences in transnational movement, economic circumstances, education, behavioral choices, living conditions, and the physical environment.
- **Civil Rights and Political Participation:** Policies and political decisions shape individuals' civil rights and political participation in changing communities. This track welcomes proposals on topics that touch upon both the impact and the agency of civil rights.

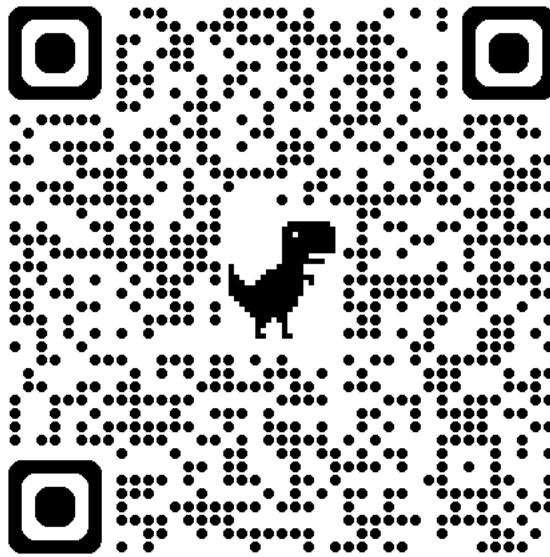


- **Education and Youth Development:** Latine, Hispanic, and newcomer youth are resilient, activating their own cultural resources and assets as they grow and learn. The goal of this track is to bring together 4-H, extension specialists, researchers, and educators to work collaboratively on enhancing educational equity, opportunities, and youth development.
- **Community and Economic Development:** Latin Americans, Hispanics, and newcomers make important impacts across communities and economies through their entrepreneurialism, business development, and risk-taking mindsets. This track examines the processes and challenges of building bridges, promoting dialogues, and creating opportunities that benefit changing communities.

At the end of the conference, we will appreciate knowing how we did this year and what recommendations you have for improvement! Please take 2 minutes to complete this survey on Friday, June 5. Thank you!

Use this link or scan the QR code.

<https://forms.gle/BBggQxU13cFEMgXu5>





General Guidelines for Presenters and Participants

Hotel Information

We recommend reserving a hotel room at either [The Tiger Hotel](#), within a short walk of the conference venue, or [The Hampton Inn](#), two miles from the conference venue. If you reserved on-campus MU Housing, you will receive information directly from the Conference Planning team with details about parking, checking in, and checking out.

Transportation

Attendees are responsible for their own transportation to and from the conference venue every day. Rideshare services like Uber and Lyft are available. Public transportation in Columbia, MO, is limited and does not reach the conference venue directly. Please plan accordingly.

Parking

There is limited free parking located at the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO) at 605 Elm St, Columbia, MO 65201. If you park here, you must request a tag at the front desk every day. **Parking is not guaranteed and is based on availability.** There is also paid street parking in front of and to the side of the conference venue, and the city has parking garages nearby (e.g., Sixth & Cherry Garage at 555 Locust).

On-site Registration

Registrants can pick up their name tags starting at 12 noon on Wednesday, June 3, at SHSMO. In addition, on-site registration will be available for individuals who have not yet registered. **Name tags are required for all sessions and conference events.**

Exhibit Tables

If you are a sponsor or partner sharing information about your products and services, please consider setting up on Wednesday, June 3, from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. If you have a branded tablecloth you would like to use, please bring it with you. Your exhibit space will be located in the lobby on the first floor. Consider sitting there, particularly during the opening reception and poster session from 2:15-3:00 pm on Wednesday, and during each breakfast, lunch, and break times on Thursday and Friday. You will need to clean up your table by 12 pm on Friday, June 5.

Poster Exhibit

Posters will be set up on the first day of the conference, Wednesday, June 3, from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM, in the lobby on the first floor. Easels and boards will be provided. Presenters should bring their own tape, pins, paper, or other materials. Poster size should not exceed 4x3 feet (48x36 inches). The poster exhibit will take place during the opening reception from 2:15 to 3:00 PM. We encourage you to stand by your poster at this time. You will need to pick up your poster by 12 pm on Friday, June 5.



Presenters

There will be a computer, projector, and Wi-Fi available in each concurrent break-out room. However, we recommend that you have your presentation materials ready on a flash drive for faster setup. Presenters should meet in their assigned room at least seven minutes before the start to set up and download the presentation on the shared computer for a smooth transition between presenters.

Technology and Wi-Fi Access

To have access to Wi-Fi at SHSMO, please use the following information. Feel free to reach out to a member of our volunteer squad with any technology questions.

Network: TigerWifi-Guest / **Password:** TrumanTiger

Lactation Room

To use the lactation room, please see the person at the front desk in the SHSMO lobby to open the room for you each time you need it.

Storage Room

If you need a place to keep your luggage or other belongings during the conference, there is a storage room inside Cook Hall at SHSMO. You can also use one of the lockers in the lobby, but you will need to bring your own padlock.

Continuing Education Units (CEUs)

If you need CEUs, please sign up for the special list at the registration table on Wednesday, June 3, at 12:00 pm. The Cambio Center staff will follow up with you after the conference to provide you with the certificate. **You are required to attend the full conference in order to get the credits.**

Emergency Procedures

- Medical emergency: **Call 911 immediately**
- Weather-related emergency: seek shelter inside the bathrooms and away from the windows
- Other types of emergency: follow the guidelines provided by the staff and volunteers

What to Do in Columbia, MO (CoMO)

As written on the city website, “You never know what you’ll meet in CoMO. Every visit ends up being different from its beginning. Long and winding nature trails lead up to wide-open views. Bright nights on Broadway Street bring out a new side of you. If you come here looking for something, chances are you’ll find something better, because in Columbia every stay is much more than what you’d expect.”

You are not far from all the action, at the conference location of the State Historical Society of Missouri, at 605 Elm Street, Columbia, MO 65201.

Check out the following links for more information:

- [City's Website](#)
- [Activity guides](#)
- [Food and drink](#): Satisfy your cravings or seek out a new taste of adventure.
- [Shopping](#): Switch up your style at one of our locally owned shops.
- [Arts and culture](#): Art is everywhere in Columbia. Galleries are just the beginning.
- [Outdoors](#): Delve deep and reach new heights. There's always more to explore.



THINGS TO DO IN COLUMBIA

MUST-DO ACTIVITIES

Updated: January, 2026 - All content subject to change

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grab a burger and shoot some pool at Booches or Billiards on Broadway (bring cash!). | <input type="checkbox"/> Experience the view at the top of the bluffs in Capen Park. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk, jog or bike on the famous Katy Trail. | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a Mizzou Tigers sporting event. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a sweet treat at Sparky's Homemade Ice Cream on 9th Street in The District. | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a tasty local brew at Logboat Brewing Company. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Explore the local art scene by attending First Fridays in the North Village Arts District. | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a festival such as True/False Film Fest, Art in the Park or Unbound Book Festival. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sample a Missouri wine at The Blufftop at Rocheport. | <input type="checkbox"/> Learn more about Columbia's history at the Boone County History & Culture Center. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend a day shopping and exploring the thriving Columbia Mall. | <input type="checkbox"/> Snap a photo of "The Big Tree," a 90 foot tall Bur Oak on the National Registry of Big Trees (Over 350 years old!). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check out the natural rock bridge and Devil's Ice Box at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit the historic John William "Blind Boone" home on 4th St. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See a film at local independent movie theater, Ragtag Cinema. | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat, shop and enjoy a night out in The District. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grab a hot slice of pizza at local favorites, Shakespeare's Pizza or Pizza Tree. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch the sun set over the river at Cooper's Landing. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support the community at one of our farmers markets. | <input type="checkbox"/> Check out a live performance at The Blue Note, Rose Music Hall or Missouri Theatre. |

Food Donation Drive at the Conference!

Did you know that 1 in 7 Missourians is food insecure? For children, that number is 1 in 5! The Food Bank for Central & Northeast Missouri is the largest food bank in the state, and the Cambio Center is partnering with them for a food donation drive during the Cambio de Colores conference. Please help us support Missourians! During the conference, you can approach the Food Bank's exhibit table to donate with cash, Venmo, or a credit card, or bring canned food!

Here is a list of great **food drive** collection items, in order of importance. We are looking for culturally relevant food, if possible. Pop-top cans for easy access are always appreciated. (Please NO GLASS!)

1. **Peanut Butter**
2. **Canned fruit**
3. **Canned entrees (ravioli, soups, chili)**
4. **Canned protein (beans, chicken, tuna)**
5. **Canned veggies**
6. **Other options:**
 - Bottled Jelly
 - Boxed/bagged rice products
 - Boxed/bagged pasta products
 - Hot cereal
 - Cold cereal
 - Granola bars
 - Breakfast bars
 - Instant mashed potatoes
 - Shampoo/conditioner
 - Soap/lotion
 - Toothbrushes
 - Toothpaste

THE FOOD BANK
FOR CENTRAL & NORTHEAST MISSOURI

FOOD AND FUND DRIVE

Cambio de Colores
Change of Colors

The Food Bank partners with food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, schools and other partners to ensure food gets to those who need it. **For every \$1 donated, The Food Bank can share at least 3 meals with neighbors in need.**

Donate via credit card with the QR code above!

June 3rd – 5th, 2026

MOST NEEDED ITEMS INCLUDE: PEANUT BUTTER, CANNED FRUIT, CANNED MEATS AND CANNED SOUPS/MEALS. *PLEASE NO GLASS

Keynote Speakers

Wednesday, June 3, 2026 / 1:00-2:15 pm – Cook Hall

Sam Mihara



As noted on sammihara.com, “in 1942, when Sam Mihara was 9 years old, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the United States entered World War II. Shortly after, Sam and his family were forced from their San Francisco home by armed military guards and sent to the Heart Mountain prison camp in Wyoming. ... They would live crowded into a single 20 x 20 square foot room for the next 3 years. ... Today, at 90-years-young, Sam is the only camp survivor who tours nationally and internationally speaking about this dark time in our history. Over 90,000 people have heard Sam’s story detailing the difficulties he, his family, and other Japanese Americans faced before, during, and after the imprisonment.” Cambio de Colores is honored to hear Sam Mihara discuss the lessons we draw from this time period, and how to continue the ongoing fight for civil rights so many decades later.

Thursday, June 4, 2026 / 9:00-10:15 am – Cook Hall

Julia López



Dr. Julia López (she/ella) is a bilingual public health researcher and clinician committed to advancing trauma-informed care and health equity across reproductive, sexual, and mental health. She conducts psychological evaluations for asylum seekers and provides culturally responsive, trauma-informed support to survivors of gender-based violence. Dr. López uses implementation science to expand access to evidence-based interventions and works in partnership with communities to reduce stigma around mental illness and substance use. Her work centers on people living with HIV, immigrants and refugees, and LGBTQIA+ communities, bridging clinical care, research, and policy to build justice-driven, trauma-responsive systems of support.

Thursday, June 4, 2026 / 4:00-5:30 pm – Cook Hall

Senator Jill Carter



Senator Jill Carter is passionate about her country and the people in her community. Elected in November 2022, Senator Carter was sworn in on January 4, 2023, to serve the 32nd Senatorial District and represent the citizens of Jasper and Newton counties. A resident of southwest Missouri for many years, she is a graduate of East Newton High School and Crowder College. For more than a decade before becoming a senator, she worked on policy and legislation at the Capitol, visiting Jefferson City on her own dime. While Senator Carter initially focused on education, she soon began advocating for additional issues that would ensure the government worked for the people.

María Sánchez



María Sánchez is a proud member of the Carthage R9 School Board, making history as the first Latina ever elected to this position. A longtime Carthage resident for nearly two decades, as well as a Licensed Realtor and Builder with RealPro with additional experience in healthcare and education, she has dedicated her career and public service to uplifting minority communities and expanding cultural understanding throughout the region. Her mission is simple and steadfast: to lead with respect and dignity through education, art, and health. María organizes some of Carthage’s most impactful cultural events, from the community’s Maple Leaf Taco Tuesday Scholarship Competition to school programming such as Mariachi Flor’s Cinco de Mayo performance.

Friday, June 5, 2025 / 10:30-11:45 am – Cook Hall

Van Lac



Dr. Van Lac is an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Prior to her graduate career, she was a high school English teacher in Richmond, California, serving primarily Black and Latine families in an under-resourced community. Her research interests include supporting minoritized students in youth participatory action research and examining the racial consciousness development of K–12 students, teachers, and school administrators. She is the daughter of Vietnamese refugees and attended her entire K-12 public education in the Oakland Unified School District.

Spark Change Awards

Cambio Center’s “Spark Change” Award celebrates individuals who inspire change through their research and/or outreach focused on Latines/Hispanics, immigrant integration, and communities undergoing demographic change. The “Spark Change” award recognizes the resilience, innovation, and impactful contributions of individuals who actively work toward bridging divides, amplifying underrepresented voices, and fostering sustainable change within diverse communities. Meet this year’s nominations! **The finalist will be announced at the conference on Friday, June 5.**



Esmeralda Aharon is a retired U.S. Air Force Senior Noncommissioned Officer; she served 26 years in the Chaplain Corps, leading intercultural, crisis, and interfaith initiatives across diverse and rapidly changing communities, including during four deployments to the Middle East. At Saint Louis University School of Medicine, she serves as Program Director for Faculty, Staff, and Community Engagement, where she designs and leads initiatives grounded in whole-person care. She is also a four-time international best-selling author and co-founder of Latinas Rising.



Robin Hattori is passionate about uplifting the Asian American community in the Midwest. As the daughter of Japanese American parents incarcerated during WWII, she has presented on this topic locally and nationally. Robin has also played a leadership role in collaborative projects such as the InVISIBLE Asian American art exhibit, AAPI Voices oral history project, a discussion series exploring Asian identity, an Asian American storytelling initiative and an Asian-Jewish dialogue group. She works at Washington University’s Program in Occupational Therapy as a lab manager.



Jenifer Rueda is an educator and community advocate originally from Colombia. She earned her degree in Psychology in 2018 and a Master’s in Community Psychology in 2021. She has lived in Missouri for the past four years, where she works as an EL teacher at a secondary school in CPS, supporting multilingual students in their academic journey. In 2024, Jenifer started leading Sonrisas, a community group that brings together Latina mothers and their children ages 0–5. This initiative creates spaces of connection, support, and empowerment for families, fostering a strong sense of belonging and community



24th Annual Conference Program

En Comunidad, We Rise: In CoMO, We Lift Each Other Up!

Day 1 – Wednesday, June 3, 2026

12:00-1:00 pm - Conference Registration

Lobby

1:00-1:15 pm - Welcoming Remarks

Cook Hall

1:00-2:15 pm - Civil Rights and Political Participation Keynote Session

Cook Hall

Memories of Injustice by Sam Mihara

Sam Mihara will expertly guide attendees through his WWII incarceration experience during this session. In 1942, the U.S. government forced 9-year-old Sam and his family, along with everyone of Japanese ancestry living in the Western Exclusion Zone, out of their homes and into prison camps. Sam and his family were sent to a prison camp called Heart Mountain in desolate northern Wyoming, where he lived for 3 years in subpar conditions. After returning home, Sam graduated from U.C. Berkeley and UCLA. And he became a rocket scientist for the Boeing Company. Sam received 4 major awards for history lecturing. His latest award is the NEH Jefferson Lecturer for 2024. He has spoken at over 500 schools. He talked at UCLA, Harvard and Congress. During his compelling presentation, Sam describes why the World War II camps were created and describes the forcible removal of people from their homes. Sam discusses what daily life in camp was like, how they got out of the camp, and what it was like for many people when they returned home. Finally, Sam examines the question: can such injustice happen again?

2:15-3:00 pm - Opening Reception and Poster Fair

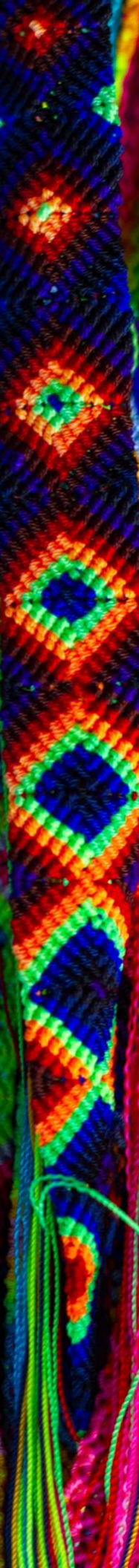
Cook Hall Room and Lobby

Posters on Community and Economic Development

Leadership Analysis of the Cambio Center and its Impact at the University of Missouri

Juan José Reyes, Gertrude Arthur, Jada Mulholland, Sophie Rentshler, and Lisa Dorner

This study examines leadership at the Cambio Center at the University of Missouri, a research and outreach center serving Latine and changing communities. Grounded in social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2007) and interest convergence theory (Bell, 1980), it analyzes how the center advanced its mission amid high



leadership turnover and limited funding. Using qualitative content analysis of operational documents, conference materials, and research outputs, the study identifies leadership practices, organizational strategies, and institutional impacts. Findings indicate adaptive leadership that sustained the center and generated benefits including grant funding, research productivity, and increased inclusion for Latine and international scholars and students.

Determinants of Economic Self-Sufficiency, Well-Being, and Integration among Refugees

Youngbin Lee

This study examines the determinants of refugees' economic self-sufficiency, well-being, and integration in the U.S. within the context of refugees' post-migration ecology. Using pooled cross-sectional data from the 2020–2022 Annual Survey of Refugees (ASR), the analysis focuses on approximately 4,500 refugee household heads from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, and El Salvador. Following Bailey et al. (2024), three indices are constructed to measure economic self-sufficiency, well-being, and integration. OLS models estimate associations between these outcomes and key predictors, including education, English proficiency, gender, household characteristics, and length of residence. The results highlight substantial heterogeneity across origin groups and show that English proficiency and education are consistently associated with improved refugee outcomes.

Posters on Education and Youth Development

Evaluating the Impact of Colombia's Free Tuition Policy on Low-Income Student Enrollment: A Difference-in-Differences Approach

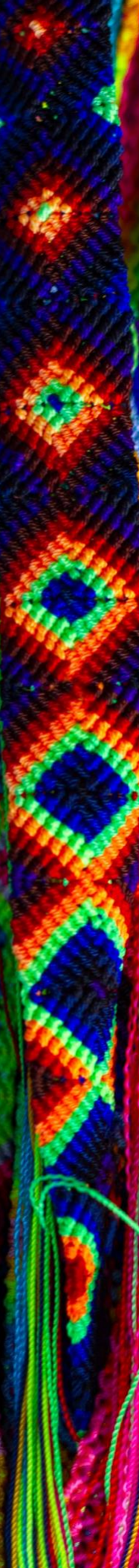
Luis Ricardo Rojas

The Colombian government implemented the Free Tuition Policy in 2021 to reduce financial barriers and expand higher education access for low-income students. This study examines the extent to which the policy has increased enrollment among traditional students from socioeconomic strata 1, 2, and 3 in Colombia's 67 public universities. Using administrative data from SNIES and ICFES, the study employs a quasi-experimental difference-in-differences design to compare enrollment trends before (2016–2020) and after (2021–2024) policy implementation. Findings are expected to provide policy-relevant evidence on the effectiveness of tuition-free reforms in promoting equitable access and social mobility.

Community Translanguaging as Relational Practice Among Latina Immigrant Mothers in Informal Support Networks

Jenifer Rueda Varon and Sophia Piral Lee

This poster presents findings from a qualitative study exploring how community translanguaging emerges as a relational, affective, and political practice among Latina immigrant mothers raising young children in Missouri. Rather than focusing on schools, the study examines informal support spaces where women fluidly use Spanish, English, Spanglish, emojis, gestures, and silence to care for one another, navigate public systems, and affirm their identities. Drawing on a constructivist grounded theory approach, the study identifies four ways in which translanguaging supports everyday life: as a tool for institutional navigation, emotional healing, community organizing, and cultural belonging. These practices show how translanguaging is not a deficit or strategy imposed from above, but a collective, multimodal way of



building meaning, leadership, and resilience from the ground up. The poster contributes to translanguaging scholarship by positioning it as a community infrastructure for mutual aid, not just a linguistic process.

Posters on Health

Effective interventions and/or risk factors to prevent hospital admissions/readmissions in older adults: Systematic Review

Rosalia Molina

Diabetes mellitus poses a significant public health challenge for older adults in the United States, leading to frequent hospital admissions and increased healthcare costs. Both clinical and social factors contribute to this burden. This review aimed to identify effective interventions that reduce hospital admissions/readmissions among older adults with diabetes and to determine key risk factors for hospital utilization. A systematic review of studies published since 2010 was conducted, focusing on adults aged 50 and above with diabetes-related hospitalizations. Data extraction and quality assessment followed PRISMA guidelines.

Spectral EEG Phenotypes of alcohol-associative learning and memory

Julian Aponte

Understanding why some people develop problematic drinking requires identifying differences in alcohol cue reactivity. Through associative learning, alcohol cues can gain incentive salience, becoming attention-grabbing and “wanted”. This study will conduct a secondary analysis of EEG data from 57 participants who completed a Pavlovian conditioning task in which visual cues predicted delivery or omission of their preferred alcoholic beverage. Using clustering methods on post-conditioning EEG spectral data, the project will identify “spectral phenotypes” and test whether they relate to alcohol sensitivity and drinking behavior. Findings may clarify neurophysiological subtypes of alcohol motivation and inform risk models and targeted interventions.

Geography, Immigrant Destinations, and Latinx Mental Health in the United States

Shania Montúfar

This poster examines how Latinx mental health varies across immigrant destination types in the United States, including Traditional, Secondary, New, and Peripheral destinations. Using 2021–2022 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System data, I analyze two outcomes: poor mental health days and frequent mental distress. I also assess whether income, education, and health insurance help explain these differences. Descriptively, New Destinations show the highest mental health burden. In adjusted models, Latinxs in New Destinations have 6.2% higher odds of frequent mental distress than those in Traditional Destinations, while Secondary Destinations generally show the lowest distress profile. Overall, the project demonstrates that geography structures mental health risk within the Latinx population and highlights the importance of place-sensitive approaches to health inequality.

3:00-3:15 pm - Break

3:15-4:30 pm - Concurrent Breakout Sessions



Breakout 1: Education and Youth Development – Panel

Room: Cook Hall Room

From Language Learning to Self-Advocacy: Participatory Pedagogies in Adult ESOL

Melissa Hauber-Özer, Kelly Leavitt, Sofia Deatherage, Yuanyuan Gu, Olumide Banjo, Desiree Dixon, Spyridoula Myga, and Leela Mogadam

Shifting policies and increased polarization around immigration in many historic refugee (re)settlement contexts underscore the need for classroom practices that foster inclusion and resilience, enabling learners to navigate complex sociopolitical landscapes in a new language. Resulting from an ongoing community-based participatory research partnership enacted through an adult English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program serving multilingual refugee learners in central Missouri, this panel reports on the outcomes of participatory pedagogies focused on digital storytelling, autobiographical storytelling, and digital literacy. Three presentations by project facilitators demonstrate how these pedagogies can strengthen refugee adults' agency, engagement, and wellbeing amidst increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Breakout 2: Presentaciones Interdisciplinarias en español

Room: Hamra Classroom

Práctica prometedora en salud: Factores que provocan estrés y satisfacción laboral entre trabajadores TN en la industria porcina norteamericana

Magdiel López-Soriano

Los trabajadores TN que vienen a la industria porcina norteamericana son vitales para mantener las granjas activas. El objetivo de esta investigación fue explorar los factores que provocan estrés entre los trabajadores con visa TN. Se elaboró una encuesta en español que se distribuyó a trabajadores con visa TN en los Estados Unidos (n=251). Los altos niveles de estrés se asociaron con una menor satisfacción laboral ($P < 0.05$). Los encuestados con más de 6 años de experiencia con la visa TN tuvieron un 80% menos de probabilidades de experimentar un alto nivel de satisfacción laboral en comparación con aquellos con menos experiencia ($P < 0.01$).

Práctica prometedora en educación y desarrollo juvenil: Creando comunidad en una preparatoria: Prácticas dentro del Club de Cultura Hispana

Maritza Sandoval Aguilar

El Club de Cultura Hispana (SCC) de la Rock Bridge High School reconoció la necesidad de un espacio que celebre la cultura hispana en una escuela donde menos del 7% de la población estudiantil es hispana. El SCC fue creado intencionadamente para servir como un espacio visible destinado a celebrar la herencia hispana. A través de actividades educativas, eventos culturales y programas de extensión comunitaria, sus miembros trabajan para compartir y aprender sobre las costumbres, tradiciones y diversos aspectos de la vida hispana. El SCC es más que una actividad extracurricular; es un espacio de empoderamiento, representación y conexión significativa para toda la comunidad escolar.

Práctica prometedora en educación y desarrollo juvenil: De la certificación al título universitario: Estrategias para apoyar a docentes preescolares bilingües mediante programas con recursos y personal bilingüe

Angélica Reina

El campo de la educación de la primera infancia enfrenta una escasez de educadores calificados, especialmente en las comunidades multilingües. Tulsa Community College (TCC) desarrolló una trayectoria bilingüe que comienza con la credencial de Asociado en Desarrollo Infantil (CDA) y conduce al Certificado de Maestría (CoM), ofreciendo becas completas que cubren la matrícula y los libros con el fin de eliminar las barreras financieras. Esta sesión examina cómo las barreras sistémicas, en particular las evaluaciones lingüísticas, limitaban la progresión de los estudiantes, y cómo el TCC implementó ajustes normativos y apoyos integrados. Asimismo, analiza cómo las estrategias para la eliminación de barreras, las credenciales acumulables, el aprendizaje semipresencial y los servicios de apoyo integral mejoran la retención y la tasa de finalización de estudios. Los participantes adquirirán información práctica para fortalecer las trayectorias educativas y promover transiciones equitativas hacia la obtención de un título académico.

Investigación en educación y desarrollo juvenil: “¿Será que alguna vez pisaré una universidad?”: The Quest for Higher Education Access Among Low-Income Students in Colombia

Pilar Mendoza y Sebastián Concha Vargas

Esta presentación expone las experiencias vividas por estudiantes actuales de UNIMINUTO en Bogotá, quienes enfrentan importantes barreras cotidianas para continuar con su educación superior, así como los sistemas de apoyo que les permiten superar las adversidades y mantenerse matriculados. Las experiencias vividas por estos estudiantes ponen de manifiesto el papel de los actores clave, incluyendo las estructuras institucionales y los sistemas de apoyo social a la hora de facilitar la participación de los alumnos en la vida universitaria.

Breakout 3: Community and Economic Development – Workshop

Room: Plassmeyer Classroom

Reimagined: Building Communities as Former Diversity Professionals

Jairo Javier Morales and Remy Xa

The Dear Colleague Letter from the Department of Education and the Executive Order from Missouri Governor, Mike Kehoe, pushed for a halt in diversity programs, to which public schools soon followed. Multicultural programs went dark and left in the center were the students in need of services. Higher education professionals working in multicultural affairs, diversity initiatives, and LGBTQ+ work were left stuck between continuing their work or finding new roles and responsibilities. In this workshop, we will explore how a former diversity professional finds meaning, provides community, explores strategies for programming, and works through stories of belonging.

Breakout 4: Education and Youth Development – Workshop

Room: Barnes Boardroom

A Hopeful Future En Conjunto: Comunidades Creating Solidarity for Working Class and Immigrant Student Success



Theresa Torres, Dea Marx, and Jude Carmona

We address strategies and practices to build communities of support for families, inner-city schools, and universities to foster student academic success and college advancement. The practices we will engage will include a variety of methods: storytelling, oral histories, public histories, collaborative community building strategies. The successful communities, schools, and programs that foster a stronger community will be the focus of this panel presentation and workshop.

Day 2 – Thursday, June 4, 2026

8:30-9:00 am **Breakfast**

Lobby

9:00-10:15 am **Health Keynote Session**

Room: Cook Hall

Intersections of Migration, Identity, and Mental Health in Latine Communities by Julia López

Migration is not just a movement across borders; it is a lived experience that shapes identity, belonging, and mental health in profound ways for Latine communities. This keynote explores how structural forces such as immigration policy, discrimination, language access, and health system design intersect with family dynamics and cultural resilience to influence well-being. Grounded in community-engaged research and real-world practice, the talk aims to highlight both the harms produced by inequitable systems and the strengths that sustain healing, including collective care. Attendees will leave with actionable insights for advancing culturally responsive, equity-centered mental health care.

10:15-10:30 am **Break**

10:30-11:45 am **Concurrent Breakout Sessions**

Breakout 1: Civil Rights and Political Participation – Panel

Room: Cook Hall

ROMERO by Xiomara Cornejo: Drama & Puppetry to Heal the World

David Crespy, Xiomara Cornejo, and Cherie Sampson

In Spring of 2024, the University of Missouri presented Xiomara Cornejo's magic drama, ROMERO, about the assassination and canonization of Archbishop Óscar Romero. The play featured the puppetry of Lil Lamberta of All the Saints Theatre Company, and the panel will consist of members of the production team both in person and via Zoom, including director David A. Crespy, playwright Xiomara Cornejo, and designer Cherie Sampson.



Breakout 2: Education and Youth Development – Promising Practices and Research

Room: Hamra Classroom

Promising Practices: Embodied English for Inclusive Multilingual Futures: A UNIMINUTO–Cambio Center Partnership

Sebastián Concha Vargas

La Red de Multilingüismo at UNIMINUTO presents a proposal to design and develop an integral plan to foster a progressive multilingual inclusive primary and higher education at UNIMINUTO in partnership with the Cambio Center. This strategy is intended to connect language policy, innovative pedagogies, curriculum internationalization, and interdisciplinarity and collaborative research to serve diverse first-generation students and six to 12-year-old children from marginalized communities. The proposal expands equitable access to English learning and intercultural competencies, influencing Colombia's current foreign language policies. It aims to share this transferable model and invites participants to join a bi-national community of practices on multilingual primary and higher education transformation.

Promising Practices: Agricultural Education fellowships in Mexico as a tool for US agriculturalists to grow access and inclusion in the US

David Aguayo, Lindsey Saunders, Meikah Dado, Josefina Pedraza Lopez, Manuel Galicia Reyes, Juan Jose Juarez Velazquez, and Alexis Guerra

This presentation highlights a collaboration between the University of Missouri and the Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, a public agricultural university in central Mexico that is focused on engaging secondary students in agricultural projects through the 4-H model. We will describe the collaboration funded by the USDA-FAS International Agricultural Education Fellowship Program (IAEFP), which included training and hosting U.S. fellows in central Mexico for two semesters each. We will share initial findings of the fellowship's impact on participants' agricultural career pathways, youth engagement practices, and learned cultural dynamics/practices between Mexican and U.S. professionals.

Research: Latin American Immigrants' Resilience: A Strength-Based Model to Support Communities, Families, and Youth Socioemotional Wellbeing

Lucía G. Medina

Latin American immigrant families bring cultural assets that function as protective and promotive factors for family and child adjustment. Adopting a strengths-based perspective is essential to move beyond deficit approaches and better capture the processes that support well-being among Latino/a immigrants. Therefore, drawing on Latin American cultural wealth, resilience science (Masten, 2018), and the bioecological model of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), this paper presentation proposes the Model of Latin American Immigrant Resilience. The model conceptualizes resilience as the result of dynamic interactions among sociocultural factors, acculturation processes, school and community contexts, family processes, parental mental health, and child characteristics. These interconnected processes shape adolescents' socioemotional competence, a key pathway to mental health, academic achievement, and life satisfaction.



Promising Practices: Semillitas: A Kansas City Culturally Responsive Early Childhood Program

Susan Schmidt and Gerardo Martinez

The "Anchors of Tomorrow" fund, was launched at the beginning of 2024 by the Hall Family Foundation, which is a local private philanthropic organization. Under this initiative, their goal in Kansas City, Missouri is to provide a world class early childhood education in both education quality and family supports. They reached out to UMKC's Institute for Human Development that is consistently capturing data, research, and evaluation. Another collaborator, Cornerstones of Care, a mental health nonprofit, conducts the classroom observations and interventions of the children's social emotional behavior. There are also five multicultural early childhood centers from the Kansas City Metropolitan area who are eagerly participating on this 5 year project. There are a total of 827 Children enrolled with 264 staff employed, and 25% of the participants are Latino families and much has been learned.

Breakout 3: Education and Youth Development – Workshop

Room: Plassmeyer Classroom

Building Bridges and Breaking Language Barriers: Expanding Bilingual and Biliterate Education

Jacqueline Rodriguez

Building Bridges and Breaking Language Barriers explores Kansas City Kansas Public Schools' strategic evolution in bilingual and biliteracy education. This session highlights the district's transition from traditional support models to a robust Dual Language Program, showcasing the expansion of K–5 Spanish immersion and the commitment to fostering biliteracy as a lifelong asset. We will examine how KCKPS empowers students and families by leveraging multilingual advocates and bicultural school environments to ensure equitable access. Participants will gain insights into scaling biliteracy initiatives and fostering an asset-based culture that honors linguistic diversity as a cornerstone of student success and global citizenship.

Breakout 4: Health – Research and Promising Practices

Room: Barnes Boardroom

Promising Practices: Developing Emergency Preparedness Microlearning Modules for Rural Communities with Limited English Proficiency

Guillermo Narvaez

This presentation is on a project to develop emergency preparedness microlessons in Spanish for immigrant communities. Spanish-speaking and limited English communities in the U.S. experience significant health and economic challenges from climate-related and other disasters. Key barriers include inaccessible information, distrust of authorities, fears of deportation, and exclusion from planning. Microlearning offers short, focused content that enhances engagement and learning, which is ideal for smartphones. This initiative produces culturally relevant materials, such as brief videos for social media (e.g., WhatsApp), to boost disaster preparedness knowledge and community resilience, ultimately helping these communities improve their readiness.

Research: When the company leaves the company town: A case study from rural Nebraska

Athena Ramos

Lexington, Nebraska has been home to a meatpacking facility since 1990, drawing many Hispanic/Latino and other immigrant families to the area for work. The meatpacking facility employed nearly 3,200 people, but on November 21, 2025, workers were informed that the plant would close in January 2026. Through this qualitative study, we sought to document workers' experiences at the plant, how their health had been impacted by their work, how their lives had been uprooted by the facility's closure, and how they were coping. This presentation will highlight preliminary findings from focus groups conducted in Spring 2026.

Research: Addressing type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) among Hispanic people in two Missouri counties

Rosalia Molina

Hispanic communities in under-resourced Missouri counties face significant health inequities, particularly regarding T2DM, influenced by adverse social drivers of health. This participatory needs assessment aimed to identify wellness priorities for Hispanic individuals with T2DM or pre-diabetes and to develop a research agenda to improve diabetes outcomes and address social determinants. Group discussions, facilitated by bilingual health workers, provided an inclusive platform for 60 Hispanic adults to share health needs and challenges. Discussions were guided by the NIMHD Research Framework and analyzed for major themes like family support, cultural dietary patterns, barriers to healthy eating, and concerns about medication safety and misinformation.

Research: 'Disfrutando': A culturally tailored intervention to address type 2 diabetes mellitus in the Hispanic population

Maithe Enríquez

Despite much research that has focused on enhancing type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) health outcomes for high-burden populations, more remains to be done. Practical approaches are needed that not only equip people with knowledge about T2DM self-management, but also help them mitigate the adverse social drivers of health that are fueling the burgeoning numbers of people in the U.S. with T2DM and that are preventing them from practicing healthful behaviors. We are an engaged community, health, and academic partnership that is working to move a program of research forward that addresses the "epidemic" of T2DM in high-burden populations in Missouri.

11:45-12:00 pm Break

12:00-1:00 pm Lunch

Room: Cook Hall

1:00-2:15 pm Concurrent Breakout Sessions

Breakout 1: Education and Youth Development – Workshop

Room: Cook Hall

Multilingual Mosaics: Building Midwestern Dual Language Programs through Community, Identity, and What We Thought was Broken



Olivia Flores

How do Midwestern Dual Language programs and communities thrive? In this session, I highlight Midwest Dual Language programs and the lessons we can learn from them. I will introduce an initiative, the Midwest Dual Language Alliance, a group of Dual Language stakeholders invested in expanding and supporting multilingual education in the region. I will emphasize our purpose and vision while also opening a discussion about how others are supporting Dual Language education across the U.S. This session will require participant engagement with a focus on collaboration and the goal of helping all attendees identify ways in which community, in their context, can support collective growth.

Breakout 2: Civil Rights and Political Participation - Workshop

Room: Hamra Classroom

Abide in Love: Building Networks of Care Across Detention, Distance, and Data

Lucy Behrendt, Max Tohline, and Emily Stuart

This workshop presents Abide in Love as a community-rooted, volunteer-led model of accompaniment and collective care in response to immigrant detention. Grounded in relational practice, shared infrastructure, and a commitment to nonviolence, the panel explores how communities rise en comunidad by sustaining dignity and connection across systems designed to isolate and disappear people. Emerging in Phelps County, Missouri, after the death of a young man held on an ICE detainer, Abide in Love has grown into a multi-site network providing communication support, commissary funds, pen pal relationships, care packages, and community connection. Three presenters trace this evolution from origin story and personal witness, to the data labor that sustains continuity of care, to current strategies for visibility and expansion.

Breakout 3: Health – Self-Care Workshop

Room: Plassmeyer Classroom

Laughter Yoga

Eileen Wolfington

From stress relief to better brain function, laughter is a holistic intervention. Developed by Indian physician Dr. Madan Kataria, Laughter Yoga is a mild exercise experience that combines childlike playfulness with breathing techniques to bring more oxygen to your body and brain. Laughter reduces stress, helps keep your mind positive, and strengthens your immune system. No traditional yoga positions are used nor jokes, comedy or drama. While Yoga mats are optional to use at the end during the guided laughter meditation and cool down, they are not required.

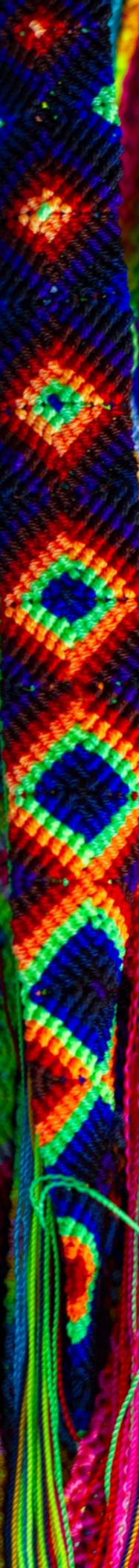
Breakout 4: Interdisciplinary – Research and Promising Practices

Room: Barnes Boardroom

Research on Civil Rights and Political Participation: Goya Boycott: A Protest in Affinity Space

Aída Guhlincozzi

In the summer of 2020, many Goya Foods consumers utilized the digital sphere to express outrage and called for a boycott through the hashtag #BoycottGoya. The analysis of 64,000 tweets using hashtags



revealed significant digital expression responding to the Goya CEO’s political speech. This article visualizes differences in the online political narratives around boycott tweets using mixed methods sentiment analysis, enabling deconstruction of multiple actors’ aims in this discourse occurring in affinity spaces. This article uses a feminist digital geographies framework to analyze how engagement with online affinity spaces and digital mediations of everyday life may transform gendered power relations in economic, social, and political contexts.

Research on Civil Rights and Political Participation: News Media Avoidance by Latinos and their Civic (Dis)Engagement

Manuel Chavez, Leonard Apar, Manuel Guerrero, Aubrey Rademacher & Jean Kayitsinga

This paper examines the statistical results of national survey to understand what sources of news are used by Latinos and what is their level of civic engagement or disengagement based on their news habits. In addition, the research studies how the concept of news avoidance is spread on Latinos based on their socioeconomic demographics. The initial results indicate that Latinos are closely aligned to non-Hispanic Whites news habits and perspectives on American civics.

Promising Practices in Community and Economic Development: The Michigan Tejano Music Historical Marker: History and Implications

Richard Cruz Dávila

Out of over 1,800 official historical markers in the State of Michigan, until September of 2023, none were dedicated to any of the state’s many Latina/o communities. While two previous markers tangentially named individuals of Latina/o heritage, on September 29th, 2023, a new marker in Detroit’s Mexicantown neighborhood became the first to specifically honor a Latina/o community in Michigan. Placed in the Mexicantown Community Development Corporation Plaza, the marker celebrates Texas-Mexican migration to Michigan and the vibrant musical community that these migrants forged. This presentation will discuss the history behind the marker, detail the process of having the marker placed, and address the significance of the marker for Latina/o communities in Michigan.

Promising Practices in Community and Economic Development: From Idea to Impact in 90 Days: Building Programs that Actually Run

Maximilianah Zales

Organizations serving Latino and immigrant communities are often tasked with launching new programs under tight timelines but without the systems needed to execute effectively. This session presents a practical framework for moving from concept to implementation in 90 days by focusing on four core components: strategy, systems, partnerships, and data tracking. Drawing from cross-sector experience building workforce, education, and community programs from zero, this presentation highlights how AI can be used as a support tool to accelerate execution, improve consistency, and expand reach—without increasing cost or complexity.

2:15-2:30 pm

Break

2:30-3:45 pm

Concurrent Breakout Sessions



Breakout 1: Community and Economic Development – Panel

Room: Cook Hall

Promising Practices from Religious Communities

Jaymes Schrock, Lexi Hall, Rev. Dottie Mathews, and Guillermo Villa-Trueba

This panel discussion is focused on the ways in which churches and faith communities are laboring to support, sustain, and adaptively engage the needs of local immigrant/migrant communities. Changes in immigration laws and enforcement have compelled organizations to adapt to best serve our immigrant neighbors in Missouri. In this conversation, the panelists will discuss promising practices in the areas of education, food security, legal support, and financial support that have emerged as organizations have adapted to a changing landscape.

Breakout 2: Community and Economic Development – Research

Room: Hamra Classroom

Structurally Produced, Institutionally Maintained: Farming Culture and the Capacity-Outcome Gap Among Small Producers in Texas

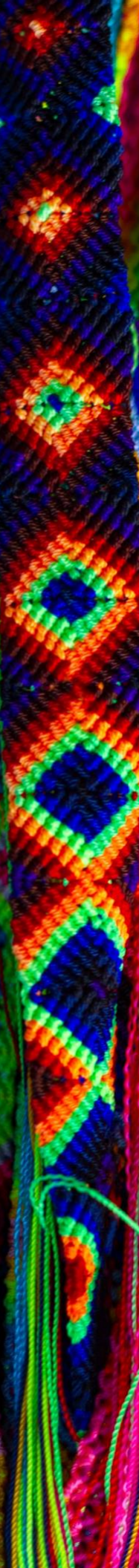
Ervin Leiva

Small-scale producers possess substantial cultural resources—debt aversion, family and land attachment, independence and self-reliance, informal networks, and non-monetary success definitions—yet struggle to convert these assets into sustainable livelihoods. This paper examines how farming culture influences resilience among small producers facing market access challenges in Texas. Drawing on interviews with 18 producers and 17 service providers across Hispanic, Black, and white populations, we develop three arguments. First, farming culture constitutes resilience capacity, enabling farmers to weather disturbance through orientations that economic indicators cannot capture. Second, capacity does not automatically convert to outcomes; the gap is structurally produced through missing market infrastructure that relegates producers to "hobbyist" status regardless of their capabilities. Third, misrecognition by field actors—service providers interpreting cultural practices as deficits rather than adaptations—compounds structural disadvantage with symbolic delegitimation. We conclude that effective intervention requires simultaneously transforming market structures and working with, rather than against, farming culture.

The Emergence of New Pueblos and Barrios: Latino Population Growth in American Cities

J.S. Onésimo Sandoval

Using data from the American Community Survey, this research examines how Latino population growth is reshaping neighborhoods and cities across the United States. Employing tract-level data and spatial statistical methods, the study identifies patterns of Latino settlement beyond traditional gateway cities and documents the emergence of new pueblos in small and mid-sized metropolitan areas, suburbs, and previously declining urban neighborhoods. The analysis focuses on the demographic processes driving these changes, including migration, natural increase, age structure, and household formation. Findings show that Latino population growth is often concentrated in places experiencing population decline, aging, or economic restructuring, where Latino communities contribute to neighborhood stabilization and regional demographic sustainability.



Energy Poverty Without Income Data: Policy Trade-offs for Community and Economic Development

Laura Pardo

Energy poverty is commonly measured using household energy expenditures as a share of income; however, income data is often unavailable to utilities and policymakers responsible for designing targeted assistance programs. This study examines how energy poverty is identified under real-world data constraints and evaluates the policy consequences of relying on alternative non-income indicators. Using the U.S. Department of Energy's Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) for the state of Missouri, the analysis compares traditional income-based energy burden measures with models that rely on housing and energy characteristics. By framing energy affordability as a community and economic development issue, this research highlights the trade-offs between administrative simplicity and community equity, offering insights for designing more effective and inclusive energy assistance policies.

Social Capital and Small Farmers' Adoption of New Technology – Jean Kayitsinga

This study examines how social capital motives shape the adoption of agricultural technologies. Data is drawn from survey of small farmers in Michigan and Tennessee. Findings indicate that farmers' willingness to adopt new tools and technologies is influenced by two interrelated factors: social capital motives and their attachment to farm and community. These factors are in turn influenced by bonding or linking ties in which farmers are embedded and by the nature and accessibility of financial resources available to them. These findings underscore the complex interplay between social capital motives and technological innovation in small-scale farming communities.

Breakout 3: Education and Youth Development – Research and Promising Practices

Room: Plassmeyer Classroom

Research: Impacts of Language Policy in Higher Education on International Graduate Students' Trajectories

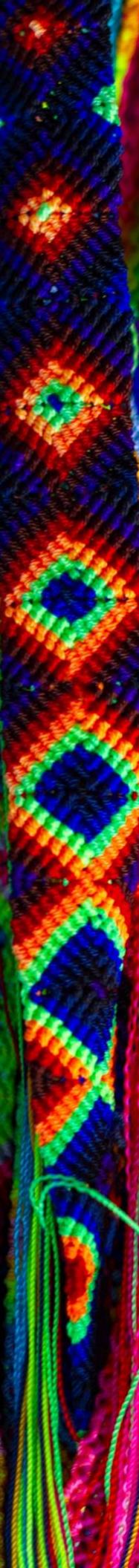
Melissa Hauber-Özer, Hsin-I Sydney Yueh, Sophia Piral Lee, and Kara Starnes

This presentation examines the implementation and impact of a state law governing the eligibility of "non-native" English-speaking international graduate students to serve as teaching assistants at a Midwestern U.S. university. The findings highlight faculty efforts to support international students while balancing institutional requirements and limitations, student perspectives of policies and practices, and implications for advocacy, policy, and action. Findings also inform how the intertwined nature of language policy, admissions, and funding limits international students' opportunities at many points. Thus, despite faculty efforts, the language policy ultimately disadvantages international students.

Promising Practice: International Student and Scholar Services: Navigating Change and Uncertainty

Kristen Carranza

International post-secondary students are not only critical to the economic development of the U.S., but they are also dynamic members of our local communities. Since the beginning of 2025, the federal government has introduced numerous executive orders and policies impacting the professional and academic trajectories of F-1 and J-1 international students in the U.S., including but not limited to travel



bans, USCIS processing holds, and many others. This session explores the potential impact not just to national research and development, but to the fabric of our local communities.

Research on Education and Youth Development: Our Community Has Capital: Celebrating the Community Cultural Wealth in Latine Students' Social Networks

Nidia Bañuelos, Kyoungjin Jang-Tucci, Claudia Triana, and Natalie Xiong

This presentation shares research findings and pedagogical tools from the Networks and Cultural Assets Project, a mixed-methods, longitudinal study that tracks how Latine undergraduates' social networks and community cultural wealth (CCW) support their transition from college into the workforce. We find that students' networks expand over time and become less dense with lower average tie strength. We also identify connections between students' CCW and their network characteristics, relationships that colleges and universities can help nurture. We created a research-informed curriculum on professional networking for Latine students intended to help them expand their social worlds in authentic, culturally affirming, and collectively beneficial ways.

Breakout 4: Education and Youth Development – Research and Promising Practices

Room: Barnes Boardroom

Research: Effect of a Vocabulary Intervention for Science on Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Attitude among Multilingual Learners in Middle School

Heba Abdelnaby

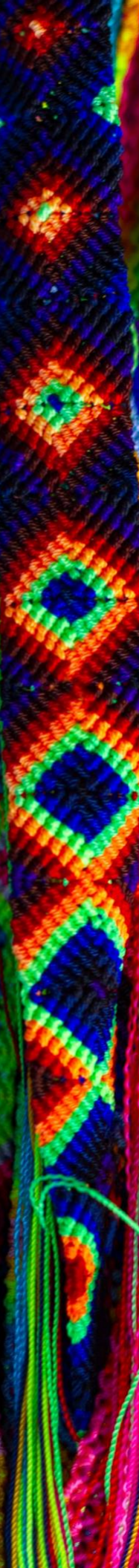
This study examined Science Generation (SciGen), a multimodal vocabulary intervention, with 10 middle school multilingual learners from refugee and immigrant backgrounds with reading difficulties using a reversal single case design. Results showed strong effects on science vocabulary, small effects on comprehension, and improved science attitudes, suggesting SciGen supports vocabulary growth but needs further study.

Research: Hearts, Methods, and Classrooms: Critical participatory inquiry alongside recently-arrived Guatemalans in rural U.S. high schools

Sophia Piral Lee

This study examines how I designed critical participatory inquiry (CPI) to work with recently arrived Guatemalan immigrant adolescents in a rural high school in the Midwestern U.S. In this project, I thematically analyzed ethnographic data that includes research plans, field notes, journal, and transcriptions from visits to the classroom during the 2023-2024 school year. I address the question: How can we design school-based CPI that is trauma-reducing, culturally recreational, and beneficial for recently arrived adolescents? My purpose with this work is to uncover lessons learned and recommendations from the methodologies applied, promoting more CPI with youth that is caring, culturally oriented, and beneficial for the students' overall well-being. My findings reflect on the importance of building community at all levels, cultural traditions, mindfulness, and student-led conversations.

Research: What Helps Recently-Arrived Immigrant Adolescents Graduate from U.S. High Schools? Voices from Rural Missouri



Sabina Aghayeva, Akpidi Oladokun, Sophia Piral Lee, and Lisa Dorner

U.S. schools have experienced significant demographic change over the past two decades, including a steady increase in older-arriving immigrant adolescents designated as English Learners (ELs). These students, particularly those arriving between ages 16 and 20, face distinct challenges in completing high school, especially in rural communities. This study examines how one rural Missouri school district supports recently arrived immigrant adolescents in navigating pathways to high school graduation. Grounded in a long-standing research–practice partnership, the study employs critical participatory research and mindful ethnographic approaches to center youth and educator perspectives. Data were collected between August 2023 and July 2024 through interviews with district leaders, school administrators, teachers, and newcomer adolescents, as well as analysis of district and state graduation

Research: From Learners to Educators and Community Builders: Asian American and Migrant Youth Leading Workshops through Community-Engaged, Responsive Pedagogy

Yeji Kim

Guided by Community Responsive Pedagogy and community-engaged research, this study examines Asian American and migrant middle and high school students’ participation in a summer camp and a youth-led community workshop on Asian American histories. Findings show these experiences cultivated students’ pride, belonging, and recognition of their cultural and linguistic repertoires as assets, while positioning them as educators, community leaders, and civic actors. By teaching peers, families, and local residents, students envisioned sustained community contributions grounded in their lived experiences. The study highlights youth-led, community-based programs as vital spaces for historical learning, community connection, and civic leadership, and calls for research and praxis that center youth as knowledge producers in pursuit of more equitable and empowering futures.

3:45-4:00 pm

Break

4:00-5:30 pm

Community and Economic Development Keynote Session

Room: Cook Hall

A Caring Community that Builds Together: Housing, Culture, and Economic Growth in Jasper County, Missouri by Senator Jill Carter and María Sánchez

This keynote presentation is centered on the transformative impact of collaboration, cultural engagement, and community leadership. María Sánchez explores how sustainable growth is achieved when communities invest in education, housing, health, and cultural outreach, guided by a shared sense of purpose. Drawing from her experience in public service, healthcare, education, and community development, María highlights the importance of inclusive leadership and civic engagement in strengthening communities and expanding opportunities for future generations. Through real-world initiatives and community partnerships in Carthage, Missouri, this presentation shows how compassion, diversity, and collaboration can drive economic development and long-term community success. Senator Jill Carter and María will offer an inspiring perspective on building communities that are not only economically strong but also culturally connected, resilient, and committed to growing together.



Day 3 – Friday, June 5, 2026

Friday morning, participants will attend the site visit OR workshop they chose during registration. Each activity provides breakfast. Site Visit 1 starts at the City of Refuge at 8 am. For Site Visits 2 & 3, please meet in the lobby at the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO) at 8 am to board the van.

Conference Site Visits (For Site Visits Registrants Only)

8:00-10:15 am **Site Visits and Breakfast**

Site Visit Option 1: City of Refuge — *Transportation is on your own to 10 N Garth Ave, Columbia, MO 65203 — just 0.6 miles from Tiger Hotel.*

City of Refuge is a 501(c)3 nonpartisan nonprofit that exists to serve and empower over 1,600 refugees a year via relational Care, Education, and Development. The community has become intricately involved with refugees by attending City of Refuge’s annual events, providing 320 weekly-volunteers, and opening their arms to donate time/talent/and treasure to the cause. At this site visit, you will get a tour of the facilities and see first-hand how City of Refuge meets its mission via its programming, including its resale shop ‘City Boutique’, cross-cultural preschool ‘City Preschool’, and more!

Site Visit Option 2: The Food Bank Market: A Place for Nutrition and Hope — *Transportation provided by van; meet in the SHSMO lobby at 8 am.*

The Food Bank Market is community-centered hub where we provide nutritious food at no cost to neighbors in Boone County, delivered with dignity, respect and choice. At The Market, families make choices that fit their dietary needs and household preferences. Beyond groceries, The Market brings together local partners and visiting services that address broader community needs: from healthcare offered on site by Compass Health to nutrition education offered in our demonstration kitchen to resource navigation for utilities, transportation and other support. During the visit you’ll see how our model is designed to promote long-term food security, community connection and equitable access to nutrition. You’ll also have a chance to observe how we operate, from the welcoming, grocery-store-style layout to the environment that helps every guest feel empowered.

Site Visit Option 3: CoMo Cooks Shared Kitchen — *Transportation provided by van; meet in the SHSMO lobby at 8 am.*

“CoMo Cooks Shared Kitchen is a commercial kitchen and food business incubator located on The Loop. We’re eliminating obstacles to entrepreneurship and making it easier for everyone to start and grow their food-based business.” At this site visit, you will learn about the mission of CoMo Cooks as you tour the kitchen space, see how it is managed with over 40 small businesses, and enjoy breakfast snacks from Latine vendors.

Conference Workshops at the State Historical Society of Missouri

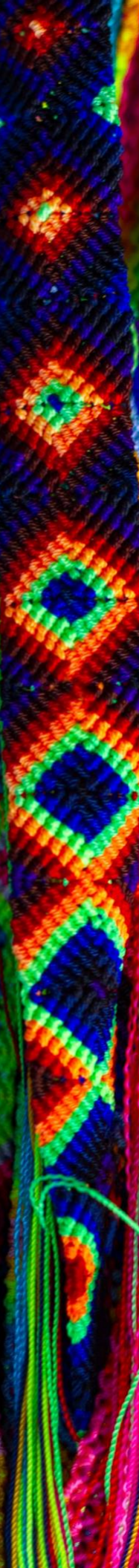
8:30-10:15 am **Breakfast and Workshops**

Breakout 1: Education and Youth Development - Workshop

Room: Cook Hall

Expresión in the Classroom: Storytelling Practices that Build Belonging and Agency

Iván Ramírez



Expresión is a storytelling fellowship that equips educators and community members to use personal narrative as a tool for belonging, learning, and leadership. This interactive session shares key findings from Expresión and demonstrates why storytelling matters for student engagement, identity affirmation, and community trust. Participants will take part in a facilitated story circle and practice simple, classroom-ready routines that support listening, empathy, and voice—without requiring participants to overshare. Attendees will leave with adaptable prompts, community agreements, and a mini toolkit of activities and resources to implement immediately across grade levels and settings.

Breakout 2: Health – Workshop

Room: Plassmeyer Classroom

Trauma-Informed Mental Wellness in Migrant Communities: Clinical Strategies That Heal

Julia López

This clinically focused workshop examines how migration-related experiences such as trauma, ongoing stress, and barriers to care affect mental health in Latine migrant communities. Participants will examine how factors at the individual, family, community, and system levels influence symptoms, help-seeking, and healing, and will practice adapting trauma-informed care to better fit clients’ cultural and lived experiences. The session provides practical tools to build trust and support mental wellness in real-world settings.

10:15-10:30 am Break

10:30-11:45 am Education and Youth Development Keynote Session

Room: Cook Hall

Towards a Rhizomatic Lens: Bolstering Student Voice through Youth Participatory Action Research with Minoritized Students at a Title I Elementary School by Dr. Van Lac

In recent years, scholars and practitioners in K12 settings have recognized the value of incorporating authentic student voice in schools. However, a population often undertheorized and overlooked in the student voice literature is elementary school students. This keynote presentation will examine a research project centering a form of student voice called youth participatory action research (YPAR) at a Title I elementary school in the Midwest. This study offers educators a pathway forward to (re)imagine how to support primary students in student voice initiatives such as YPAR through a rhizomatic lens that accounts for connections, ambiguity, and lines of flight.

11:45-12:00 pm Closing Words and Spark Change Award

Room: Cook Hall

12:00-1:00 pm Lunch and Mariachi

Room: Cook Hall

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US THIS YEAR!

Please come again next year Kansas City

SAVE THE DATE: June 2027

Don't forget!

Please take 2 minutes to complete this survey on Friday, June 5. Thank you!

Use this link or scan the QR code.

<https://forms.gle/BBggQxU13cFEMgXu5>

