



---

Posted on Mon, Mar. 14, 2005

## Career preparation en español

**Universities designing program to train marketing and communications professionals**

BY CHRISTINA HOAG  
[choag@herald.com](mailto:choag@herald.com)

Experts in Hispanic marketing are a hot commodity these days, so hot they can be hard to find.

Just ask Talent Zoo, an Atlanta recruiting firm for advertising and marketing executives.

"It's really reached a critical point," said Amy Hoover, vice president. "There are more opportunities than candidates available. I don't think there's been an emphasis of this in schools."

That may be starting to change. Hearing similar pleas from the corporate world, a handful of universities are recognizing Hispanic marketing and communications as fields in their own right and are training professionals specifically to work in the Hispanic market.

Last fall Miami's St. Thomas University launched a master's program in Hispanic communications arts; a year ago, Florida State University began a graduate certificate program and undergrad minor in Hispanic marketing communications. Southern Methodist University in Dallas started a course in Hispanic marketing within its MBA program last summer.

A few schools have long offered such classes, such as The University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio, which has an undergrad course, and the University of California at Los Angeles with its 18-year-old annual extension course.

Other schools such as the University of Miami and Florida International University have for years catered to Latin American students with Spanish-language journalism programs, but are now seeing a surge of interest from stateside Hispanics.

For the most part, though, Hispanic business training is a field relegated to the seminar circuit.

### **GROWING DEMAND**

"There is a huge need to train people in the Hispanic market," said Felipe Korzenny, founding director of FSU's Center for the Study of Hispanic Marketing Communications in Tallahassee. "But hardly any schools are doing this."

The big hurdle is convincing college deans that there's a need for it. Like many consumer products companies with their advertising budgets, Korzenny said, academics believe their general marketing courses cover all aspects of the subject and Hispanic issues are covered in sociology-type Hispanic studies programs.

"They seem to think that global marketing or an international program is sufficient to understand other cultures," agreed Edward Rincon, president of Dallas research firm Rincon & Associates and the teacher of SMU's course. "It's a tough battle to get them to diversify their curriculum."

Like Korzenny, Rincon said he met with many deans before finding one who would take a chance on a Hispanic marketing course.

### **HISPANIC CULTURE**

Hispanic marketing boosters say that general marketing courses don't address the idiosyncrasies of the Hispanic culture that affect consumer habits.

That's important, they say, because Hispanics are the fastest-growing demographic group in the United States.

Differences can range from use of English versus Spanish to ingrained attitudes such as a more fatalistic perspective on life to characteristics of market segments, such as Central Americans versus Caribbean islanders, for example.

Studying Latin American markets is not the same either, as U.S. Hispanics have a different life experience once they come to the United States than they had in their countries of origin or that their ancestors had.

That leaves a breach for specialized courses to fill, Korzenny and Rincon said.

### **DIFFERENT FOCUSES**

Rincon's course focuses more on market measurement and research, while the FSU program takes an interdisciplinary approach with courses in language, Latin American literature, anthropology and sociology as well as marketing.

Not all attempts at offering Hispanic marketing courses have been successful: The University of Texas at Arlington has offered such a class four times, but has only mustered sufficient enrollment to open it once, said spokesman Bob Wright.

Some universities are eyeing niches in the mushrooming Hispanic media industry.

That led to the launching of St. Thomas' Hispanic communication arts graduate program, which is taught mainly in Spanish, said Gloria Ruiz, chair of the Communication Arts, English and Humanities Department.

"There's a real need for bilingual communications people that goes beyond marketing," she said.

### **MULTIFACETED CLASSES**

The 15-month course trains students in everything from Spanish locution to Spanish written skills.

Both the University of Miami and Florida International University are noticing more Hispanic students who live in the United States in their Spanish-language journalism courses, a change from the '90s when enrollment primarily came from Latin American students.

Because of that, FIU is changing the focus of its curriculum -- from investigative reporting that students can use back home in Latin America to writing skills that prepare students for U.S. media jobs, said Mario Diament, the program's academic advisor.

### **FOREIGN STUDENTS**

"Because of immigration, we're getting more students such as lawyers from Colombia who can't practice law here, but they like to write," he said.

FIU last month added another Spanish-language program to its roster: a master's in political science.

Mónica Puig, editor of Latin Business magazine and founder of the 11,000-member Latin Business Club, said she signed up for St. Thomas' master's program to expand her career options as the Hispanic media industry grows.

"It's a wonderful learning experience," she said. ``It's an opportunity to learn Hispanic media in depth that you won't get anywhere else."