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## UMKC and Alianzas

By Laurence Kaptain, Guest Columnist

Since 1990, the Hispanic population in Missouri grew from 61,702 to 118,592, an increase of 92 percent. This presents challenges for many communities and service providers. It also presents opportunities for research projects that involve public health, economics, sociology/anthropology, business and education, just to name a few.

Recognizing the need to address community and immigrant concerns, UMKC's Institute for Human Development and University Outreach and Extension launched a three-year initiative: Alianzas, the Spanish word for alliances.

The ultimate goal of Alianzas is to enhance the ability of communities to collaborate with the growing immigrant Hispanic populations through a Hispanic, university and community partnership, using a community-based, co-learner approach. The proposed means to reach this goal include:

- Accessing established University faculty and community resources to address issues that arise from cultural differences within the community.
- Fostering effective communication and cultural diversity skills that are shared between the community and University Outreach and Extension (UO/E).
- Using the community-based, co-learner model to mutually define the needs and assets of the community as well as develop and implement a culturally sensitive strategic plan.

Alianzas is currently developing a statewide database on Latino issues, providing distance learning opportunities for Mexican nationals, and working with service providers in the northeastern area of Kansas City, where many Latinos live.

The Saint Louis Mexican Consulate recently relocated to Kansas City due to the emerging Hispanic population in the area. This well-staffed operation offers faculty and students portals of entry into databases, statistical information, and a wealth of information and experience from a knowledgeable and efficient staff of Mexican nationals.

Dr. Carl Calkins, director of the Institute for Human Development, asked me to be a Faculty Advocate for Alianzas. As a former Fulbright Scholar to Mexico I am more than glad to volunteer my time to assist faculty and students wishing access to this "new" population. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I may provide assistance for cooperative projects and synergies with Alianzas.

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