

**For Immediate Release**  
**March 3, 2011**

### **University of Florida Celebrates 80 Years of Latin American Studies**

Gainesville, FL – The University of Florida (UF) proudly celebrates 80 years of teaching, research and service in Latin American Studies. The anniversary will be marked by a series of public events from March 24-26, 2011. The events include the dedication of a historical marker on the Plaza of the Americas, an academic conference, a Latin American career symposium, several art and cultural exhibits, and a gala reception. Full details can be found online at:  
<http://www.latam.ufl.edu/News/conference.stm>.

At UF's commencement ceremonies on June 2, 1930, President John J. Tigert announced the creation of the Institute for Inter-American Affairs (IIAA), the first research center in the United States to focus on Latin America. Interest in Latin America at UF was, and still is, a natural result of Florida's geographical proximity to the Caribbean and South America, its Spanish heritage, and its large Spanish-speaking population.

The IIAA's inaugural conference was held in 1931 as part of the celebratory events marking the university's 25<sup>th</sup> year in Gainesville. UF's Plaza of the Americas was dedicated at the closing ceremony by planting 21 live oaks on the university quadrangle, one for each of the republics of the Americas at the time. Over the subsequent decades the IIAA evolved into what is known today as the Center for Latin American Studies. In 1961, UF's Latin American program was among the first in the country to be designated a National Resource Center by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) under its new Title VI program. It has been funded through Title VI ever since.

UF faculty members have been a force behind the development of the field of Latin American Studies nationally. The *Handbook of Latin American Studies*, the premier bibliography on the region, was published by the University Press of Florida from 1949-78. The inaugural meeting of the Seminar on the Acquisition of Library Materials (SALALM) was hosted by UF in 1954. Also, three UF faculty members have served as president of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), the largest professional association in the world for individuals studying Latin America.

The mission of the Center for Latin American Studies is to advance knowledge about Latin America and the Caribbean and its peoples throughout the hemisphere. With over 170 faculty from colleges

across UF, the Center is one of the largest institutions internationally for interdisciplinary research, teaching and outreach on Latin America, Caribbean, and Latino Studies.

Source: Hannah Covert, Executive Director, [hcovert@latam.ufl.edu](mailto:hcovert@latam.ufl.edu), 273-4712