

Latinx Cultural Center Name Change Report - May 2024





Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
History of the LCC.....	4
Latinx and Latine.....	4
Data Collection.....	5
Big Ten Context.....	8
Next Steps & Recommendations.....	9
Appendix A.....	10
Appendix B.....	12



Introduction

*In an effort to remain relevant and responsive to the students we serve and in recognition of the importance of marginalized communities to use the power of language to self-identify, the Latinx Cultural Center engaged in a study of its name over the 2023-2024 academic year. **As a result of student feedback as well as research in the field, we recommend updating the center's name to the Latine Cultural Center.** The report that follows details the history of the LCC, context about recent shifts in language, research on our Big Ten counterparts, and recommendations for implementing this change.*

History of the LCC

[In February of 2018](#), undergraduate students Josue Velazquez, Jonathan Godinez, Michelle Navarro, and Alondra Avitia, now alumni, connected at a social justice leadership retreat and began discussing Latinx issues on campus. The idea for a Latinx Cultural Center was inspired by the recent student activism happening on campus, which resulted in the establishment of the Black Cultural Center and the developing work for the APIDA Student Center. Students advocating for APIDA and Latinx spaces formed a temporary cross-cultural coalition to advocate for spaces while attending the Campus Climate Student Forum in spring 2018. Velazquez, Godinez, Navarro, and Avitia met on a weekly basis throughout fall 2018, facilitating town halls and discussions with their peers to seek input on the center. They also met with administration, such as the Assistant Director of the Multicultural Student Center and the Dean of Students at the time and attended many university-hosted events about establishing a center. At the end of spring 2018, the university agreed to establish the Latinx Cultural Center and APIDA Student Center in the North Mezzanine of the Red Gym. With an end goal of securing a permanent home for the LCC, students decided to label the location as a startup center. The LCC was opened in the fall of 2018, with the student activists who helped establish the LCC serving as its first interns. A year later, the first professional staff member was hired and started in the fall of 2019. Currently, the LCC operates with one professional staff member, and two interns, a programming intern, and the Latinx Heritage Month chair.

Latinx and Latine

In recent years, there has been an [ongoing conversation on campus and nationally](#) about the use of Latine versus Latinx. During this time, the LCC has received feedback from students asking to change the name from Latinx to Latine. In response, LCC staff have facilitated events on how students prefer to identify themselves.

During 2022 Latinx Heritage Month, the student-run planning committee facilitated a discussion titled, *Language as Expression*, which explored the way Latinx/e/a/o students preferred to use these terms to identify themselves. Then, in the fall of 2023, the LCC co-hosted an event in collaboration with Chican@ & Latin@ Studies, titled *What's In A Name: Latinx/e/a/o*. Chican@ & Latin@ Studies professors Dr. Aurora Santiago-Ortiz and Dr. Jorell Meléndez Badillo presented on the history of the terms Latinx and Latine. The professors explained that Latine was created to be a gender-neutral form of the word Latino, which was created by Latine queer, non-binary and feminist communities. However, they presented critiques that “the use of X does not flow as well in Spanish/Portuguese and disability justice activists point out the use of X can be unreadable in assistive devices.” In the discussion following the presentation, students shared how they preferred to identify themselves, with many stating they use the term Latine.

Numerous campus units and organizations are considering or have changed their names to Latine. Currently, the Chican@ & Latin@ Studies unit is exploring changing their name to use Latine in place of Latin@. The Latinx Academic Staff Association (LASA) changed the name of their student graduation from Latinx Graduation Ceremony, to Latine Graduation Ceremony in spring 2024. LASA is also in the process of changing from Latinx to Latine in their organization's name.

The largest Latine student organization on campus changed their name from the Latinx Student Union to the Latine Student Union in 2021. In an Instagram post announcing the change, they wrote, “The majority of our

members identify as Latine, and we want to use inclusive language that is not gendered but that also works for Spanish speakers. Our organization believes in ‘knowing better, doing better’, and we hope to encourage you all to do the same.”

Additionally, the Wisconsin School of Business Latine Affinity Group navigated a name change in Spring of 2021, after a student ambassador for the group advocated for the name to change from Latinx to Latine. Upon putting this proposition to a vote, the response from the student affinity group was “overwhelmingly in favor of [using] Latine” (Student ambassador from the WSB Latine Affinity Group).

Data Collection

The LCC collected data from its constituents and other Big Ten schools to help inform the decision to keep the Latinx or change to Latine. On March 11, 2024, a survey [Appendix A] was distributed to constituents via social media, the LCC e-newsletter, and physical fliers. Additionally, campus partners such as Chican@ & Latin@ Studies, and student orgs such as the Latine Student Union also shared the survey with their constituents. The survey closed one week later on March 18, 2024. In May 2024, a website review was conducted of Big Ten schools to determine what language is being used by these institutions. The findings of the survey and website review are detailed below.

Survey Results

When the *Latinx Cultural Center Name Change* survey closed, 126 individuals had completed it. Of these respondents, 112 were current students, and all but one of the students identified as Latinx/a/e/o, Chicanx/a/e/o, or Hispanic. The survey results were compiled and analyzed by two professional staff members of the MSC, Assistant Director Noreen Siddiqui and LCC Program Coordinator Natalie Ergas. The responses were coded into subthemes [Appendix B]. These subthemes were then grouped into overarching themes. One individual’s response could be coded for multiple subthemes, which is why the total number of comments is greater than the number of individuals who filled out the survey.

Overarching Themes

Themes	# of Comments*	# of Student Comments*
Supportive of changing to Latine	155 (77%)	142 (70%)
Neutral on the name change	20 (10%)	19 (9.4%)
Supportive of Latino	15 (7.4%)	6 (2.9%)
Negative of Latinx	9 (4.5%)	8 (4%)
Supports keeping name Latinx	2 (1%)	2 (1%)
Supportive of Hispanic	1 (.5%)	1 (.5%)

**Percentages are rounded to the nearest decimal*

The survey responses were overwhelmingly supportive of changing from Latinx to Latine. Out of the 202 individually coded comments, 155 (77%) were in support of changing the name, while 20 (10%) were neutral. A minority of the comments supported using Latino (15), keeping Latinx (2), or changing to Hispanic (1).

Comments in support of the name change cited several reasons for preferring Latine over Latinx or other terms. The most common reason was that the “e” in Latine is more linguistically suitable for Spanish and Portuguese in comparison to the “x” in Latinx (31). The term Latinx uses the “x” as it is pronounced in American English as opposed to the phonetic pronunciation in Spanish. In contrast, Latine utilizes the Spanish and Portuguese pronunciation of “e,” which aligns with gender-neutral nouns describing people such as “estudiante” that are already in common use (<https://elcentro.colostate.edu/about/why-latinx/>). These quotes from students illustrate this viewpoint:

“I think the new name is still inclusive of all identities, and it is an effective way to include the Spanish pronunciation. I think that the change from Latinx Cultural Center to Latine Cultural Center is moving in the right direction.” (Fourth year undergraduate student)

“Latine is the gender neutral form of the word I feel most comfortable using in speech, and I agree that it seems to fit the grammatical forms of the language better, and has good precedent in other gender neutral nouns.” (Graduate/Professional student)

The second most referenced reason in support of changing from Latinx to Latine was that it allows students to choose their own label and felt less “colonizing” (14). Respondents felt that Latine was created by Latine folks as opposed to Latinx which felt imposed by those not in community. These student testimonials exemplify this:

“[Latine] is also the version of the word I associate more with Latine people talking about ourselves, rather than others talking about us.” (Graduate/Professional student)

“The new name will show more ownership for what we stand [for]. Latine is more commonly used in actual communities and not just academic settings like Latinx usually is.” (First Year undergraduate student)

“The new name is more inclusive! It’s for for Latines to take control of their own identity and how they label themselves at this PWI” (Third Year undergraduate student)

The third most frequent argument to use Latine did not necessarily negate the use of Latinx. These responses promoted the use of Latine as inclusive for the LGBTQ+ community (7). As has been previously discussed, Latinx and Latine are both gender-neutral. For these individuals, it was important for the LCC to use a term that was gender-neutral to be inclusive of gender-queer and non-binary Latine folks. An additional 8 comments expressed a desire to use Latine, because it was “inclusive” but did not specify how it was inclusive. These quotes demonstrate the survey participants’ affirmation of Latine as affirming of LGBTQ+ identity:

“I feel that my identity as a genderqueer Latine is well represented by this marker!” (Second year undergraduate student)

"Changing the name to Latine would be most compatible with the way queer Spanish speaking communities see themselves. I feel Latinx has been co-opted for partisan politics and does not accurately reflect the Latine experience." (Graduate/Professional student)

Additionally, respondents preferred Latine over Latinx for accessibility reasons (6). Specifically, they pointed out that screen readers cannot read "Latinx," so it creates a barrier for visually impaired individuals who utilize screen reading devices. Similarly to those comments promoting a gender-neutral term, these comments stressed the importance of using Latine for its ability to be more inclusive than other terms:

"I support the potential shift from Latinx CC to Latine CC. The 'e' feels much more inclusive of gender non-conforming people, in addition to x not flowing as well in Spanish and having issues with legibility for hearing impaired folks." (Second year undergraduate student)

"The name [Latinx] is also impossible to read for us disabled community members and students that use screen readers. 'Latine' is better expressed with screen readers and is better aligned to the global majority for gender nonbinary labeling throughout Latin America." (Graduate/professional student)

Finally, the original student founders of the LCC participated in the survey. They expressed strong support for changing the name from Latinx to Latine, stating their support in the testimonials below. All four founders gave permission for their statements to be included in this report.

"The name [Latinx] was well suited for the time it was opened. Now, "Latine" seems more appropriate and inclusive. I think evolution of the name is good. It shows that students, staff, and community are being intentional and meaningful." (Michelle Navarro, alum and co-founder of the LCC)

"I believe at the time of its inception, the Latinx Cultural Center made sense to be as inclusive to all identities within the Latinx culture. Contemporarily, it feels a bit outdated and not in line with what is concurrent with research or the literature of Latine individuals. I don't have any concerns with the name change. As one of the co-founders of the LCC, I always knew that there would be change within the name, organization, and culture of the center, as it should be welcomed with the changing of the times of those students who inhabit and appreciate the space." (Jonathan Godinez, alum and co-founder of the LCC)

"The center was created to uplift and highlight the voices of Latine students at UW-Madison. If UW Latine students want the name change, then I agree and am 100% on board." (Alondra Avita, alum and co-founder of the LCC)

"I believe the LCC is headed in the right direction if we are consistently using our learning and adapting. I am 100% on board with the name change. I want everyone to feel represented and cared for in the space." (Josue Velazquez, alum and co-founder of the LCC)

Big Ten Context

All but one institution in the Big Ten Conference have a Latinx/a/e/o academic unit. Several had cultural or academic centers. There was a mixture of all of the terms ranging from Latino, Latina, Latinx and Latine being used. Within this context, UW-Madison would be a leader in using Latine for their cultural center.

Big Ten University	Latinx/e/a/o Center Date of Establishment	Affiliated Academic Unit	Additional University References to Latinx/e/a/o Students, Events, and Programs
Indiana University Bloomington	La Casa / Latino Cultural Center, est 1973	Latino Studies Department	"La Casa/Latino Cultural Center at IU Bloomington eases the transition to college for Latine students with academic support..."
University of Maryland	Latinx Cultural Center in progress	Latino/a Studies	Developing their cultural centers currently
University of Michigan		Latino/a Studies	
Michigan State University		Chicano/Latino Studies	
Ohio State University		Latinx Studies	Latine Student Success
Pennsylvania State University		Latina/o Studies	Latine Student Organization
Rutgers University			Center for Latino Arts/ Culture, Using Latine/x
University of Illinois	La Casa Cultural Latina, est 1974	Latina/Latino Studies	Black & Latinx Summit Latinx Heritage Month Latino Family Day
University of Iowa	Latino Native American Cultural Center, est 1971	Latina/o/x Studies	Latinx/a/o graduation
University of Minnesota	Mi Gente Latinx Cultural Center, est ?	Chicano & Latino Studies	
University of Nebraska		Latino & Latin American Studies	Mexican American Student Assoc.
Northwestern University		Latina & Latino Studies	Casa Hispana (student org)
Purdue University	Latino Cultural Center, est 2003	Latin American & Latino Studies	

Next Steps & Recommendations

The conclusive findings of the LCC constituent survey and the campus trend of shifting language to Latine support changing the Latinx Cultural Center's name to the Latine Cultural Center. This report recommends that the change be effective by the start of the fall 2024 semester. This update is necessary to reflect the overwhelming majority of views and wishes of Latine identifying students on campus, for whom the center was created. Changing the LCC's name recognizes the continually evolving nature of language and honors the history of student activism that led to the creation of the LCC in 2018. Additionally, moving to Latine aligns with the university's mission to create an inclusive environment that fosters belonging. The change to Latine should also be reflected in the heritage month title, because the LCC oversees the student planning committee for Latinx Heritage Month. This shift to Latine Heritage Month should also be effective for fall 2024.

In order to implement this modification to the name, the LCC team will work alongside the Student Affairs Communications and University Communications teams. This will include an informational segment on the LCC's website, updates to signage and the logo, and communication on the LCC's outreach channels. We anticipate that this work will be completed in time for the start of the school year in September.

Appendix A

Latinx Cultural Center Name Change Survey

“The LCC would like our constituents' feedback as we consider a potential name change. After reading the information below, please respond to the following questions.

Everyone has a preferred way to refer to themselves, and the LCC is considering renaming the center in a way that feels the most inclusive and welcoming to Latinx/a/e/o identifying students. We recognize that as languages evolve and as times change, so does the way students and the campus community prefer to identify themselves. In recent years, there has been a movement to go from using Latinx to Latine for a variety of reasons.

The use of Latinx has been “traced to online forums in the 1990s” as well as to other left and queer spaces (Aparicio, 2017, 385). However, critics state the use of X does not flow as well in Spanish/Portuguese and disability justice activists point out the use of X can be unreadable in assistive devices. (What's In A Name: Latinx/e/o/a, 12/5/23)

Latine is another term that people choose to use to identify themselves. “Latine is also a gender-neutral form of the word Latino, created by gender non-binary and feminist communities in Spanish-speaking countries. The objective of the term is also to remove gender from Spanish, by replacing it with the gender-neutral Spanish letter E, which can already be found in words like estudiante” (El Centro, Colorado State)”

Questions (with drop down answers)

- **First & Last Name**
- **Email (Wisc Email Preferred)**
- **Role at UW-Madison**
 - Students
 - Alumni
 - Staff
 - Faculty
 - Alumni
 - Community Member
- **If you are a current student, what year are you?**
 - First
 - Second
 - Third
 - Fourth
 - Fifth
 - Professional Student
 - N/A
- **Do you identify as Hispanic, Chicano/a/e/x or Latino/a/e/x?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Prefer Not To Respond
- **What are your thoughts on the current name, Latinx Cultural Center?**

- 
- Please share your thoughts on a name change from Latinx Cultural Center to Latine Cultural Center. Your response can address the following but is not limited to: Do you have concerns with the new name? Other thoughts?

Appendix B

Survey Subthemes

Themes
Supportive of changing to Latine
Neutral on the name change
Negative of Latinx
Supportive of Latino
Supports keeping name Latinx
Supportive of Hispanic

Patterns of Words/Phrases (Codes)	Student	Faculty/Staff	Alumni	Community	Total
Latine is good, supports the change	50	2	4	1	57
Latine better in Spanish/Portuguese	31	0	2	0	33
Latine is better than Latinx for gender neutral and queer folks	7	1	0	0	8
Don't have problem with Latine, but prefer it over Latinx	17	0	0	0	17
Negative view of Latinx and positive view of Latine	6	0	0	0	6
Accessibility concerns around the "x" in Latinx (screen readers)	6	0	0	0	6
Latine feel like choosing one's own label, feels less colonized	14	0	0	0	14
Latine is more inclusive	8	2	1	0	11
Prefers Latine or Latin* or Latin	3	0	0	0	3
Latine is more commonly used than Latinx in conversation	5	0	0	0	5
Neutral on name change	4	1	0	0	5
Only concern is if name change might cause confusion	1	0	0	0	1
Time devoted on the name change could be better spent elsewhere	1	0	0	0	1
Native speakers are the only ones who should be making this decision	1	0	0	0	1
Supports the change if Latine students want it	0	0	0	1	1
Latinx is not used outside academia	2	0	0	0	2
Latinx is outdated	0	2	4	0	6
Negative view of Latinx	11	0	0	0	11

Negative view of Latinx, Latine is okay, but prefers Latino	6	0	0	0	6
Negative view of Latinx and Latine. Prefers Latino	3	0	0	0	3
Prefers Latino, but Latine is okay	1	0	0	0	1
Prefers Latinx over Latine	2	0	0	0	2
Prefers Hispanic over Latine	1	0	0	0	1