

CAMBIO DE COLORES 2006 – PRESS RELEASE 2

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IMMIGRATION CONFERENCE

CAMBIO DE COLORES (CHANGE OF COLORS) 2006—LATINOS IN MISSOURI FIFTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: “BEYOND BORDERS”

“Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) - Latinos in Missouri” is an annual three-day conference that focuses on Latino immigration to the state in particular and the Midwest in general. It is the premier event focusing on the heartland’s most important demographic and community change of the last two decades. The goal of this conference is to contribute to the smooth and sustainable integration of the new population for the benefit of all the people in the state of Missouri.

Similar to other states of the heartland, the Latino population in Missouri has more than doubled in the past fifteen years. According to recent census data, Latinos or Hispanics comprise over 2.6 percent of Missourians, distributed not only in the metropolitan areas, but in every county of our state.

“Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors)—Latinos in Missouri: Beyond Borders” will take place from Wednesday April 19 to Friday April 21, 2006, at the Stoney Creek Inn, in Columbia, near the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. The conference expects to draw approximately 300 participants, including academic researchers and extension specialists, public and private service providers, grassroots organizations, staff from state and local government institutions, politicians, and newcomers themselves.

The main topics of the conference are: change and wellbeing; civil rights; education; health; and youth, families, and communities. Presentations and workshops will cover, among other topics, how to prepare teachers to educate the newcomers; educating Latinos to become leaders, entrepreneurs, and smart consumers; language barriers and how to overcome them; the role of Church organizations; healthcare disparities; family planning; understanding gang formation; immigration policies; and cultural competency.

The overall emphasis is translating knowledge into policy and the main objectives of the conference are to evaluate and assess how communities are reacting to the changes brought about by the presence of new Latino settlers in every region of the state; to discuss the multiple contributions—economic, social, and cultural—that this settlement of new Missourians is bringing to many communities and to the state as a whole; to share relevant scholarship and best practices, and identify growth opportunities and challenges that this demographic change brings to the state, its people, communities, businesses, and educational institutions; and to provide a forum to discuss these important and complex

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issues. The overall intention is to develop sustainable communities in which people coming from different cultures will be able to develop a harmonic coexistence for generations to come.

The conference chair is University of Missouri's Anne Dannerbeck-Janku, an economist in the School of Social Work. The Executive Coordinator is Domingo Martínez Castilla, of MU's Cambio Center. The conference planning committee includes more than thirty volunteers from state public and private institutions.

Plenary speakers will include Michele Waslin and Beatriz Ibarra, from the National Council of La Raza in Washington, D.C.; Commissioner D. Kent King, from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Iowa's Michele K. Yehieli, specialist on health disparities; Erika Ramirez, from the Kansas City Hispanic Economic Development Corporation; Ronelle Neperud, a Leadership specialist from Kansas; and Anna Williams Shavers, a Law professor from the University of Nebraska.

Special guests include Missouri Attorney General Jay Nixon, Columbia Mayor Darwin Hindman, UM System President Elson S. Floyd, MU Chancellor Brady Deaton, Provost Brian Foster, and other University of Missouri leaders.

Main sponsors are the University of Missouri System; the MU Office of the Chancellor, Office of the Provost, Vice Provost for International Programs & Faculty Development, Cambio Center, Hispanic and Latin American Faculty & Staff Association (HLAFSA); University of Missouri Extension Alianzas; in cooperation with the MU Conference Office.

External sponsorship has been received from the Monsanto Company, the Missouri Foundation for Health, Mercy Health Plans of Missouri, Saint Louis University, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For more information regarding the conference, please access the conference website: <http://www.cambiodecolores.org>