

Proposal # 1118

## ***Instructionally Related Activities Report Form***

SPONSOR: Jennie Luna  
PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT: Chicana/o Studies  
ACTIVITY TITLE: Chicana/Latina Retreat at the Santa Rosa Island  
DATE (S) OF ACTIVITY: March 22-24, 2019

Please submit via email to the IRA Coordinator along with any supporting documentation within 30 days after the activity.

### **A. ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

- (1) PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY;
  - (2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S) AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES?
  - (3) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE ACTIVITY?
  - (4) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE/WERE THE ACTIVITY'S WEAKNESSES?
  - (5) HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY FOR NEXT TIME?
  - (6) WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?
  - (7) WHAT ARE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ACTIVITY? ATTACH STUDENT EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH FERPA RESTRICTIONS YOU MUST REMOVE ALL PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE STUDENT INFORMATION)
  - 8) GIVE A SUMMARY OF EXPENSES FOR THE ACTIVITY (DO NOT INCLUDE ACCOUNTING STRINGS)
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### **B. ATTENDEE LIST- SUPPORTING DOCUMENT:**

In addition to the report form, *in a separate document*, please provide a list of participants that engaged in the instructionally related activity. This for IRA Committee reference only and will not be published on the IRA website. Include your name and the title of your IRA activity on the document.

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### **C.IMAGES FROM ACTIVITY:**

Please provide a few images in this document (or attached separately) that demonstrate student participation.

## **(1) PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY**

The Chicana Latina Retreat is geared towards student empowerment through political, cultural, environmental and social consciousness development. A three-day retreat held at the Santa Rosa Island Research Station (SRIRS), the Chicana Latina Retreat was held on March 22-24, 2019 and included 28 participants, including 25 students. It is worth noting that nearly all student participants indicated that they had never been to Santa Rosa Island previously and many indicated that they had never been exposed to outdoor activities or had been exposed to a remote location without the use of technology.

The goal of the activity was to create a safe, welcoming, and accepting environment for Chicana/Latina students, with the hope to create a space conducive to community interaction as well as self-reflection. Given the high numbers of Chicana/Latina students on the CI campus, the goal was to cultivate leadership and address specific issues that Chicana/Latina college students face. Some Chicana/o Latina Leadership characteristics we aimed to foster were: Strong cultural/ethnic identity, respect and love for the land/Tonantzin Tlalli/Mother Earth, Passion, Integrity, Respect, A sense of mission, Consistency, Support and development of all Chicanas/Latinas, Empowerment and Hermanidad. Specific goals of the overall activity included: providing students with knowledge of resources, support services, and a sense of community; to facilitate dialogue and development of relationships; develop strong, responsible, and committed leaders within the Chicana/o Latina/o community and allow for older students to pass on valuable information, experiences, and motivate others to assume an active role on campus.

The activity aimed to accomplish these goals through the design of specific workshops and activities that included large and small group assignments for individual and group reflection and discussion. Workshops were also held on community building and team and community building workshops including a Power Circle workshop, Group Agreements workshop and Constructivist Listening and Community Building workshop. Other workshops were held on identity, leadership development, body image and self-esteem, as well as small group work and activities that fostered collaboration and growth. Specific discussions and topics were held related to identity, community advocacy and need, review of sustainability topics related to caring for and protecting Tonantzin Tlalli/Mother Earth in combination with the focus and work with SRIRS and opportunities for self-care and personal reflection including hikes, optional Sunrise ceremonies to honor the earth and indigenous ancestors of the land and optional Sunrise yoga to connect health and well-being to sense of identity and community.

## **(2) HOW DID THE ACTIVITY RELATE TO A COURSE(S) AND/OR LEARNING OBJECTIVES?**

**Chicana/o Studies 335: Chicana Feminisms** - The course details the history of Chicana Feminist Thought and addresses issues of gender, sexuality, spirituality, sexism, homophobia, and examines the leaders of critical Xicananisma. This activity worked to extend the learning of community building not only among themselves as students but additionally between faculty and staff.

To build on the design of this course, a session at the retreat was held on reviewing and exploring identity, including Chicana Feminism, hermanidad and cultura or culture. The retreat also aimed to provide students with a sense of community as well as to facilitate dialogue and development of relationships. This was not only accomplished throughout the entire activity but was also specifically addressed with the panel of Chicana/Latina role models that actively sought to foster this learning.

**Chicana/o Studies 343: Health Issues in the Latina/o Community** - This course specifically examines our relationship the land and Indigenous food & plant ways. The opportunity to interact with SRIRS with this activity sought to expand student knowledge of natural and cultural resource patterns and processes, develop interdisciplinary collaborations, and weave together the work of the research community. This was done through a Chicana Indigenous perspective on this trip with a focus to engage students with deeper understandings of Indigenous relationships to land and the environment. This was accomplished through discussions related to the sustainability of resources, ecological needs for sustainability particularly in the context of Santa Rosa Island and its unique features. The experiential aspects of this included a guided ranch tour and Cherry Canyon hike, beach walks, observing sunrise and moonrise, stargazing, and identifying flora and fauna.

### **(3) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE STRENGTHS OF THE ACTIVITY?**

On a whole, the retreat provides a unique space for students to build on course work while exploring issues on Chicana feminism, complexities of identity and gender roles/expectations with the specific opportunity to do so in a safe and open atmosphere. Participant feedback both post-activity and at the close of the activity and activity debrief has expressed this is one of the greatest strengths of the activity.

Beyond their individual experience, another key strength of the activity is the sense of community that is built throughout the retreat. Beginning with shared stories from the facilitators, engaged and authentic group discussions as well as community building in small group discussions, bonds across student participants were clearly established and built throughout the weekend. In fact, students repeatedly indicated a strong desire to remain connected to one another after the activity that resulted in the students themselves creating a group text in order to remain in contact with one another. As a direct result of this feedback from participants, activity facilitators opted to build in an additional gathering of the program participants that was held on April 22, 2019 on the CSUCI campus. The focus of this time was to continue the sense of community that was established at the

retreat, but also to foster continued links to campus resources as well as continued themes of mentorship and leadership.

On a whole, students stated that their participation in the retreat not only significantly impacted their life, but even cited the retreat as a life-changing event. Chicanas/Latina participants clearly cultivated meaningful relationships with experienced students and facilitators further increasing their navigational capital at CI, supported each other by providing consejos when appropriate, conversed about political identities and accomplished physical feats they didn't know they were capable of doing. The benefits of this retreat are insurmountable and ultimately support successful college and community navigation for Chicanas/Latinas at CI.

#### **(4) WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ARE/WERE THE ACTIVITY'S WEAKNESSES?**

Overall, there were few weaknesses of either the retreat or any component of the overall activity. One minor weakness is related to the limited number of participants directly related to the capacity of SRIRS. Participants repeatedly expressed that they wished that many others could participate in or undergo a similar experience. An additional weakness of the activity is related to the timeframe of the activity. Many participants expressed a desire to have continued or ongoing participation. Although, as a direct result of this feedback, we did embed an additional gathering, students continue to express a desire to continue the relationships established.

#### **(5) HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE THIS ACTIVITY FOR NEXT TIME?**

There is a lot of interest in attending this activity, however, we did experience some last-minute cancellations. Many of the students that applied also indicated that they had conflicts related to work or other personal commitments. We would like to improve upon how we confirm with participants, so we are able to take full advantage of every ticket and every available housing slot at SRIRS. Additionally, follow up meetings and communication after the event is concluded is an opportunity to improve on cultivating a sustained impact of the program and activity.

#### **(6) WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PROCESS?**

There is a great need for spaces that foster empowerment for Chicanas/Latinas. The student participants were overwhelmingly responsive to the design of the overall retreat and spoke to the transformative nature of the retreat in terms of their own self-identity, sense of empowerment, connection to their community and Mother Earth.

Additionally, it was impressive at how self-sustaining the retreat was due to the willingness of the participants. Participants demonstrated a strong willingness at the maintaining a team atmosphere and collectively attended to the needs of the group

related to meals, meal preparation, cleaning of communal spaces and creating/facilitating inclusive activities from board games, to hikes, to small group beach walks and so forth. In this, it was clear that genuine community and care was established by the group.

**(7) WHAT ARE STUDENT RESPONSES TO THE ACTIVITY? ATTACH STUDENT EVALUATIONS OR ASSESSMENTS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH FERPA RESTRICTIONS YOU MUST REMOVE ALL PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE STUDENT INFORMATION)**

Please see attached student evaluation summary information from a Qualtrics post-event survey.

**(8) GIVE A SUMMARY OF EXPENSES FOR THE ACTIVITY.**

The overall funding request for the event was originally \$7,860. Funds were expended in the following areas: in travel costs associated with participant travel by boat (Island Packers Cruises) in the amount of \$2,704.00, overnight fees associated with participants staying at the Santa Rosa Island's Research Stations in the amount of \$140.00 and costs associated with food and supplies, \$1,524.32. Final activity expenses totaled \$4,241.32.

**B. ON SEPARATE DOCUMENT, PLEASE ATTACH ATTENDEE LIST (PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFO REMOVED)**

Please see attached student attendee list.

**C. PLEASE INCLUDE UP TO 6 IMAGES IN THIS DOCUMENT TO DEMONSTRATE STUDENT PARTICIPATION (or attached as a separate document)**





California State  
University

# INSTRUCTIONALLY RELATED ACTIVITIES

C H A N N E L  
I S L A N D S









**Chicana/Latina Retreat to Santa Rosa Island**  
**Dr. Jennie Luna**

**Attachment B: ATTENDEE LIST**

**Student Participants:**

1. Zulma Barrera
2. Alondra Bautista
3. Odalys Cardenas
4. Estrella Carrillo Arredondo
5. Estefani Cervantes
6. Diana Del Rio
7. Sandra Escalera
8. Yenis Gonzalez
9. Mariah Kelley
10. Alondra Lazaro Gonzalez
11. Maria Lopez-Garcia
12. Rebecca Marquez
13. Katherine Martinez
14. Luz Martinez
15. April L. Navarro
16. Yesenia Olmos
17. Katherine Parada
18. Xenia Plascencia
19. Alba Quintanilla
20. Leticia Robles Lozano
21. Jessica Rodriguez
22. Jossimar Tapia
23. Sarah Teniente
24. Alejandra Vargas
25. Miriam Valencia

**Staff/Faculty Facilitators:**

26. Jennie Luna
27. Veronica Montoya
28. Monica Rivas

Connecting Outdoor Experiential Learning, *Testimonio*,  
and Communitas as Complimentary Pedagogies for Success

Examining The  
Santa Rosa Island Research Station  
2019 CSUCI Chicana/Latina Retreat

Tommee McMakin  
EduChs 349  
Spring 2019

My Capstone research was designed to examine Santa Rosa Island Research Station (SRIRS) visitor experiences to find out the scope of their cultural resource knowledge in order to create bilingual educational tools for SRIRS. These tools will convey to visitors the importance of island resources, why their protection is necessary and ways to ensure preservation. Methods used to collect data included semi-structured interviews, structured qualitative surveys and participant observation with the 2019 Chicana/ Latina Retreat. However, the collection of data was not the only outcome of my time on the island with thirty other Latinas. I observed emotional bonding, critical discourse, discussions of identity politics and *hermandad*<sup>1</sup>. This paper will connect outdoor experiential education, *testimonio* and creating *communitas* as successful pedagogies for Chicana/Latina success at CSUCI.

### *Background*

The Chicana/Latina Retreat (CLR) was held March 22-24, 2019 at the SRIRS. Participants included three CSUCI staff facilitators, 24 students and SRIRS coordinator, Aspen Coty. Intentions of the gathering included student empowerment, creating a conducive space for *communitas* and self-reflection, cultivating leadership skills and addressing specific issues that Chicanas/Latina college students face. Organizers hoped to foster strong cultural/ethnic identity, respect and love for the land, a sense of support, consistency and personal development.

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<sup>1</sup> sisterhood

Activities, workshops, guided hikes, breakaway groups, assigned group tasks and free social time were implemented and supported depending on the desired outcomes. Goals included:

1. Providing students with knowledge of resources, support services, and a sense of community.
2. Facilitating dialogue and development of relationships.
3. Allowing for older students to pass on valuable information, experiences, and motivate others to assume an active role on campus.
4. Developing strong, responsible, and committed leaders within the Chicana/o Latina/o community.

Outdoor experiential activities included a guided ranch tour and Cherry Canyon hike, beach walks, observing sunrise and moonrise, stargazing, and identifying flora and fauna. Additionally, each facilitator gave a personal *testimonio*, invited personal questions and engaged in an authentic and meaningful discussion with the group. And finally, *communitas* was observed in small and large groups, during meal preparation, after a particularly difficult hike, and throughout the entire weekend as bonds strengthened. It is worth noting that 25 of the 27 participants were on Santa Rosa for the first time and many had never been “camping” in such a remote place off the grid. This offers a unique opportunity for bonding as the women acquired new skills and faced new challenges together.

Each day of the gathering, one facilitator gave their *testimonio* to the entire group about a topic of their own choosing. These shared experiences served to humanize and equalize everyone in the room and further trust building. Duncan-Andrade (2009) discusses the concept of Socratic



hope as a mechanism for establishing solidarity with students and cultivating deeper relationships. By creating these personal connections via *testimonio*, facilitators show they culturally reflect their students and make themselves available as sources of inspiration and knowledge. These resources are essential to Latina students' educational success (Duncan-Andrade 2009).

Additionally, facilitators making themselves available to students serves to create connections for students with university programming which helps them to form networks, find support, increase social capital and feel validated as Latina students (Gloria and Castellanos 2012). Many of the students asked the facilitators questions about their experiences then relayed these conversations back to their own personal experiences. All three facilitators spoke about being a first generation college student. This served to be the largest commonality amongst the group and many participants spoke of their aspirations to attend college despite barriers which directly reflects Yosso's (2005) concept of aspirational capital. Additionally, collective connections are created with *testimonio* as an impetus for opening discussion furthering cultural capital within the group as well. These *testimonios* serve as a source of strength for students who experience a range of emotions and experience confidence dips as they navigate CI.

One exercise which furthered this acknowledgement of similarities and differences amongst participants involved responding to a list of identifiers involving class, gender, abilities, family dynamics and life experiences. This exercise would not have been possible or as effective had it not been for the facilitators putting themselves in a vulnerable place to share with students which has the potential for creating lasting loving relationships. According to Duncan-Andrade, (2009) "At the end of the day, effective teaching relies most heavily on one thing: deep and

caring relationships.” These relationships were further expanded upon as bonding occurred during a logistically and culturally important time during the retreat, meal preparation.

Each meal assigned a group to prepare food, and a group to do dishes and clean. I have been to the island multiple times with groups, and meal preparation can be challenging depending upon group dynamics and kitchen experience. This was not the case during the retreat. I would argue that each woman brought from their personal funds of knowledge a working understanding of food preparation and collective organization. This was clearly seen as a group of 8 women worked together to make posole, which to my knowledge, had never been made at the station before. In order to accomplish this task, they established trust, communicated effectively, and visibly enjoyed the process as music played and feelings of *communitas* were shared via multiple languages and laughter.

I view preparing posole together in a university field station within a national park as an act of solidarity and resistance, as our group occupied and celebrated our community in a space that has not always been available to us. Anzaldua states (1987), “There are more subtle ways that we internalize identification, especially in the forms of images and emotions. For me food and certain smells are tied to my identity, to my homeland.” The Chicana experience consists of a liminal identity and navigating higher education for the first time adds an extra layer to that liminality as we learn to navigate a new space. Connections made in the kitchen and over a meal provide a platform for developing coping skills and according to Gloria and Castellanos (2012) “The accessibility to similar race and culture peer groups has been found to help students make sense of their educational environment and to develop survival skills.”

The Cherry Canyon trail is 4.1 miles long and climbs approximately 1,000 feet in elevation. It is considered by the National Park Service to be a moderately strenuous trail. Participants' hiking skills and previous experience ranged from very familiar to none at all. The hike is designed to be taken individually as the trail is narrow and the coordinator and myself paced each person approximately thirty feet away from the person in front of them. Hikers are encouraged to remain silent, observe their surroundings and be mindful of their thoughts. Hikers were also reassured that although they may at one point perceive themselves to be alone, they were in fact not as I brought up the rear of the hike and could guide anyone through if they needed assistance. Approximately one-third of the way into the hike, the ascent through the canyon begins and at this point, hikers may have lost sight of anyone ahead of them or behind them.

Due to the Spring rains, the landscape was bursting with flowers and water could be heard running in a creek. As you come around a corner halfway into the hike, you can see the final ascent in the distance and there are usually the leaders of the line making their way up the mountain. This perspective can be very intimidating and discouraging. The first time I hiked this trail, I was going through chemotherapy and the hike was strenuous but beautiful and I was committed to completing it. I remember when I saw that mountain and the line of tiny people hiking up it, I was convinced I was in over my head and broke down. I also knew I was past the point of no return and in order to complete the task, forward was the only way. I took ten steps at a time then a break and continued this way until I reached the top. I shared this story with a few of the others when they asked me about the hike. I told them it could be perceived as too much, but just take one step at a time and you will eventually get to the top. And, we all did.

We reached the top of the marine terrace overlooking the ocean with Santa Cruz to the East and the sun beginning its descent in the West. Many of the hikers were taking photos together, laughing, smiling and talking about what they observed on the hike. We circled up and each went around sharing our experience. Hikers talked about their phenomenological observations and feelings of gratitude. One hiker cried as she expressed feeling overwhelmed by the sense of accomplishment that she felt. She said, “I saw that mountain and I thought, ‘No way!’ And, I thought of Tommee’s story and just took one step at a time and here I am. I didn’t know I could do this.” This powerful moment reflects the overarching message of this activity. When we come together and share our stories, we remind each other that we are resilient, we are capable, and we persist together.

At the end of the weekend, one last exercise involved another large group circle where each person qualified their weekend experience in one word. Some responses included, “connected”, “grounded”, “loved”, “life-changing”, “confident”, and “inspired.” I believe the combination of engaging in outdoor experiences connecting students to the land and to each other increases a sense of self, improves confidence and strengthens relationships. Chicanas/Latina participants cultivated meaningful relationships with experienced students and facilitators further increasing their navigational capital at CI, supported each other by providing *consejos* when appropriate, conversed about political identities and accomplished physical feats they didn’t know they were capable of doing. The benefits of this retreat are insurmountable and ultimately support successful college and community navigation for Chicanas/Latinas at CI.



## References

- Anzaldúa, G. (1987). *Borderlands = la frontera : the new mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute.
- Duncan-Andrade, J. (2009). Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(2), 181-194.
- Gloria, A. M., & Castellanos, J. (2012). Desafíos y Bendiciones. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 11(1), 82-99.
- Yosso, T. J. (2013). Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicana/Chicano Educational Pipeline.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69-91.