

## Latin Americans learn about U.S. institutions at UCSD seminar held from June 24 to August 2

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### LATIN AMERICANS LEARN ABOUT U.S. INSTITUTIONS AT UCSD SEMINAR

Twenty-five Latin American policymakers, scholars and journalists gathered at the University of California, San Diego this summer to learn about United States institutions and public policies. The Third Annual Seminar in U.S. Studies, held from June 24 to August 2, included lecture and discussion sessions on topics ranging from ethnic and racial politics in California to the abortion rights movement and the savings and loan crisis.

"The Summer Seminar provides a unique opportunity for Latin American policymakers, scholars and journalists to become immersed in cutting-edge research on U.S. political and economic systems," said Cathryn Thorup, director of studies and programs for the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies. "They will return to their own countries prepared to use this knowledge to develop U.S. studies programs, to carry out research, and to inform and guide government policymaking."

For seminar participant Angelica Ocampo, a political scientist who is helping to guide the Columbian government in its struggle toward democracy, invaluable knowledge was gained which she hopes to apply to aid the country's political reform efforts. "In Columbia, we have adopted a new constitution which is our step toward a new democracy. This seminar helped me to understand exactly how democratic institutions can and cannot function and how we can best reform our political and economic institutions to embrace the many fragmented groups in our country."

Seminar participant Eduardo Baca-Cuenca, who analyzes U.S. policy and events for Mexico's Foreign Ministry, benefited from the sessions by gaining better insight into the thinking of U.S. policymakers.

"Some of the discussions have helped to give me a new perspective on certain American policy issues which will help me directly in doing my job," said Baca-Cuenca. "In my work, I'm trying to shed light on why certain U.S. policies are adopted and I attempt to explain certain developments in American society that could impact U.S.-Mexican relations. For example, the evolution of Latino politics in California is something we are watching very closely. To hear U.S. experts give their perspectives on this political development provided me with an invaluable context for understanding urban politics in America."

Dora Gallardo Calva, who teaches at the Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas in Mexico, said the seminar helped to increase her understanding of what U.S. scholars think about America and how they use different methodologies to try to teach these concepts to students.

"There is a relatively recent trend to study the United States in our country," said Calva. "Because of this fact, along with the proliferation of institutes that study the U.S. and its policies, it is extremely helpful for teachers in Mexico to understand how U.S. faculty perceive American political and economic issues, and the methods they use to teach students about American public policy."

The seminar participants this year represented seven Latin American countries -- Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Columbia and Argentina. The sessions, which featured informal discussions with guest experts, documentary films, and special training in research methods, were taught by UCSD and invited faculty from other campuses.

The Third Annual Summer Seminar was sponsored by UCSD's Center for U.S.- Mexican Studies and the American Political Institutions Project. The seminar was made possible by grants from the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Fulbright Program, the University of California Consortium on Mexico and the United States, and general support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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