

Jayson Cabrera Leads Student Groups Advocating for Latino Culture at Stockton University

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Galloway, NJ - Jayson Cabrera grew up near Perth Amboy in Keasbey, N.J., and has made his mark as a force for Latino culture at Stockton University by not giving up.

Now a junior, he is president of the Latin American Students Association, but he has been working on developing a group that would be a strong voice for Latino students since he first arrived at the Galloway, N.J. university.

He signed up for a group known as Los Latinos Unidos when he was a freshman, but quickly found out that “the club only had a departing president and a handful of unmotivated club members. Instead of leaving when I had the chance, I saw this as my opportunity to step up to a leadership role and start my mark on Stockton.”

After a number of ups and downs, in which the club lost most of its board due to academic and financial pressures, Cabrera decided to try again.

“I kept getting asked if I was still part of ‘that Spanish club,’ and if I still had meetings,” he said. “After talking to some mentors and upperclassmen as well as some other experiences, I decided that LLU needed to be brought back to our campus, but with some modifications. In a few months’ time, the club underwent a name change, a perception change, and a change of values. Thus LLU was reborn but this time as the Latin American Student Association.

“All in all, my vision for LASA is to give the Stockton community a place to preserve, showcase, and expand our Latino culture,” said Cabrera. He feels he is helping to establish an organization that will continue growing, since the leadership team is made up of freshman and sophomores, with him as president.

The club holds programs including Fiesta Night and Beyond the Stereotype. While Fiesta Night is focused on the fun and flavorful side of Latino culture with food and dance, Beyond the Stereotype is an interactive theatre experience of the negative and positive views society has of Latino men and women, he said.

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The group also has done community service projects such as helping families with young children at Atlantic City's Rescue Mission.

Cabrera is also involved in advocating for Latino culture as vice president/treasurer and community service chair for the Zulu Chapter of Lambda Sigma Upsilon Latino Fraternity Inc. This national fraternity's values "are values that I strive to incorporate and exemplify in my life each day," he said

"Academic excellence is a value I've always worked at, but becoming a brother of LSU transitioned that to being inducted into Order of Omega, an honor society for Greek Life honoring leaders and high achievers," said the student who has made the Dean's List four out of five semesters so far.

"Being a role model to the community is another goal I adopted very quickly," he continued. "I have been able to show students that success is very attainable. The goal that has influenced me the most is Cultural Awareness as well as Cultural Diversity. It brought me to look deeper into my own culture and even strengthened some relationships with elders in my family," he said.

"My fraternity is one of the most diverse in the nation, containing representation from over 50 different ethnicities. In translating this goal to my own goals, LASA came to mind," he noted. "I want LASA to be a culturally aware place for people of different countries to celebrate something that they have in common, a passion for the Latino culture."

Cabrera credits his godmother, Keyla Suero-Alleyne, as "a guiding light throughout my life. Being that my mother's language is not English, it was difficult for her to help me through various things growing up," he explained. "So to have someone like Keyla in my life has been a great push for me to achieve the goals I set for myself.

"Around the time of eighth grade, I came out to my mother, which wasn't easy nor did I have the happy ending that some do," he said. "Keyla was the person who helped me through those rough years that followed, and to be honest I don't think I would have made it this far without her support."

Cabrera is active in many other aspects of college life, including serving as an Admissions ambassador, a resident assistant for Residential Life, public relations chair for Greek Council and student adviser for the Unified Cultural Greek Council, which he co-founded.

He is also an inductee of Alpha Lambda Delta (First Year Honor Society), Psi Chi (Psychology Honor Society), and Order of Omega (Greek Leadership Society). Previously he worked for the School of Social and Behavioral Science as a Teaching Assistant, for the Stockton phon-a-thon working with alumni, and served on a committee for Stockton Day of Service, Spring of 2014.

Two assistant directors in Stockton's Office of Student Development have mentored him, influencing his career goals.

"Lauren Wilson is the Student Affairs professional that I hope to be one day," Cabrera said. Dianne Stalling, the adviser to the LASA, "has made a great impact on my Stockton experience. She has helped cultivate me into the student leader I am today and for that I am grateful," he said.

His advice to other students?

"Never let someone tell you that you're too involved or doing too much for your campus if your goal is to leave a mark."

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