M.E.Ch.A (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán)  
3rd Annual Calmecac Izcalli Student Conference  
Project Lead: Sayda Hernandez  
Funded for $4,700

M.E.Ch.A will be staging the 3rd Annual Calmecac Izcalli Student Conference on April 15-18, 2012 on campus. The conference will be a weekend long event and will have two main components: the postsecondary informational and the cultural awareness component. The conference’s theme is “Revolutionizing Our Minds, One at a Time.” More than one hundred and fifty high school students from across Washington State will attend the conference. The participating students will attend various educational sessions as well as be exposed to educational opportunities at Eastern Washington University. The educational sessions will be presented by EWU students and staff as well as M.E.Ch.A college students from other chapters in the state. The conference will mainly be focused on addressing our theme, nonetheless there will be other cultural and educational topics covered. In part, the conference will serve as an outreach effort beneficial to Eastern Washington University’s academic programs to recruit prospective Latino/a students. Thus, this project compliments the student Recruitment and Retention Grant Category.

Participating high school students will benefit from the conference in several ways. First of all, they will be attending educational sessions in which they will learn about higher education, culture, and community issues. We hope that the cultural sessions will help affirm a strong self-identity, one which will aid in their later success. Also, during the conference students will have the opportunity to meet individuals with similar life experiences that may answer their questions concerning postsecondary education. Overall, high school students will have a taste of the college experience and be given the opportunity to network for future reference. The conference will also include informational sessions open to Eastern students. This will provide both the high school participants and Eastern students with information on available contact resources at EWU (i.e. Chicano Education Program, Academic Support Center and Admissions). The conference process (planning and execution) will help enhance our members’ planning, leadership, and communication skills. We will be responsible in developing proposals (budget, grant, contractual, etc), as well as organizing conference sessions and coordinating supportive committees. We will also be promoting the conference and obtaining support from departments on campus.

Latino/as are the largest minority in Washington State, comprising 11.2% (753,148) of the population. This is a growing group and it is estimated to continue growing not only in the state of Washington but in the rest of the nation as well. Latino/a student enrollment in Washington state schools have increased greatly as well: 250% percent in the past twenty years. Latino/as comprise 12% percent of the Washington state student body. However, only 54% of these Latino/as students graduate on time – the average percentage of completion rate was 70% among students. From these statistics we can see that Latino/as are suffering in high school completion, preventing this group from continuing to post secondary education.

Only a select few of Latino/as high school graduates continue their education to a four-year university. In 2004, only 15% of Washington’s Latinos continued their education to the post
secondary education level. Finally, Latino/a students only represented 3.6% of the Washington undergraduate student enrollment in Fall 2004. This post secondary education enrollment level among Latino/a students has remained relatively constant within the past years. EWU M.E.Ch.A. would like to help raise the enrollment number of Latino/a students in four year universities, specially EWU. We hope that the ideas and resources presented will aid Latino/a students in continuing their education to the university level. Increasing this group’s enrollment in higher education, is the first step in developing successful Latino/a professional’s in Washington State.

(U.S. Census Bureau 2010, 2006 Washington State Latino/Hispanic Assessment, State of Washington Commission on Hispanic Affairs)

Our conference will help break down potential barriers, which are preventing Latino/a high school students from pursuing higher education. Through the educational sessions, college fair, speakers, and the personal interaction with other college students, we hope to provide the students with the motivation to not only graduate from high school but to also further their education. Current college students, guest speakers, and/or faculty and staff will serve as role models to which the participating students can look up to.

- 150 high school Latino/a students will register and participate in the conference
- All conference participants will attend the college information fair. To keep track of the numbers, we will be registering them in the entrance of the event location (possibly the Multi-Purpose Room).
- Conference participants will attend “college going” informational sessions. In order to make sure that all the students attend “college going” sessions, we will have one common theme for each hour of sessions.
- At least 40% of the students will apply to EWU. We will emphasize a session in which the students will be walked through the EWU Admissions application process. The students will leave the session with a completed first portion of the EWU application (the transcripts and personal statement will be sent at a later time).