Casa de las Americas Annual Report

Academic Year 2025-2026

Prepared by Lorenley Baez

Director, Casa de las Americas





Message from the Director

This year marked a period of significant growth and institutional advancement for Casa de las Américas. Through strategic partnerships and increased campus engagement, Casa broadened its impact, reaching more students and expanding opportunities for cultural exploration, mentorship, leadership, and community building.

A notable achievement during the year was the integration of CREAR Futuros into Casa de las Américas. Following its transition to Casa after operating elsewhere at the College during its first two years, efforts were focused on strengthening the program's infrastructure through enhanced mentor recruitment, onboarding, training, and professional development. These improvements have better positioned mentors to support student success while establishing a stronger foundation for the program's continued growth.

This progress occurred despite challenges, including the loss of grant-funded support resulting from shifts in federal funding priorities that affected institutions of higher education nationwide. Nevertheless, student participation and demand for Casa's programs continued to grow, reflecting the importance of culturally responsive programming and student-centered support services.

Looking ahead, Casa remains committed to expanding its impact through innovation and collaboration. Priorities include developing faculty-led initiatives that connect academic learning with experiential opportunities, strengthening partnerships with community-based organizations, nonprofit agencies, and elected officials throughout Queens, and enhancing the training and professional development of student employees. As participation continues to increase, we will also explore opportunities to reimagine the Casa space to better meet the evolving needs of our students and community.

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report reflect the collective contributions of our students, faculty, staff, community partners, and supporters. Together, we are advancing a more connected, inclusive, and impactful future for Casa de las Américas.

Lorenley Báez
Director, Casa de las Américas
LaGuardia Community College, CUNY

Executive Summary

Mission

Casa de las Américas advances student success by providing opportunities that foster the educational, professional, and leadership development of Latinx, Latin American, and Caribbean students. We achieve this through targeted academic support, high impact programs, culturally informed mentoring, and partnerships that expand pathways to research, career development, and community engagement.

Four-Year Impact Overview (FY 22-FY26)

Metric	Results			
	Fall 2025-Spring 2026	Fall 2024-Spring 2025	Fall 2023-Spring 2024	Fall 2022-Spring 2023
Students Served	2750	2130	934	201
Events Hosted	60	53	44	29
Casa Ambassadors	5	8	8	4
CREAR Futuros Mentors	4	4	0	0
CREAR Futuros Mentees	64	60	0	0
Community Partners	116	10	0	0
Faculty Collaborations	9	6	0	0

Over the past four academic years, Casa de las Américas has significantly expanded its reach, programming, and collaborative network. Student participation, events, mentorship opportunities, and faculty collaborations have grown steadily over this period, reflecting the Center's expanding role and impact across the College. CREAR Futuros data is reflected beginning in 2024-25, following its integration into Casa.

Partnerships with faculty across a wider range of academic disciplines have enabled Casa to engage more students and expand its programming from a primarily New York City-focused perspective to a broader exploration of Latino cultures, histories, communities, and contributions across the Americas and beyond. During this period, Casa also expanded its network of community partnerships, cultivating relationships with 116 community partners and 9 faculty collaborators that enhanced access to mentorship, leadership development, cultural enrichment, career exploration, and student support resources.

The decrease in Casa Ambassador positions in 2025-26 reflects the conclusion of grant-funded support through El Camino and Ledger 9 because of broader shifts in federal funding priorities affecting colleges and universities nationwide. This reduction was not related to Casa's performance or student demand, both of which continued to increase throughout the reporting period.

Budget & Resource Development

	Fund Source	Total
External	USDA	$ 9,750.00
	LGBTQIA+ Archives	$ 10,000.00
Casa de las Americas	LaGuardia Foundation	$ 40,000.00
	Ledger 9	$ 25,000.00
	El Camino	$ 4,000.00
	College Association	$ 13,170.00
CREAR Futuros	Mentors Stipends	$ 45,600.00
	Mentors Activities & Supplies	$ 6,000.00
	Liaison	$ 15,000.00
Total		**$ 168,520.00**

During the reporting period, Casa de las Américas secured **$168,520** in institutional, external, and grant funding to support cultural programming, student engagement, leadership development, mentorship initiatives, and student employment opportunities. This total reflects programmatic and operational funding and does not include personnel costs. Funding from the LaGuardia Foundation, College Association, USDA, LGBTQIA+ Archives, El Camino, Ledger 9, and CREAR Futuros expanded the Center's capacity to provide student stipends, mentorship opportunities, leadership experiences, cultural programming, and paid student employment. These investments directly supported Casa's ability to serve 2,750 students, host 60 events, sustain the CREAR Futuros mentorship program, and strengthen opportunities for student learning, connection, and success.

Key Accomplishments

- Expanded Casa's reach to **2,750 students** through cultural, educational, leadership, and community-building programs.
- Hosted **60 events** that fostered student engagement, cultural exploration, academic enrichment, and belonging.

- Integrated **CREAR Futuros** into Casa, supporting **64 mentees** through structured mentorship, resource navigation, and student success programming.
- Strengthened collaborations with faculty across multiple disciplines, broadening programming to explore Latino cultures, histories, and contributions from both local and global perspectives.
- Secured **$168,520** in programmatic funding to support cultural programming, student development, mentorship initiatives, and student employment opportunities.
- Expanded community and institutional partnerships, increasing opportunities for student engagement, mentorship, cultural enrichment, and professional growth.

Strategic Goals & Outcomes

The accomplishments highlighted throughout this report are rooted in Casa de las Américas' commitment to three core strategic pillars: Student Engagement, Leadership Development, and Academic & Faculty Partnerships. The outcomes presented in this section demonstrate progress toward these priorities and illustrate how they collectively advance student success, belonging, and institutional impact across the College.

Goal 1: Student Engagement

Objective

Increase student participation in educational, cultural, and co-curricular programming that fosters belonging, cultural awareness, and student success.

Key Activities

- Educational workshops and skill-building sessions
- Guest speaker and author series
- Cultural heritage celebrations and commemorations
- Leadership and civic engagement programs
- Community-building and campus-wide events

Outcomes

- Served 2,750 students through programs and services.
- Hosted 60 educational and cultural events.
- Increased student participation through targeted outreach, campus collaboration, and enhanced digital engagement.
- Broadened programming to reflect diverse Latino cultures, histories, and experiences from local, national, and global perspectives.

Outcome Measures

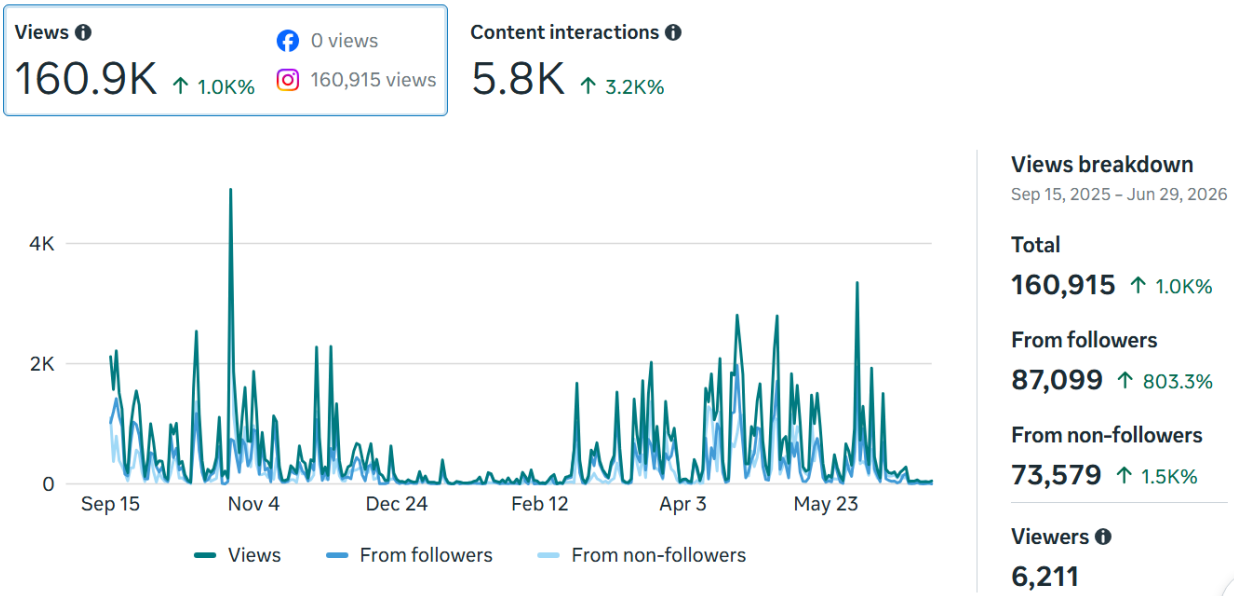
- **Events Conducted:** 60
- **Students Served:** 2,750
- **Student Satisfaction:** 92% average positive satisfaction rating
- **Social Media Reach and Engagement:**

For Casa: 160,915 impressions and 5,800 engagements
For CREAR Futuros: 93,237 impressions and 3,900 engagements

- **Student Impact:** "*Through Casa's events, I've met new people and learned about cultures from around the world, as well as cultures right here in New York City. These experiences have broadened my perspective and introduced me to things I might never have discovered without Casa.*"

Casa de las Américas Instagram

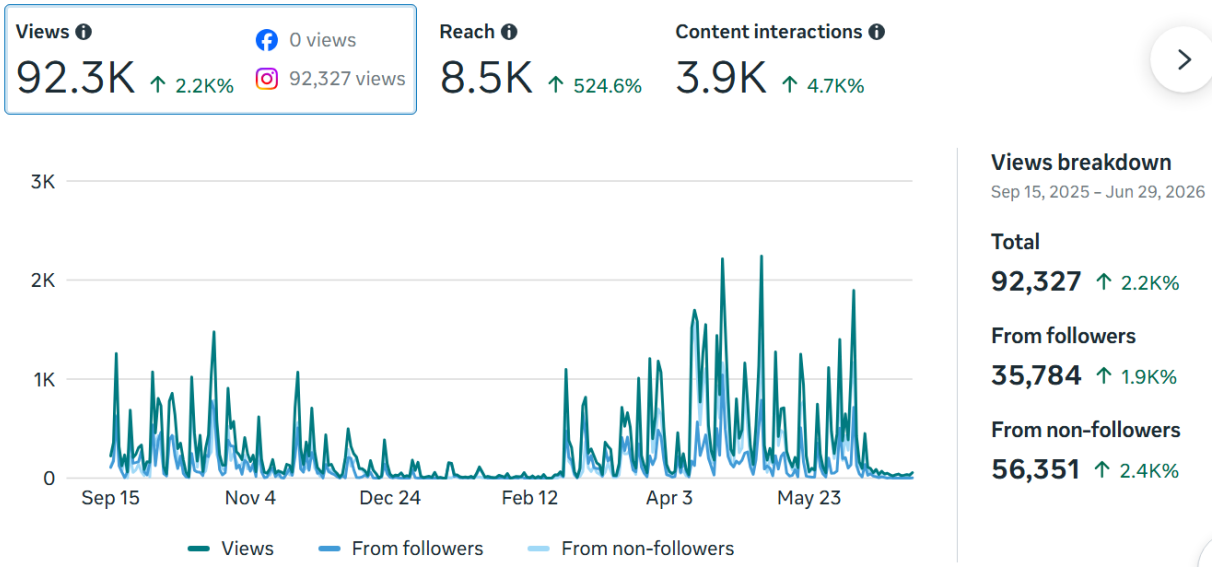
New followers: 354



Data from Meta Business

CREAR Futuros Instagram

New followers: 169



Data from Meta Business

Goal 2: Leadership Development

Objective

Develop students' leadership, professional, and interpersonal skills through mentorship, employment, training, and experiential learning opportunities.

Key Activities

- Casa Ambassador Program
- CREAR Futuros Peer Mentoring Program
- Student employment and leadership opportunities
- Professional development workshops and trainings
- Conference, networking, and career exploration opportunities

Outcomes

- Supported 5 Casa Ambassadors and 4 CREAR Futuros Mentors in leadership-focused roles.
- Strengthened mentor preparation through structured onboarding, training, and professional development.
- Provided students with opportunities to develop communication, event planning, teamwork, public speaking, and peer support skills.
- Expanded experiential learning opportunities through student-led programming, outreach, and community engagement activities.
- Increased student leadership capacity by integrating mentorship, employment, and professional development into Casa's programming model.

Outcome Measures

- **Student Leaders Employed:** 9 (5 Ambassadors; 4 Mentors)
- **CREAR Futuros Mentees Supported:** 64
- **Professional Development Session:** 7
- **Student Leadership Workshops:** 2
- **Student Impact:** "*Casa de las Americas has helped me in many ways ranging from networking events, career workshops, and resume building workshops, essential skills that have benefited my professional development.*"

Goal 3: Academic & Faculty Partnerships

Objective

Strengthen academic engagement and student success through faculty collaboration, interdisciplinary programming, and curricular connections that advance the mission of Casa de las Américas.

Key Activities

- Faculty-led educational and cultural programming

- Classroom partnerships and guest lectures
- Interdisciplinary collaborations across academic departments
- Co-curricular learning opportunities
- Academic and cultural events connected to course learning outcomes

Outcomes

- Expanded collaborations with faculty across multiple academic disciplines.
- Increased opportunities for students to connect classroom learning with cultural, civic, and experiential learning experiences.
- Broadened programming to explore Latino cultures, histories, communities, and contributions through interdisciplinary and global perspectives.
- Strengthened the integration of Casa programming into academic courses and campus-wide educational initiatives.
- Advanced student engagement by leveraging faculty partnerships to reach new student populations across the College.

Outcome Measures

- **Faculty Collaborations:** 8
- **Academic Disciplines Represented:** 5
- **Faculty-Led Programs and Events:** 11
- **Classes Engaged Through Casa Programming:** 10
- **Faculty Impact:** "*La Casa is doing amazing work for students: both by offering a space for community, and by offering changes for course engagement. I decided to schedule one of my ENG 248 (Latino Literature) classes to happen in La Casa. At the time, I just thought it would be nice to introduce them to the space and have class somewhere different. But the students were so excited about the prospect of sharing the knowledge they had learned so far; they took their presentations on Ibi Zoboi's novel (S)Kin far more seriously than I expected! Some of them even volunteered to bring visual representations of the novel to share for extra credit. La Casa gives students a space where they can put their knowledge to work; I am grateful to them for enhancing my course, and I will return!*"

Community Partnerships & External Engagement

In 2025-2026, Casa de las Américas expanded its community engagement efforts through partnerships with nonprofit organizations, cultural institutions, government agencies, and elected officials. These collaborations expanded student access to professional networks, cultural experiences, mentorship, and community resources.

Workforce Development & Career Pathways

Through its partnership with the Hispanic Federation, Casa de las Américas expanded career readiness opportunities for students beyond the CREAR Futuros mentorship program. During the spring semester, Casa and Hispanic Federation co-hosted a large-scale Career Expo that connected students with employers, community organizations, and industry professionals. The

event provided students with direct access to internship and employment opportunities while strengthening relationships between LaGuardia students and workforce partners.

To prepare students for success, Casa also hosted a series of career-focused pop-up events in advance of the Career Expo. Participating employers and professionals provided résumé reviews, interview preparation, career guidance, and insight into navigating the job application process. These efforts helped students build confidence, strengthen professional skills, and engage directly with potential employers.

Partnership Highlights

- **76** Career Expo exhibitors / organizations
- **3** Career Pop-Up participating organizations
- **20** Career Pop-Up Volunteers
- **6** student-facing career development events

Community Engagement & Resource Connection

Casa continued to strengthen its connection to the broader Queens community by incorporating community partners into major campus programs and celebrations. During Hispanic Heritage Month, ten community-based organizations participated through resource tabling and outreach activities, connecting students with educational, cultural, workforce, and social service resources.

These partnerships helped extend the impact of Casa's programming beyond individual events, creating opportunities for students to engage with organizations and services that support academic success, professional development, and community involvement.

Government & Civic Engagement

Casa maintained strong relationships with local elected officials and government representatives throughout the year, ensuring that students remained connected to civic resources and opportunities available throughout Queens and New York City.

Among the most notable partnerships were engagements with Council Member Julie Won and Assembly Member Claire Valdez, whose participation helped strengthen dialogue between students and public leaders. Casa regularly invited elected officials and agency representatives to campus events, creating opportunities for students to learn about civic leadership, public service, and community advocacy.

Recognition & Community Impact

In fall 2025, during Hispanic Heritage Month, Casa de las Américas received a Citation of Honor from the Office of Queens Borough President Donovan Richards in recognition of its outstanding service to both the LaGuardia Community College and Queens communities.

This recognition reflects Casa's continued commitment to expanding educational opportunities, promoting cultural engagement, and serving as a trusted resource for students and community members throughout the borough.

Assessment and Continuous Improvement

What Worked Well

- Expanded student engagement through a combination of cultural programming, leadership development, career readiness initiatives, and mentorship opportunities.
- Strong collaboration with campus departments, community organizations, and external partners that enhance program reach and student impact.
- Successfully leveraged social media and signature programming to strengthen student awareness and participation.

Challenges

- **Staffing:** Growing program demand continued to place pressure on limited staff capacity and administrative support.
- **Space Limitations:** Securing appropriate space for larger events, workshops, and student gatherings remained an ongoing challenge.
- **Budget Constraints:** Limited funding restricted opportunities to expand programming and meet increasing student demand.
- **Student Participation Barriers:** Work schedules, family responsibilities, and competing academic commitments affected students' ability to participate consistently.

Improvements Planned

- Strengthen assessment practices to better measure student learning, engagement, and program outcomes.
- Strengthen assessment and partner engagement strategies to maximize student impact and program effectiveness.
- Improve program planning and communication strategies to increase student participation and awareness of available resources.

Priorities for Next Year

Strategic Priority 1: Expand Student Leadership & Development Opportunities
Continue strengthening leadership, mentorship, and experiential learning opportunities that empower students to develop confidence, build skills, and actively contribute to the campus and broader community.

Strategic Priority 2: Strengthen Partnerships that Advance Student Success
Deepen collaborations with community organizations, philanthropic partners, government agencies, elected officials, and campus stakeholders to expand access to mentorship, cultural enrichment, leadership development, and support services.

Strategic Priority 3: Foster Student Engagement & Sense of Belonging
Increase participation in Casa programming through intentional outreach, culturally responsive programming, and ongoing assessment of student needs while continuing to cultivate an inclusive and welcoming community.

Acknowledgements

The accomplishments highlighted in this report reflect the collective efforts of many individuals and partners. Casa de las Américas extends its sincere gratitude to the students, Casa Ambassadors, CREAR Futuros mentors and mentees, faculty collaborators, staff colleagues, community partners, donors, and funding organizations whose dedication, expertise, and support contributed to the Center's continued growth and impact. We are especially grateful to the students who bring life, energy, and purpose to our work each day.