LAT CRIT TRANSITION MEMO, V to VI

TO: LatCrit VI Planning Committee
FROM: Roberto Corrada & Nancy Ehrenreich

I. Program and Schedule

A. The Embarrassment-of-Riches Problem

LatCrit is growing. We received dozens of paper and concurrent panel proposals last year, resulting in eight concurrent panels. Because those panels were scheduled in two time slots, four panels ran concurrently in each slot. The panels were packed with participants – sometimes up to five – and there was sometimes little time for discussion after the panelists presented. Moreover, we turned away some people who had asked to speak (but only if they had recently presented on a plenary or concurrent). An important issue that this year's planning committee should address as early as possible is how this burgeoning interest in LatCrit should, and can, be accommodated. The schedule is getting so crowded that there is very little time left for spontaneity, political caucusing, and relaxation – all important LatCrit values, and traits that distinguish this conference from others. But inclusiveness is also a very important LatCrit value, so the problem is a difficult one.

The inclusiveness issue also affects the composition of the plenary and concurrent panels. There is a tension between comprehensive and inclusive participation (across gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation lines, among others), on the one hand, and time, on the other. The risk of attending too rigidly and formalistically to inclusion is that time is sacrificed, and panels become overladen with speakers. The result can be a "talking heads" conference in which presentations are rushed and there is little opportunity for exchange between presenters and audience.

Our personal preference on these issues is to reduce the traditional number of plenary panels and roundtable discussions from seven to five (and maybe even four) and the number of keynoters from four to three, and to add an extra time slot for concurrents. We also believe some thought should be given to the possibility of thinking about inclusiveness at the conference-wide level, rather than attempting to accomplish it on each panel. This is clearly ultimately an issue for this year's planning committee, but BEWARE: Last year's committee was committed to thinning out the program, and look where we ended up!

B. Communication & Information Flow

It's crucial to manage the information coming in (about keynote and plenary panel speakers, scholarships, concurrent panel proposals, etc), as well as to have an efficient means of communicating with the various conference participants. Otherwise, we found, it's very easy for things to get out of control, with conflicting commitments being made and scholarship promises exceeding available funds. Therefore, we would suggest the following information management system to avoid these problems and facilitate communication:

1.) <u>Plenary and Keynote Speakers</u>

- *Speaker/Moderator Information Sheet*: All members of the planning committee who will be involved with contacting potential keynote or plenary speakers should fill out a *Speaker/Moderator Information Sheet* (attached) for every individual who agrees to speak at the conference. The completed sheet should be forwarded to the Scholarships Committee.

- *Confirmation Letter:* Once a speaker has committed to participate (and any necessary approvals have been obtained from the Scholarship Committee, see below), a letter of confirmation should be sent to the speaker, detailing our understanding of what s/he will be addressing and giving more details about LatCrit. (See attached letter from last year.) A copy of this letter should be forwarded to the Scholarship Committee. That committee should keep track of speakers & assure that everyone who's committed to speak receives a *Confirmation Letter.*

- *E-Mail Distribution List:* Each confirmed speaker should be entered into the appropriate e-mail distribution list, for either keynote or plenary panel speakers, to facilitate future communication with those people as group.

2.) <u>Concurrent Panels & Individual Paper Proposals</u>

- The *Call for Participation* (attached) needs to be sent out as soon as possible once the fall semester begins. (You're ahead of us on that one, obviously!)

- *Proposals Chart:* Once the concurrent panel and individual paper proposals start to come in, it's risky and cumbersome to keep them just on the handwritten forms in which they arrive. We strongly suggest immediately recording each proposal in an Excel chart on a computer. That chart should include: name; e-mail address; phone & FAX; proposal title; a blank for the name of the concurrent panel to which the person is ultimately assigned, and a check-off column for each of the communications which should be sent to such individuals (see below). Individuals who have not provided their phone or e-mail (and there will be many!) should be immediately contacted for that information (unless it can be pulled off the LatCrit master list – which should also be done right away). This chart will help to assure that no one is left out in the process of assigning people to particular concurrent panels, and that everybody receives the necessary communications.

- *E-Mail Distribution List:* Each person who submitted a proposal for a concurrent panel or individual paper should be entered into an e-mail distribution list for concurrent panel presenters, to facilitate future communication with those people as a group.

- *Confirmation of Proposal Receipt:* As soon as a concurrent panel or individual paper proposal is received, the individual who sent it (and all individuals on the panel, if an entire panel is proposed) should receive a confirmation e-mail, acknowledging receipt of the proposal and stating when further information will be provided. Once this e-mail is sent it should be checked off on the *Proposals Chart*, so that you know who has received what. (Alternatively, instead of using this rolling confirmation process, you could wait and send out a confirmation to everyone all at once – which would eliminate the need to keep track of who has received it. The disadvantage of that approach is that the proposals dribble in, so some folks wouldn't hear a response for a while, and there would still be some late proposals that would come in after the confirmation was sent out.)

- *Notification of Panel Assignment:* Once the concurrent panels have been organized, an e-mail needs to go to each individual, telling them what panel they're on, when it meets, and who else is speaking and moderating. Once this letter (or e-mail) is sent, it should be checked off on the *Proposals Chart*. This notice needs to be sent relatively soon, or else people will conclude that their proposals have not been accepted, and might make other commitments.

<u>3.) Moderators</u>

- *Speaker/Moderator Information Sheet:* All members of the planning committee who will be involved with contacting potential moderators should fill out a *Speaker/Moderator Information Sheet* (attached) for every individual who agrees to moderate a panel. The completed sheet should be forwarded to the Scholarships Committee.

- *Confirmation Letter:* Once a person has committed to moderate (and any necessary approvals have been obtained from the Scholarship Committee, see below), you might want to send a letter of confirmation, detailing what the moderator will be responsible for doing and providing the names and e-mail addresses of speakers on the panel. A copy of this letter should then be sent to the Scholarship Committee.

- *E-Mail Distribution List:* Each person who agrees to moderate a panel should be entered into an e-mail distribution list for moderators, to facilitate future communication with those people as a group.

C. Time Line of Information Distribution

In addition to the communications with speakers and moderators, described above, a number of documents and letters need to go out to everyone on the LatCrit mailing list. The list is available on disk and has also been set up as an e-mail distribution list, so you can send any of these by e-mail instead of snail-mail if you prefer. Examples of the various letters and other documents that need to be sent out are attached here. Note that it takes some time to update and adjust them for the new year's symposium. The various communications are listed below:

1.) Save the Date Letter (Sept.)
2.) Call for Participation (Sept.)
3.) E-mail Reminder re Call for Participation Deadline (2wks before it's due)
4.) Conference Packet (Feb.): includes the cover letter, tentative program schedule, substantive program outline, hotel & travel information sheet, advance conference registration form, hotel registration form, hotel literature, symposium submission guidelines, works in progress reader solicitation form, and child care survey.
5.) Conference Packet (received upon registration): includes final program, substantive program outline, program participation guidelines, and symposium submission guidelines, conference feedback form, list of conference participants and their addresses, phone numbers, etc, mini-poster.
6.) Conference Feedback Form (May): This should be distributed at the end of the conference. Be sure to announce

D. Organizing the Concurrent Panels

There's not too much to say here. One person should receive the responses to the *Call for Participation*, and one or two people should sit down with all of those proposals and organize them into themes. Then the planning committee as a group can give feedback and make adjustments.

E. The Substantive Program Outline

Production of the Substantive Program Outline is far more time-consuming than you might expect. It is important to identify one or two people *early on* who will be responsible for putting it together. We strongly advise *against* group drafting of the panel descriptions for this outline; although it's valuable to get input from a lot of folks, involving several people in the writing of this document is simply too cumbersome. Each person responsible for a plenary panel should draft a description of that panel, and then the person(s) assigned to the Substantive Program Outline should combine these descriptions into a coherent whole. That draft of the outline can then be run by the larger planning committee, for final editing suggestions.

II. Works in Progress

The invitation for Works in Progress, has traditionally been part of the initial *Call for Participation*. We would suggest that a request for volunteers to read and comment on the Works in Progress could also be included in that initial mailing . In the past, solicitation of those readers has not occurred until after the Works in Progress proposals come in, which causes us to have to scramble at the end. Getting names of readers up front therefore seems a good idea.

III. Local Arrangements

First, at least two people on the planning committee should be local. It is invaluable to work as a team, double checking each other and helping each other out.

Second, try to find someone on your faculty who has planned a conference before. We were helped tremendously by Joyce Sterling, who has on a yearly basis helped to plan the Law and Society conferences. She gave us a sense of whether rates were too high, and provided insights we might otherwise not have had – for example, letting us know that when a group brings this kind of event to a hotel it's typical to ask for a free suite for the leadership.

Third, competitive bidding is a must! We were able to work down rates for food and lodging substantially by looking at four different sites, in different locales, and playing them off against each other.

A. Hotel & Food

1.) Site Visits: It's crucial to visit any hotels under consideration before making your decision. (See the original Transition Memo for details about what types of rooms the site should contain.) Be sure to check out the guest rooms as well as the conference rooms when you're there. In addition, once the planning committee has selected a site, you should make sure that you plan to do another visit to that hotel sometime shortly before the conference. At that point, you can visualize who will be where, and also catch changes necessitated by, for example (as we experienced), the complete redecorating of one of the major rooms in the interim. You should also carefully go over the setups in each room.

2.) Contract: Don't be too quick to sign a contract, if you can avoid it. It's a good idea to run the draft contract by other people to get their comments. It also gives you a chance to get a sense of how much interest there is in attending the conference (through the response to the *Call for Participation*) before finalizing any number guarantees.

- *Room guarantees:* Resist the temptation to inflate the number of people you expect to attend the conference, either to induce hotel interest or to avoid being short on rooms. Hold off as long as possible on giving your final number guarantee so that you have a good sense of how many are attending. The room guarantee that we set, which worked out pretty well, was 75 rooms per night. But your guarantee will not necessarily be the same; it will depend on the room rate and the number of scholarships you give out. (Our rates were $62-68 per night.)

- *Room inspection:* It's important to look at each type of room, so you can negotiate which types go to fill the guarantee.
- *Student rooms:* Be sure to negotiate a much lower rate for student rooms. The hotels we talked to were quite willing to do that, so long as we capped the number. Our cap was 25 people. Make sure also that the student rooms count towards the guarantee.
- *Negotiating food rates:* Food markup at hotels is huge. We found that hotels are willing to move most on their food rates. Most hotels will provide you conference menus to choose meals from. Please pay special attention to these; we did not, relying instead upon suggestions from the hotel's conference coordinator, and, as a result, our most expensive meal was the one least liked by everyone at the conference. Buffets are the best deals.
- *Food guarantees:* For the large, sit-down meals, we guaranteed 100, and had an average attendance of 107. This worked out perfectly, because the hotel made 10% more food than the guarantee. For buffets, you can go lower, because there's always plenty of food. We guaranteed 90 for buffets. You shouldn't go too low, however, because the guarantee will affect the number of place settings the hotel sets. For breaks, don't guarantee more than 75, and for Sunday brunch or breakfast, go way low (closer to 35). Most folks will be heading out of town by then.
- *Conference rooms:* You should never, ever be charged for any conference rooms, given the size of our conference. They'll try to charge you, but hold your ground.

<u>B. Transportation</u>

1. <u>Air transportation:</u> We were surprised to find that some large conference hotels buy blocks of discounted air fares from major carriers. They make these rates available to conference attendees. Be sure to ask whether such rates are available. Our experience was that the hotel won't allow people to book the discounted air fare unless they have first booked a room. By the way, if your conference is taking place at high altitude, be sure to tell people not to drink margaritas (or whatever) on the way there, or after arriving(!).

2. <u>Ground transportation:</u> Be sure to ask whether the hotel has a shuttle from the airport and, importantly, whether that shuttle can handle the numbers of people you have coming in. If not, you'll need to contact outside transportation companies. We found that these companies almost always offer a discount for groups.

3. <u>Parking Arrangements</u>: Invariably, some people will drive to the conference or rent a car at the airport. Be sure to inquire with the hotel about parking rates for hotel attendees. The hotel may give you a discounted rate for the conference.

IV. Advertising & Fundraising

A committee on Advertising & Fundraising should be designated. It should probably not be greater than two or three people. These tasks are not good for the entire Planning Committee – we found that they were always last on the agenda and were jettisoned quickly at the end of long conference calls. A small committee can take this work on and report quickly to the committee as a whole by email.

A. Advertising

Both Temple University Press and New York University Press have purchased advertising in past LatCrit Conference Programs, paying $150 for a program advertisement. Certainly, this at least should be continued, but some thought should be given to expanding this effort. First, the number of presses should be expanded. In addition to approaching more university presses that publish material related to race and critical theory, the advertising effort should be expanded to include traditional law publishers like West and Aspen who are increasingly publishing texts related to race and law topics, and are even now publishing casebooks in traditional law subjects that take gender and race approaches to those topics.

The other suggestion, in addition to approaching more publishers, is to make the advertising effort more comprehensive. Rather than selling space in a conference program maybe we could make publishers conference sponsors. We would sell them on the conference, charge $500, and tell them that advertisements will accompany all conference mailings, including the call for papers, the preliminary program packet in February, and the final registration program packet at the conference.

B. Conference Sponsorship & Cosponsorship

For LatCrit IV, we were very successful in getting a number of California schools to cosponsor the conference by pledging amounts ranging from $500 to $5,000. As a result, LatCrit IV was our most successful conference from a money perspective. Last year, the University of Denver, as the host school for LatCrit V, contributed $10,000 in cash and $10,000 in soft costs toward the conference. Cosponsors for LatCrit V included: University of Miami ($5,000), Arizona State University ($1,500), and the University of Colorado ($1,500).

In the past, cosponsor solicitations have almost always been treated as an afterthought for two main reasons – they are not prioritized at the same level as program and venue issues and probably because most people do not like to do these solicitations. We feel that the cosponsor solicitations will be handled more smoothly if a particular person (preferably not the conference chair) takes on the responsibility. We recommend a cosponsor subcommittee composed of one or two people who will be responsible for ascertaining which regional schools should be approached to be cosponsors and then soliciting volunteers among planning committee members with knowledge of, or affiliation with, the target school to make a cosponsorship request of the appropriate school official (typically the dean or associate dean). (One of the attachments to this memo is a sample letter soliciting such cosponsorship that we used last year.)

Given that most people do not like to raise money, the task of soliciting is more easily digested, and more likely to be accomplished, if everyone on the planning committee is made responsible for one or at most two phone calls. This division has worked well in the past, and we are afraid that the task of actually calling potential cosponsors would be too burdensome if entirely handled by only one or two people.

V. Scholarships

A. In General

LatCrit exists, at least in part, to allow scholars who can make a real contribution to attend and participate in LatCrit conferences regardless of need. Indeed, most of the money raised for each LatCrit conference goes right back out the door in the form of conference scholarships. In the past, we have tried to match outgoing scholarship commitments with incoming monies and have so far been lucky. Before we suffer a major financial setback, however, we should formalize our scholarship process. Our recommendation is to have a small scholarship committee (no more than two people, one of whom must be the LatCrit Treasurer) whose responsibility would be to 1) inform all planning committee members who are soliciting speakers about the guidelines to be followed in making scholarship commitments, 2) make sure that planning committee members who offer a scholarship both report back to the scholarship committee once the scholarship offer has been accepted and send a confirmation letter to the scholarship recipient, and 3) work with the LatCrit Treasurer to ensure that scholarship offers do not outstrip financial capability.

B. Guidelines

Law schools can generally fund individual scholar participation in a LatCrit Conference. Thus, the first guideline is that *no scholarships should be offered to law professors.*

Second, we expect *anyone receiving a scholarship (with the exception of students) to write an article* for submission to the symposium issue of the review that will publish the conference papers.

Scholarship commitment levels in the past have generally been based somewhat on the type of conference participation expected of the scholarship recipient. We believe this tradition should be continued. Thus, *scholarship authority is capped as follows:*

1. Keynote Speakers:
   Maximum $ commitment: $750.00

Scholarship items: Airfare
Room & Board
Waiver of Conference Fee

2. Plenary Speakers:
Maximum $ commitment: $400.00
Scholarship items: Airfare OR Room & Board
Waiver of Conference Fee

3. Concurrent Panel Speakers:
Maximum $ commitment: $250.00
Scholarship items: Room OR Board
Waiver of Conference Fee

4. Works In Progress:
Maximum $ commitment: $100
Scholarship items: Waiver of Conference Fee

5. Students:
Maximum $ commitment: $100
Scholarship items: Waiver of Conference Fee
Special Student Room Rate

The idea behind the guidelines is just that – they are guidelines only. There may be instances when we have to deviate from the guidelines, but when that happens the process should be that guideline deviations must be 1) approved by the scholarship committee chair (as doable) and 2) approved by the planning committee as a whole (as something we *should* do).

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We hope this is helpful to future conference planners. *Buena suerte!*