"H/L ministry is about coming to a mutual understanding in the church, and stepping over obstacles of culture and language, to walk alongside and learn from each other."
- A NCCUMC Pastor

"Hispanic ministries need to be given a chance to really be Hispanic ministries, before they become something else because people think that they haven’t worked."
- A THLCI partner

Dr. Colón-Emerc at Reconciliation UMC in Durham. Source.

Thriving Hispanic/Latino Communities Initiative
Summative Report 2008 to 2014
Executive Summary

For the Duke Endowment
by the Center for Assessment and Policy Development (CAPD)
September 2014
Overview of the Thriving Hispanic/Latino Communities Initiative (THLCI)

The Thriving Hispanic/Latino Communities Initiative (THLCI) was created in 2008 via a grant from the Duke Endowment's Rural Church program area (TDE) to the Duke Divinity School (DDS). The grant was $1,260,000 for the period 2008 through 2014.

Its goal is to develop effective leadership for Hispanic/Latino ministry, using the resources of the Hispanic House of Studies and partnerships with key stakeholder institutions: The Duke Divinity School (DDS), The Duke Endowment (TDE), the North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church (NCCUMC) and the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church (WNCCUMC).

This Executive Summary highlights major findings from a summative evaluation of THLCI over the period from 2008 through mid-2014. The full report elaborates on and provides additional evidence for these findings. It also gives a more nuanced picture of the context, and why the program has evolved in the direction it has.

We hope that you will find the information below useful.

Sally Leiderman

Stephanie Leiderman

September 2014
Summative Findings

Overall, we conclude that THLCI is doing an excellent job of expanding and strengthening capable leadership to engage more effectively with Hispanic/Latino populations in North Carolina, and within Methodism in North Carolina.

That conclusion is based on three main sets of results:

1. The program has leveraged its funds to build capacity for North Carolina Hispanic/Latino ministry among 100 plus people (a conservative estimate of an unduplicated count\(^a\)), well in excess of the originally hoped for 12 THLCI Fellows,

2. As THLCI intends, the people who are receiving the most intensive supports are already being acknowledged and called upon to provide leadership around Hispanic/Latino ministry. In addition, many of those who received less intensive support found those supports quite powerful and were moved to action based on them, and

3. THLCI is achieving these results against a complex set of challenges. Some of these are structural (economic models of Hispanic/Latino churches and ministry) and others are conceptual (different views among stakeholders about what Hispanic/Latino ministry is intended to accomplish and thus, different ideas about how to respond to opportunities).

Context

There were three main contextual factors that influenced THLCI’s theory of change and development. First, the population of Hispanic/Latino residents of North Carolina was growing dramatically in the early 2000’s. The proportion of Hispanic/Latino people engaged with UMC churches, as members or leaders, was quite small relative to their proportion in the population, and growing at a much slower rate. Additionally, there was a long history of investment in Hispanic/Latino ministry among the stakeholder institutions. Approaches that were aimed at seeding self-sustaining Hispanic/Latino churches led by Hispanic/Latino or Spanish fluent ministers and intending to serve mostly Hispanic/Latino peoples, were often being subsidized outside their own congregational resources. In addition, pastors serving Hispanic/Latino populations often are part-time and/or bi-vocational. Many people within the stakeholder institutions were frustrated by what was viewed as the failure of efforts to create thriving churches with substantial Latino/Hispanic populations or to engage more effectively with those populations in mission and discipleship. They were considering the role leadership might play in addressing these concerns.

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\(^a\) This estimate is based on the program’s influence via Caminantes for Students (46), Encuentro (40), Disciples Making Disciples (24), THLCI Apprentices, Fellows and Scholars (6), DDS Faculty (3), pastors in Pastores Caminantes (15+) and pastors in the Hispanic Pastor’s Retreat (30+), taking into account what we know about the people who participated in more than one of these. The total also includes specific Rural Fellows, DS’s & others who provided evidence that THLCI was influencing their actions.
At the same time, different stakeholders viewed the framework for H/L Ministry in different ways, pointing to different goals and potential ways of addressing them. Some stakeholders felt that THLCI would be successful if it helped to form leadership that would be able to create economically self-sustaining UMC congregations that were predominantly or exclusively made up of Hispanic/Latino peoples. Some felt that it would be successful if it helped to identify and support the formation of skilled and effective Hispanic/Latino pastors among DDS M.Div. students on an Elder track. Others supported that leadership goal, but wondered if there would be churches willing to be served by these newly formed pastors, or able to pay their salaries. Some felt THLCI would be successful if, in addition to identifying and helping to form skilled and effective pastors who are themselves Hispanic/Latino, it would help build the capacities of a broader group of M.Div. students and a broader group of pastors and congregations, with a heart for Hispanic/Latino ministry, who were fluent or nearly fluent in Spanish but not necessarily Hispanic/Latino themselves.

**Infusion Strategy**

At this point, it is reasonable to describe THLCI as using an infusion strategy. Rather than constructing an initiative centered mostly, though not exclusively, on formation of Fellows, the THLCI model infuses different subsets of capacities more broadly, and to a variety of groups. THLCI uses this strategy for several reasons. One is an attempt to leverage its resources to influence more people. THLCI was expected to fund and support 12 Fellows over six years (or 2 per year) relative to, for example, the 6 or 7 Rural Fellows TRC was intended to fund and support each year. Another was to address pipeline issues, which made it difficult for the program to attract and retain even that level of Fellows. In addition, THLCI chose this approach to model a different way of thinking about Hispanic/Latino ministry -- one that is everybody’s responsibility and to everyone’s benefit.

**THLCI Strategies, Intended Outcomes and Early Results**

**Data Sources**

Results are based on data collected from 2008 through 2014. Data come from in-depth interviews with the Hispanic Fellows and Hispanic Apprentice and from surveys or interviews with a sample of participants in other core THLCI strategies (Encuentro, Caminantes, Caminantes Pastores and Hispanic Pastor’s Retreat). Data also come from interviews with some of THLCI’s regional and national partners, and from surveys and multiple rounds of interviews with Rural Fellows, particularly those who participated in Encuentro or Caminantes. See Chapter 2 of the full report for more detail on findings. See Chapter 3 of the full report for lessons learned and potential models of thriving, not shared in this Executive Summary. See Appendix A of the full report for more in-depth discussion of Evaluation Methods.
Findings by Strategy

Figures 1, 2 and 3 together display key evaluation findings from THLCI’s first phase. They provide additional evidence for the summative findings previously noted.

Figure 1, “Strategies by Expected Outcome” is based on THLCI’s theory of change, informed by working sessions with the THLCI’s Directors. It lays out the key capacities each aspect of THLCI programming is expected to infuse. For example, we know that goals of the Encuentro program are to simultaneously help participants expand their definition of who they consider “my people,” expand their vision for Hispanic Ministry, experience models of churches as centers for community development and strengthen participants’ Spanish language skills.

Figure 2, “Early Results of THLCI Strategies,” goes into greater depth about the goals and methods of some key programs. It also outlines some points about how each program has been implemented to date, including the number and type of stakeholders engaged and reported benefits.

Figure 3, “Early Applications of Learning/Infusion,” shares some selected stories of ways in which people connected to THLCI are beginning to apply the framework, ideas and capacities they have learned. For example, we note that two Caminantes for Students participants are now bringing a new energy to working with the Hispanic/Latino population in the UMC South Carolina Conference.

Participants routinely provide evidence of gaining the hoped-for outcomes for any particular strategy. In addition, across the strategies, interviews provide evidence that participants frequently gain or deepen their sense of responsibility for connecting with Hispanic and Latino people post participation. Many also specifically cite THLCI programs as changing their way of thinking about the importance and practice of vital Hispanic/Latino ministry. Those who seem to be more strongly influenced in those particular ways include Rural Fellows who go on Encuentro, several Caminantes students, stakeholders who participate in Encuentro and Caminantes for Pastors, DDS Faculty who participate in the Course of Study in El Salvador and Lay Missioners and Pastors working in a Hispanic/Latino context who attend the Hispanic Pastor’s Retreat.
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**Strategies**

*In-need Short-Term Contributions*

*Figure 1: Strategies by Intended Outcome*
Figure 2: Early THLCI Results
Figure 2: Early THLCI Results (contd.)
Figure 3: Early Applications of Learning/Infusion

Other UMC Pastors in North Carolina

Strait and Faculty at DDS

Staff at DDS Students

Selected Quote Activity/Application THLC Work w/ Partners

Participated

Nutritional counselor

Nutritional counseling

Nutritional counseling

Nutritional counseling

Nutritional counseling

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Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings, and the context of Hispanic/Latino ministry in Methodism in North Carolina, we note the following:

An infusion model makes sense, and to get the most “bang for the buck” it would help if stakeholders would address together some of the conceptual and structural challenges.

The infusion model is consistent with best practices for effective leadership of Hispanic/Latino ministry as described by, for example, the National Plan for Hispanic and Latino Ministry (General Board of Global Ministry of the United Methodist Church). THLCl’s approach also models a vision of Mestizo that includes capacities for both blended and separate service and engagement with Hispanic/Latino North Carolinians. It does not assume that leadership for Hispanic/Latino ministry will come exclusively, or even primarily, from people who are themselves Hispanic or Latino. This approach thus offers Conferences and other stakeholders many more potential leaders, and more opportunities for many types of missions and churches, including some that are likely to be more sustainable.

It is important to continue sharing a nuanced understanding of population trends.

A deep understanding of the constant and generational changes in Hispanic/Latino population and circumstances within North Carolina is key to planning for the future of Hispanic Ministry. Some of the leaders and stakeholders we spoke with emphasized this point as a reason not to focus solely (or perhaps at all) on separate, dedicated Hispanic Ministry, led in Spanish. While separate, dedicated missions or church plantings may be an effective approach in the short term, they note that historically, second and third generation individuals show much less interest in being segregated into separate programs. In the future, THLCl will need to work to help leadership address these different and changing populations.

There are a number of ways to grow and deepen the impact of the Infusion Model, many of which THLCl anticipates.

At least one of the potential model churches we describe in Chapter 3 of the full report (CityWell UMC) provides examples of ways of building confidence and lay capacity around inclusion of Hispanic/Latino peoples within UMC congregations. As is true for TRCI, there is a role for the Conferences, DDS and TDE to support/training for lay people to understand ways of being more fully inclusive, and to understand walking with, not charity for, Latino/Hispanic communities. We were told capacity building around “inclusion” for lay people could also serve as the groundwork for shifting church identities, as churches became less insular and more multi-cultural and/or more multi-racial or multi/ethnic. And, as is almost always the case, given itinerancy, involvement of lay people encourages the sustainability of those shifts.
There is also an opportunity to bring existing leaders of Hispanic Ministries to the table more to share the knowledge that they have about the communities, and about ways to better integrate separate Hispanic Ministries into church decision-making and life.

Some additional supports and partnerships are needed from the two North Carolina UMC Conferences.

To create an opening for Hispanic ministry of the kind being promoted via the infusion work, the Cabinets and Boards of Ordained Ministries may want to better understand and value the capacities being developed through THLCI, with a goal of finding ways to make a place for these gifts in a larger number of churches, serving a wider variety of members.

There are also some capacities that could be included or strengthened.

One example is how pastors can meet spiritual and mission needs that involve landowners, employers and farm workers, particularly when some are church members and differ on immigration, wage rates and other issues.

Additionally, it is promising that some multi-ethnic and Hispanic/Latino churches have begun to do racial equity trainings. We hope that this work will continue in the future, with increased support and involvement from THLCI.

As more churches begin to embrace and attempt to implement inclusive and multi-ethnic principles, particular understandings can be important. As reported to us, key ones, particularly for groups just beginning to reach out or looking for innovative ways of reaching out, could include:

- Acknowledging the often unspoken fear of talking with and being in fellowship with people who don’t speak English, or whose English skills are not strong.

- Examining biases and assumptions about undocumented people being criminals/untrustworthy.

- Finding a way to acknowledge existing power dynamics in the community.

- A more nuanced understanding of diversity within the Hispanic community.

- Adjusting to life patterns of people with different schedules.

- Embracing the activist history of Methodism, and making it a point of current pride.