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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2008

CAMBIO DE COLORES (CHANGE OF COLORS) 2008—LATINOS IN MISSOURI SEVENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE: “UNITING CULTURES – UNIENDO CULTURAS” IN COLUMBIA, MO

“Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) - Latinos in Missouri” is an annual three-day conference that focuses on Latino immigration to the state in particular and the Midwest in general. It is the premier event focusing on the heartland’s most important demographic and community change of the last two decades. The goal of this conference is to contribute to the smooth and sustainable integration of the new population for the benefit of all the people in Missouri and neighboring states.

Similar to other states of the Midwest and the South, the Latino population in Missouri has more than doubled in the past fifteen years. According to recent census data, Latinos or Hispanics comprise now 2.8 percent of Missourians, distributed in every county of our state. The neighboring state of Kansas has seen its Latino population grow from 3.8 percent in 1990 to 8.3 percent in 2005.

“Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors)–Latinos in Missouri: Uniting Cultures – Uniendo Culturas” will take place from Monday April 7 to Wednesday April 9, 2008, at the Stoney Creek Inn, in Columbia, Missouri. The conference will draw between 200 and 250 participants, including academic researchers and extension specialists, public and private service providers, grassroots organizations, professionals from state, local, and federal government institutions, politicians, and newcomers themselves.

The main topics of the conference are: change and integration; civil rights; education; health; and youth, families, and communities. Around forty presentations and workshops will cover issues of special relevance to make this integration process beneficial to everyone, for example: asset accumulation strategies for newcomers; inclusion and integration of Latino parents and students into school systems; best practices for prevention of diseases; cultural competency; changes in sending and receiving communities; the immigration legal and political climate; and many others.

The 2008 conference underlines the need for every stakeholder—newcomer and long-established alike—to get involved into the complex and vibrant process of social, economic, and cultural change, so as to develop a sustainable, richer, diverse, and harmonic community, especially for the benefit of the incoming generations.

The conference chair is Lisa Y. Flores, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Missouri. The Executive Coordinator is Domingo Martínez Castilla, of the

University of Missouri-Columbia's Cambio Center. The conference planning committee includes more than thirty volunteers from state public and private institutions.

Plenary speakers will be Huyen Pham, a researcher in immigration law and its effects on society, from Texas Wesleyan University School of Law; Edward A. Delgado-Romero, an expert in Multicultural Counseling and Competence, from the University of Georgia; Luis R. Torres, a Fellow with the National Institute on Drug Abuse and a researcher on Latino families, from Washington University in St. Louis. There will also be a plenary expert panel on difficult dialogues, with the participation of Roger L. Worthington, Sandra Hodge, and Paul Ladehoff, from the University of Missouri- Columbia; and another plenary expert panel, including Mary Simon Leuci, Jo Britt-Rankin, and David Baker, who will discuss the statewide resources for Latino integration offered by the University of Missouri's Extension service,

The closing session keynote speaker will be Dr. Samuel Betances, a well-known and engaging communicator on the challenge of casting away barriers to success. A Harvard graduate, he is an honored Professor Emeritus, a consultant to U.S. Presidents, CEOs, managers, community groups, clergy members, educators, and a role model for youth.

Special guests include University of Missouri System President Gary Forsee, and other University of Missouri leaders. The conference is sponsored by the University of Missouri System and its Columbia campus. Main external sponsors include the Missouri Foundation for Health.

For extensive and updated information regarding the conference, please access the conference website: www.cambiodecolores.org (also reachable from www.latinosinmissouri.com).