

Aggie BSM launches ministry to engage Hispanic students

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COLLEGE STATION—When classes began for the fall semester at Texas A&M University, the Aggie Baptist Student Ministry launched a new ministry,



Sarai Aparicio (right) and Regelio Corbian serve treats and provide information about Viva: Faith-Based Hispanic Community, a program of the Aggie BSM. (Photo / Isa Torres)

Viva: Faith-Based Hispanic Community began this semester as a student group under the BSM umbrella after Tiffany Aquino, Arely Mendiola, Rogelio Cobián and Caleb Jackson saw a need they wanted to address.

The conversation about starting a ministry focused on inviting and connecting Hispanic students to the BSM started last May. The students shared their ideas with [Joel Bratcher](#), BSM director at Texas A&M, and Associate Director Rebecca Hernandez.

“We noticed we were Hispanic, and there were a couple of other Hispanic

students at the BSM,” Mendiola said. “We each knew other Hispanic students, but there weren’t that many of us at the BSM.”

Even after the academic year ended for the students, BSM leaders continued to make plans and prepare to offer their support once students returned for the fall semester, Hernandez said.

Extended welcome

Aquino described the challenges Hispanic Americans who may come from more diverse communities or from Hispanic majority towns face when they move to College Station, with its majority Anglo population. For students coming from Latin America, that culture shock may be amplified, she said.



Arely Mendiola (right) and Sarai Aparicio (left) prepare to serve fellow students at Texas A&M during a welcome event where they shared information about Viva: Faith-Based Hispanic Community, a program of the Aggie BSM. (Photo / Isa Torres)

Last semester, Aquino sensed a calling to reach her own people, a calling

that became clearer when she served through Go Now Missions in Mexico City during the summer.

The BSM represents a home for Mendiola. It is where she also found many of her college friends including Aquino, who is also her roommate. However, she perceives a need for the BSM to become a home for more Hispanic students.

“Any time you go to the BSM, you’ll find very welcoming people. I think we just want to extend that but maybe be a little more specific towards the Hispanic community,” Mendiola said.

As students shared their ideas, Bratcher realized God seemed to be providing the beginning for a ministry that grows more important every year. Last semester, Hispanic students at Texas A&M comprised about 20 percent of the student body.

Empower and encourage student leaders

Empowering them to pursue their calling not only gives students the trust they need when they respond to a call God gives them, but it also teaches leaders at the BSM where and how they must minister, he added.

“I’m not Hispanic, so I get to learn from them,” Bratcher said.

BSM students’ desire to reach more Hispanic students certainly needed the support and trust of the BSM leadership, he noted.

“Our students have amazing ideas, and so I am kind of like a player-coach when I see their hearts wanting to reach more people,” Bratcher said. “We just try to encourage them, and in some cases that means just encouraging their leadership by saying, ‘You guys can do this!’”

As more universities experience an increase in the Hispanic student population, Bratcher recommended providing strong discipleship for Hispanic students.

“Giving them a place to begin to read the Bible with other believers and discover how great that is, that’s one great thing we can give them,” he said.

“The other thing we can give them is leadership opportunities where they’re integrated into everything we are doing—where their ideas and their leadership are highly valued.”