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Scholarship benefit memorializes Los Danzantes founder Martínez

Fresno State's folkloric dance group, [Los Danzantes de Aztlán](#), will host a scholarship benefit Tuesday, May 7. The proceeds will fund a new scholarship named in honor of the dance group's founder, the late Chicano and Latin America Studies professor emeritus [Ernesto Martínez](#).

The social and dinner will be at 6 p.m. at the University House (4411 N. Van Ness Blvd.). A donation of \$50 per person is requested. Tables of 10 are available for \$500.

President John D. Welty will join with former Danzantes members like the Hon. Rosendo Peña, associate justice of the 5th District Court of Appeal, to host the event. The evening will also feature performances by current Los Danzantes de Aztlán group members.

"The event will raise funds for student scholarships in memory of Prof. Martínez, the father of folkloric dance in the Central Valley and one of a handful of pioneers in California who helped develop Mexican folklórico dance in the 1960's," said Dr. Victor Torres, director of Los Danzantes who succeeded Martínez when he retired in 2001.

Martínez, an alumnus of Fresno State and renowned as a patriarch of Mexican folkloric dancing in the United States, died June 3, 2010 in his Fresno home. He was 71.

"Throughout the years, many Danzantes students graduated with majors like liberal studies, social work, Chicano studies, engineering, public health, psychology, agricultural sciences, business, art, biology and Spanish," Torres added. "This scholarship will assist students earning a college degree while they engage in an important cultural activity that contributes to the cultural life of the university and the community."

Martínez founded Los Danzantes de Aztlán in 1970. It became internationally acclaimed, earning status as the official Mexican folkloric troupe of the CSU system. Martínez' influence extended far from the campus as Danzantes has become a springboard for generations of dancers throughout the central San Joaquin Valley and beyond, inspiring the formation of other community dance groups, Torres said.

During his distinguished career, Martínez was honored with several [awards](#). He was a founding faculty member of the then-La Raza Studies Program – now the Department of Chicano/Latin American Studies – at Fresno State.

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He also co-founded the Chicano Alumni chapter of the Fresno State Alumni Association and its Chicano Commencement Celebration in 1976. That event is now called the Latino Commencement Celebration and is sponsored by the College of Social Science under the direction of its dean, Dr. Luz Gonzalez. It is believed to be the largest of its kind in the nation. This year's Latino Commencement will take place May 18 at the Save Mart Center where Los Danzantes also performs.

For more information, or to request accommodations for persons with disabilities in advance, contact Torres at 559.278.2848 or victort@csufresno.edu.

(Copy by University Communications student news assistant Alejandra Garcia.)

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- [Los Danzantes de Aztlán](#)
- [Ernesto Martinez](#)
- [Emeritus prof Martínez wins Chicano Alumni award](#)

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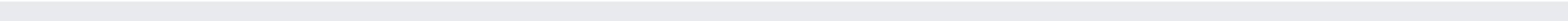
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