

Estrada campaigns by dancing in the Pit

To hold symposium for Latinos

BY MATT SAMPSON
STAFF WRITER

As campaign flyers, buttons and stickers spread around campus for the presidential race, some students are looking at a different race.

And one Homecoming queen has taken a new approach to campaigning — salsa dancing.

The Essentials

Senior Sophia Estrada, a sociology and linguistics double major from Charlotte, danced the traditional Latin American dance in the Pit last week with members of her campaign team for her 2008 Homecoming queen bid.

And Estrada said her Latino heritage is a crucial part of her campaign, providing it with focus and purpose.

"I am very active in the Latino community," Estrada said. "I wanted to do something with what I've learned from different Latino organizations at the school."

Estrada said she decided to come to UNC after looking at a large variety of colleges across the country.

After visiting campus in April during her senior year of high school, Estrada said she fell in love with UNC because of the diversity of its student body.

"I love the diversity found at Carolina," Estrada said.

"I've learned and grown so much at UNC because of its diversity and everything the school offers.

"That's why I feel being Homecoming queen would be a great opportunity — this would be a wonderful outlet to benefit the Latino community."

Having a student's perspective was also very important for Estrada in making her choice, she said.

"My decision was very last-minute," Estrada said. "The last trip I made, I came up to visit a friend and he gave me a tour of campus.

"That's when I said this is really the place for me."



UNC senior Sophia Estrada is a candidate for 2008 Homecoming queen.

The Project

Estrada said her campaign is mostly centered on her service project.

She plans to extend the University's outreach to members of the Latino community in a day-long symposium for high school students in the surrounding area.

"I want Latino students to come to the college and learn about the importance of education," she said. "It lets them consider their college and professional lives after high school."

High school students invited to the University will have the opportunity to ask both academic professionals and the UNC community alike general questions about the college experience.

The students will attend workshops, learn how to apply to college and have the opportunity to ask questions about applying for financial aid, taking the SAT and other general questions about admission and scholarships.

Estrada's project has similarities to Project Uplift, a two-day conference for minority students held every spring by the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

And Estrada said that although she attended Project Uplift during her senior year of high school, it was only part of the inspiration for her project.

Most of her inspiration came from her work with first-generation Latino families who hope to send their children to college for the first time.

"I'm not necessarily trying to encourage students to go to UNC, but to give people an incentive to get more education in general," she said.

"At my high school there weren't many Hispanics who went to UNC or to college at all."

Estrada said first-generation Latinos might not always know the ins and outs of the complex financ-

Latino high school student symposium

> Latino high-schoolers will be invited to the University to ask questions about education.

> Facilitators will discuss college applications, taking the SAT and scholarships.

> The goal of the project is to promote diversity at the University by opening doors.

Vote between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Wednesday on campus or online.

ing involved in going to college.

And because North Carolina has one of the fastest growing Latino populations, Estrada said the University could do more to reach out to the community.

She said a centralized location on campus for Latino issues would provide focused support to the community.

"I think a Latino center would be a great idea. I'm very supportive of it," she said. "Having that center would really open the University up."

The Campaign

In addition to salsa dancing in the Pit, Estrada has been campaigning by posting flyers around campus and through online resources.

Her Facebook group has reached more than 250 members.

Estrada said the campaign process has been facilitated well so far by the UNC Board of Elections, who have quickly answered all of her questions about election rules.

At the same time, Estrada said the campaign has been personally challenging as she tries to balance the obligations of a busy senior with her campaign work.

"I had a lot of midterms last week, so that was a really busy time for me," she said.

"But we have been reaching out and my friends have been awesome."

Senior Writer Matthew Price contributed reporting. Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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