

Francisco Esparza: The Perfect Wabash Man

In his time at Wabash College, Francisco “Frank” Higinio Esparza ’83 embodied the Wabash ideals by thinking critically, acting responsibly, leading effectively, and living humanly. He acted as a speaker, a leader, a representative, and a journalist for *The Bachelor*.

Esparza hails from Indianapolis, Indiana¹. Francisco got his start at the College as a freshman in Morris Hall². Frank demonstrated his intelligence through his accomplishments in both academic and extracurricular activities. He earned a spot on the *Dean’s List* for four semesters at Wabash and graduated *Cum Laude* in 1983.³ At the college he found great success studying the sciences and also participated on the Forensics



Photo of Francisco Esparza
(Ramsay Archives)

Team. *The Bachelor* recorded him winning the preliminary round in the New Year’s Novice Indiana Event Tourney in October of 1980⁴. While at Wabash Esparza received the Norman E. Treeves Award in Science⁵, given to, “A senior concentrating in Division I (biology, chemistry, mathematics, and physics) who has shown the greatest progress academically and as an individual during their junior year⁶.”

¹ *Wabash Student News Bureau* June 1983.

² Uncredited, “The Quid Nunc: All News Worth Reading About Wabash’s Living Units” *The Bachelor* 08-31-1979.

³ *Wabash Student News Bureau* June 1983.

⁴ Uncredited. “Forensics Earns Second” *The Bachelor* 10-03-1980.

⁵ *Wabash Student News Bureau* May 1983.

⁶ *Wabash Student News Bureau* May 1983.

Francisco Esparza began joined the debate team his freshmen year and participated in debates against students from other universities⁷. He would debate on a variety of subjects on and off campus. These campus debates were regularly political, covering the current events of the time⁸. For instance, one of his debates, hosted by the Parliamentary Union, covered the relationship between the United States government and General Motors⁹.

In 1981, Esparza was one of Wabash's speakers in the Monon Debate, which pitted Wabash and DePauw students against each other on the issue of The Gentlemen's Rule¹⁰. On several occasions Esparza and the Wabash team traveled to other states for debates¹¹. Frank would sometimes cover his debates in *The Bachelor* and, in one issue, made a case for



Esparza speaks in a debate hosted by the Parliamentary Union. Photo by Dave Holland.

how debating should work. He suggested that reason should be held above facts because memorizing facts does not require intelligence or critical thinking. He wrote, "In debate it was even more evident. Try and argue a reasonable point and the opponents would retort evidence! When it came time for rebuttals, the argument was we had five cards and they had four, therefore we win."¹²

⁷ Uncredited "Eight Compete in Speech Meet" *The Bachelor* 10-12-1979.

⁸ Uncredited. "Republicans Win Campus Debates" *The Bachelor* 11-04-1980.

⁹ Holland, Dave. Photo *The Bachelor* 03-21-1980.

¹⁰ Jeffers, Tom. "The 'Gentleman's' Rule Debated" *The Bachelor* 11-13-1981.

¹¹ Esparza, Frank "In Quest for Education" *The Bachelor* 03-26-1982.

¹² Esparza, Frank "In Quest for Education" *The Bachelor* 03-26-1982.

At Wabash, Frank held leadership positions in the Hispanic Society¹³ and rose to the position of Vice President in his junior year¹⁴. During the same year the Hispanic Society hosted “Latin American Fest” where students from other colleges would be invited to join Wabash in a cultural celebration¹⁵.

It was during his senior year that Francisco Esparza became President of the Hispanic Society¹⁶. As president he advocated for better recruitment of Latino students¹⁷. In a letter to the editor that was featured in *The Bachelor*, Frank spoke out about the struggles of Latino students at Wabash. He criticized the lack of funding for Latino led

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Esparza: Hispanics Are Minorities, Too

Dear Sir:

In examining *The Bachelor* article “What Gains Have Been Made for Blacks at Wabash?” by Ted Rourke, I noticed the words minority and black were interchanged frequently albeit erroneously as if to indicate that they were synonymous. A trivial matter to be sure but unfortunately it reflects a sort of muted response to the entire picture as far as minorities are concerned at Wabash College.

I refer to the fact that not once in the article above mentioned, was the word Hispanic substituted for minority. In a sad ironic sense this may reflect how the college feels concerning the under-representation of the second largest and perhaps soon to be

largest minority in the country.

In the *Time* magazine cover story “It’s Your Turn in the Sun” (Oct. 16, 1978, pp. 48-61) it was reported that the Hispanic proportion of U.S. population was nine percent vs. 12 percent for blacks and due to the greater population increase rate among Hispanics they may soon be the largest minority. As a member of the Minorities Studies Committee over a period of three years I can attest to the fact that the Hispanic presence here at Wabash College has been examined.

Over these three years: the Hispanic Society was formed and continues to function, two Owen Duston Visiting Scholars have come and once a semester the campus hosts the “Spanish Fest.” Inequities however are all too painfully obvious.

In regards to finance and other support facilities, there is little to none in contrast to the Malcolm X Institute and separate financing for blacks. In terms of academics, only Dr. Rosenberg’s English 10 class offers any formal study of Hispanic Culture.

In assessing the minority situation at Wabash College it is safe to say that it is inadequate and incomplete. Perhaps a reassessment of the future picture of the minority presence is called for in light of President Salters’ statement that, “The strong presence of racial and ethnic minorities is an absolute essential if this academic community is to become genuinely representative of first quality liberal education” and said statement’s endorsement by the Wabash College Faculty.

Esparza argues that the College needs to make a concentrated effort to increase recruitment of Latino students and funding of Latino clubs. (*The Bachelor* 02-25-1983)

¹³ Esparza, Francisco. “Esparza: Hispanics Are Minorities, Too” *The Bachelor* 02-25-1983.

¹⁴ Elizondo, Bob. “Over 60 Latinas on Campus Tonight” 04-02-1982.

¹⁵ Elizondo, Bob. “Over 60 Latinas on Campus Tonight” 04-02-1982.

¹⁶ Esparza, Francisco. “Esparza: Hispanics Are Minorities, Too” *The Bachelor* 02-25-1983.

¹⁷ Esparza, Francisco. “Esparza: Hispanics Are Minorities, Too” *The Bachelor* 02-25-1983.

clubs and poor recruitment efforts. On the subject of recruitment, he wrote: "In assessing the minority situation at Wabash College, it is safe to say that it is inadequate and incomplete. Perhaps a reassessment of the future picture of the minority presence is called for in light of President Salters' statement that, 'The strong presence of racial and ethnic minorities is an absolute essential if this academic community is to become genuinely representative of first quality liberal education' and said statement's endorsement by the Wabash College Faculty¹⁸."

Esparza was a representative for Morris Hall¹⁹ and served on the Minority Committee in the Wabash College Student Body Senate in his second and third years at the College²⁰. Thanks in part to his efforts, the Senate recognized the need for better

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Senate Passes Minorities Resolution

In response to urgings from the Wabash permanent committee on minorities, chaired by Wabash political science professor Dr. David Hadley, the Student Senate Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution recognizing the importance of minority representation and pledging to actively support minority recruitment at Wabash.

The motion was brought before the Senate by Senator Sal Dominguez, who is also a member of the Minorities Committee. Dominguez described the intent of the resolution as being a "student statement of position by the Student Senate as representatives of the student body," according to Student Senate Secretary Randy Williams.

See inset article to the right for exact wording of the resolution.

Hadley, when asked about the resolution, explained that it was an effort undertaken by the student members of the Minorities Committee. Other students on the committee besides Dominguez are Terry Grimm, Charles Gant and Frank Esparza.

When asked of his personal view of the matter, Hadley stated, "I'm pleased that the Student Senate responded to this request [from the committee he chairs] for some kind of a commitment. I hope that this kind of cooperation will be continued in the future."

The Senate also resolved in its meeting on Tuesday to stay completely uninvolved in beer-purchasing plans as long as current disagreements among living units persists. According to Student Senate president Dan Peters, "We made a resolution that as long as there wasn't full participation by the fraternities and dormitories, we [the Senate] would not get involved."

The resolution came as a result of problems that arose over beer-buying plans, under the jurisdiction of the Inter-Fraternity Council, at a recent meeting of the IFC.

The basis of the disagreement within the IFC was over using fraternity funds for the purchase of beer, raised by the Phi Kappa Psi representative to the IFC, John Clymer. On a vote to approve a plan for the purchase of \$2,000 worth of beer for Pan-Hel, only the Phi Psis objected to such an arrangement, with the Lambda Chi Alpha representative abstaining.

In a chapter meeting held Wednesday night, the Phi Psis voted to approve the Pan-Hel beer-buying plan, however, ending the dispute in this area and apparently paving the way for beer to be purchased by the student body as a whole.

The plan now being considered calls for each of the nine fraternities and the dormitory students to pitch in \$200 apiece toward the purchase of Pan-Hel beer. This arrangement could be altered somewhat in the fraternity end of the deal, if the decision is made to proportion the total of \$1,800 called for from the nine fraternities according to fraternity population instead of the flat \$200 apiece.

According to Birden, a new policy will also be implemented to discourage non-Wabash students and faculty from getting free beer during the celebration. Beer will be dispensed by the glass from behind a counter, instead of from kegs as in previous years. This, it is hoped, will discourage outside intruders and also help ease the problem of long beer lines.

Birden also announced that there would be an IFC sponsored pizza party and beer-competition games on Thursday night of Pan-Hel. The party and competitions will take place in Chadwick Court.

Be It Resolved:

That the Student Senate realizes that minority representation is a vital part of the Liberal Arts education, therefore, we actively commit ourselves to the pursuit of a greater minority representation in both student and faculty recruitment, and the sponsoring or support of programs such as those rendered from the Minorities Committee in achieving those ends.

The Student Senate responded to demands for better inclusion of Latino Students at Wabash College. (*The Bachelor* 04-03-1981)

¹⁸ Esparza, Francisco. "Esparza: Hispanics Are Minorities, Too" *The Bachelor* 02-25-1983.

¹⁹ *Wabash Student News Bureau* February 1980.

²⁰ Note: While it is clear that Esparza served on the Student Senate for his sophomore and junior year, I was unable to find clear evidence to show whether or not he was a member of the senate during his senior year.

recruitment of Latino students and more funding for Latino clubs²¹. *The Bachelor* recorded a resolution passed by the Student Senate in 1981 in response to some of Esparza's calls for action. "Student Senate Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution recognizing the importance of minority representation and pledging to actively support minority recruitment at Wabash²²."

As a writer Esparza shared his opinions about the Wabash experience. He covered a huge variety of topics from the Wabash tradition²³ to political happenings²⁴. His writing was bold. Frank was unafraid to openly criticize, whatever or whomever stuck out as unjust to him, even members and institutions of the College. He brought a confident writing style peppered with quips and jokes that made his arguments approachable for both sides of the debate. His arguments would often center around political freedom and its impact on



Frank Esparza (left) spends a Friday night with friends. (Photo from *The Wabash*, volume 128, 1981 p. 61.)

Wabash. In one of his articles, he laid out his argument for free speech: "Albeit, free speech and a free 'press are not always entertaining nor comforting; they do provide a forum for the exchange and examination of ideals and information. The advantage of this exchange allows anyone with an open mind to formulate and sharpen his own views, as well as make him a more accurately informed citizen susceptible to forfeiture²⁵."

²¹ Uncredited. "Senate Passes Minority Resolution" *The Bachelor* 04-03-1981.

²² Uncredited. "Senate Passes Minority Resolution" *The Bachelor* 04-03-1981.

²³ Esparza, Frank "Wabash Principles Give Us 'Carte Blanche' Now" *The Bachelor* 01-22-1982.

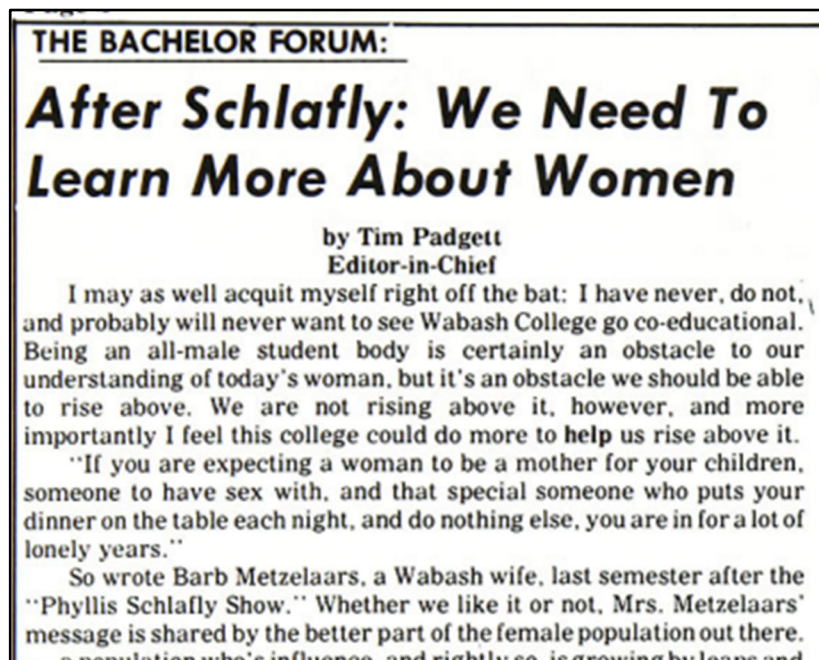
²⁴ Esparza, Frank. "Wabash Not Immune to Free Press" *The Bachelor* 02-19-1982.

²⁵ Esparza, Frank. "Wabash Not Immune to Free Press" *The Bachelor* 02-19-1982.

Esparza became a layout and materials consultant for *The Bachelor* during his junior year²⁶. *The Bachelor* from the years that Esparza was a member of the staff is still looked back on as one the best stretches of journalism from the paper. Francisco's biggest accomplishment as a journalist was winning a second-place award at the 1983 Indiana Collegiate Press Awards (ICPAs²⁷). Along with coauthors Editor-In-Chief Tim Padgett and Joseph Adam, Francisco would publish an editorial campaign focused on the contributions of women to the College and society²⁸. The same year *The Bachelor* achieved fourth at the ICPAs for weekly newspapers²⁹.

Altogether, Francisco Esparza embodied the core values of Wabash. His attention to scholarship, journalism, and as a leader represent the ideal of what it means to be a Wabash man.

-Ethan Wallace '25



A 1982 article by Editor-In-Chief Tim Padgett that was part of the editorial campaign about 'women' that took second place at the 1983 ICPAs. From *The Bachelor* 02-12-1982.

²⁶ Esparza, Frank "In Quest for Education" *The Bachelor* 03-26-1982.

²⁷ *Wabash Student News Bureau* April 1983.

²⁸ Note: I was unable to find any articles attributed to Esparza that were part of the campaign. However, he was recognized as a coauthor according to the Wabash Student News Bureau.

²⁹ Uncredited. "Journalists Win ICPA Awards" *The Bachelor* 04-15-1983.