

Veronica Isabel Sotelo

Senior, Political Science & Theatre

by Joseph S. Spencer, Sr.

Her finger strums musical strings from the guitar like the sun's ray lifts the morning dew, revealing earth's beauty. The essence of music flows with her creative and innovative spirit like the wind rustling the tree's leaves, as she strives to inspire others to uplift themselves and achieve what they thought impossible. This is the mission of Veronica Isabel Sotelo, a UWM senior with majors in political science, theater, and a certificate in Cultures and Community.

Born in Leon, Mexico, Sotelo came to the United States with her family. She completed elementary school in Beloit and graduated from a high school in Milwaukee. She is fluent in Spanish and English, which she finds advantageous.



During her first year at UWM, Sotelo enhanced her political knowledge with the College Democrats and the Latino Student Union (LSU). She became the vice president of LSU during her second year, and the president of the organization in her third year. She has definitely sharpened her leadership skills through these experiences.

Realizing Latina/os were missing the golden opportunity of higher education to advance, she produced a booklet with scholarship information on guidance, funding sources, timelines, and other valuable information to motivate students in pursuing higher education. The booklet was produced by students for students and LSU held seminars at local high schools. Thereafter, speaking engagements allowed her to address the “holistic person” as a part of the educational process.

“The Latina Monologue has been a great feature for LSU regarding Latina women telling their stories,” she continues. The monologue was also aired on “Morning Blend,” a daily Milwaukee television program. Additionally, LSU participated in cultural entertainment with the Black Student Union, Multicultural Student Coalition, Asian Student Union, and Kappa Delta Chi, which was co-sponsored by interested parties at UWM. “We performed a series of scenarios regarding multicultural stereotypes, based on how others wrongly judge a person,” she reflects.

Regarding generational and cultural gaps, Sotelo sees language as a barrier for Latina/os. “The first generation may not have attended college and is unaware of available advantages,” she explains. “This creates a wide barrier when assisting children with school assignments. Additionally, the gap is widened when today’s generation gets involved in street activities, leaving parents at a loss because of the language and generational barriers.”

What she has accomplished through LSU are “actions that are critical today because Latina/os do not have many resources,” Sotelo states. “Latina/os need more education to enter the professional markets, role models, and positive influence while in high school. Having a high school diploma is not enough, neither is dropping out of school and gang involvement conducive to their welfare.” She finds great joy in helping others through the education process, thus allowing them to “Be all they can be.”

Sotelo’s leadership also gained her recognition as a community advocate for voting and immigrants’ rights. “I helped organize students to increase the Latina/o vote and promote it,” she says. “It was very interesting and I learned a lot about the political arena.” Several of her community activities were featured in the *Voces de la Frontera*, a community advocacy publication.

“Bilingual education is of vital benefit to American society,” she says emphatically. “There is a need for professionals to be educated in more than one language. I used to help with medical translations. When a mother does not understand a medical professional, it could be problematic.”

Sotelo spends her summers at the United Community Center (UCC) as a tutor and mentor to elementary school students. Previously, she worked for the Youth Volunteer Corps as a math and social science tutor.

For relaxation, Sotelo loves walking by the lakefront and downtown. “The water is so beautiful,” she exclaims. “However, I do not like the extreme coldness of the winter or excessive heat in the summer. It is so different from Mexico where the cool breeze on your face is so refreshing all year.” She also misses the fresh fruits and special dishes from Mexico.

“I love to draw portraits, play the piano and pick the guitar, which I used to do with my aunts,” Sotelo says about her hobbies. “However, my personal goals are to make others better, serve as an inspiration, and to get Latina/os more committed to the educational process.” Sotelo is ecstatic that she is able to accomplish these goals through the mediums which UWM offers her as an inspiring undergraduate student.

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