



HEALTH SPEAKS **EVERY** LANGUAGE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Letter from the Founding Director



Dear Alce su Voz Supporters,

I write this letter in May 2025, and the U.S. public health landscape has been completely transformed in the past four months. Like countless health-focused programs across the country, Alce su Voz has suffered from a loss of federal funding, and because of a new state proviso here in Kansas that reinforces the current federal discourse, our efforts to seek non-federal grant funding have also been delayed. Despite these challenges, Alce su Voz continues to move forward to pursue our mission of health equity for speakers of Spanish and Indigenous languages. In this current climate, we are extremely grateful for your support of our initiatives and the ongoing support of the Kansas Health Foundation through the Building Power and Equity Partnership that have allowed us to continue to thrive as a program at Wichita State University (WSU).

2024 was an extraordinarily productive year for us. We began the year focused on our efforts to improve healthcare language access for speakers of Spanish and Indigenous languages in Kansas, primarily funded by the Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Every time we offer our community language access workshops, I am moved by the commitment and the collaboration of our team members, who work together tirelessly to orchestrate the publicity, graphic design, catering, registration, distribution of participant support stipends, and record keeping for each event. I would like to specifically recognize Denise Romero, our Director of Community Engagement, for coordinating these events, and Margarita Francisco, our Akateko Community Liaison, for recruiting Mayan community participants and arranging the interpreting services for our Ark City and Coffeyville workshops.

Quality professional health care for patients with non-English language preference requires well-trained clinicians and interpreters who are prepared to work together in health care settings, and Alce su Voz made strong contributions to healthcare workforce development in 2024. We are grateful to our partners at the KU-Wichita Department of Family and Community Medicine and the National Association for Medical Spanish (NAMS) for their collaboration on our clinician professional development videos, which can be found on our website and YouTube channel. In addition to these videos, we offered our third 40-hr. medical interpreter training in 2024 and our fourth training in early 2025, facilitated by our Director of Interpreter Engagement and Education Rommy Vargas-Bezzubikoff.

We also made strides toward supporting systemic change to improve healthcare language access through our policy research, which you can read about in our white paper “Enhancing Infrastructure for Equitable Healthcare Language Access Services in Kansas.” We are grateful for the collaboration of Mara Youdelman, the Managing Director of Federal Advocacy at the National Health Law Program, on this research, as well as Dr. Nikki Keene Woods, Chair of the WSU Department of Public Health Sciences, for spearheading our language access research project. My hope is that in 2025 and beyond we can support the state of Kansas and local healthcare entities in the implementation of our recommendations for improved language access policies and procedures.

Last year also marked the beginning of our oral history project “Stories of Language, Communication, and the COVID-19 pandemic in Kansas Latine Communities,” funded, until recently, by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). Last year, we focused primarily on developing our approach to oral history interviews in Latine communities through a collaboration with Dr. Elena Foulis of Texas A&M San Antonio. The preparation, which included an interview training and a collaborative research project on trauma-informed approaches to oral history interviews, set the stage for the 15 interviews that we conducted in Spanish and Akateko in several cities in Kansas this past winter. Unfortunately, NEH issued a stop work order on this project in April 2025 due to shifting federal priorities. However, we plan to proceed with our plans to archive the interviews and curate segments for public dissemination and use in Spanish and public health courses.

In summer and fall 2024, we continued our work to support vaccination for Mayan Indigenous communities in Cowley and Montgomery Counties in rural South Central and Southeast Kansas, with funding from the Kansas Department of Health and the Environment (KDHE). We collaborated with the Cowley and Montgomery County Health Departments to offer interpreting in multiple languages at two back-to-school vaccine events, and we initiated the creation of a video on childhood vaccines with voiceovers in multiple languages. We also began to develop a set of educational materials for healthcare professionals on care for Mayan communities in Kansas. Savannah Paschal, a recent WSU graduate, was the program manager for this project and the creative force behind many of the activities. Unfortunately, the funding stream for this program, from the Centers for Disease Control, was discontinued in April. We hope to continue this work with alternative sources of funding.

I always say that the most incredible aspect of this program is the way it allows WSU students to grow and learn. In 2024, students were engaged through course assignments and as paid employees. I would like to especially recognize our graduate research assistants Raúl Rangel and Gabriela Aguilar and our undergraduate research assistant Alec Schon, for their unwavering commitment to our programs. Each of them has had the opportunity to focus on aspects of our work that align with their own areas of study and expertise: Indigenous linguistics, health care, and computational linguistics, respectively. Graduations notwithstanding, we want them to stay with ASV for as long as they can!

Finally, one more piece of good news: Alce su Voz recently hired a new program manager! Dr. Drew Colcher joined our team as staff in May after completing his PhD in Hispanic Linguistics at the University of Texas at Austin. A Wichita native, Dr. Colcher has been collaborating with us in different capacities for several years. In fact, like Mz. Paschal, he began his work on linguistic equity after taking my course Spanish in the U.S. at WSU many years ago. We are thrilled to have Dr. Colcher officially on our team to lead our capacity building efforts in the area of healthcare language access.

I hope my letter and this annual report provide you with a sense of our recent accomplishments. There is much more work to be done to achieve health equity for linguistically marginalized communities in the United States, and we are indebted to our donors who are making it possible for us to continue this endeavor.

If you have any questions or comments about this report or any aspect of our program, please feel free to reach out to me by email at showstack.alcesuvoz@wichita.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in white ink on a dark blue background. The signature reads "Rachel Showstack, PhD" in a cursive, flowing script. The "R" is large and loops around the first part of the name. The "PhD" is written in a slightly more formal but still cursive style.

Alce su Voz President and Founding Director

Letter from the Director of Civic Engagement Initiatives



Hello Everyone!

It has been an incredibly eventful year—it's almost unbelievable to look back on all of our accomplishments, and I was in attendance for almost all of them! In 2024 we held workshops from January all the way into November. Every workshop was so incredibly lively and filled to the brim with excitement. Even though I assure you there were a lot of unexciting tasks during the planning, I wouldn't change the time I spent on each one!

Like Dr. Showstack, I write this letter far later than 2024, during this consistently shifting environment. It was devastating to have two federal grants discontinued just as we were making great progress. I can't lie and say it was really easy to be resilient or that I always had a smile on my face while wrapping up grant work that would normally take months in mere days. But during these hard (an understatement) times, I can confidently say we found comfort in remembering our strength as the Alce su Voz team and in our community, which we work tirelessly to protect. Our unwavering passion for the health of our community cannot be better summarized than by our mission statement: to improve health equity for Spanish and Indigenous language speakers.

I am so grateful for all who have joined us on this journey to work toward a healthier Kansas for all. I hope everyone who has attended a workshop, donated money, or volunteered with us understands the monumental work we have done together. My gratitude cannot be expressed in words, but I know we will all continue working together until health equity is achieved for everyone.

I joined Alce su Voz as a young college student wanting to improve the health of my community in the south side of Wichita. I couldn't imagine that a small step into Dr. Showstack's class would turn into a greater lifelong purpose. I want to deeply thank Dr. Showstack, Denise Romero, and Rommy Vargas-Bezzubikoff for being great role models and opening my eyes to what adulthood could actually be like. Lastly, I would love to thank our student employees and volunteers— Gabriela, Alec, Raúl, Jorge, and Perla—for making me look forward to hours-long car rides through the miles of Kansas wheat.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Savannah Paschal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Program Manager

About Alce su Voz

Mission

Our mission is to support health equity for speakers of Spanish and Indigenous languages in the U.S., with a focus on Kansas and the Midwest.

Vision

Our vision is a future where state and institutional systems are built to ensure that everyone, regardless of language, receives the care and resources needed to achieve the highest possible level of health and well-being.

Strategies

We are working to achieve this mission and vision through the following strategies:

Community Engagement	Policy Research and Education	Workforce Development
Workshops, listening sessions, and public campaigns in the areas of language access, civic engagement, and community storytelling	Empirical research and engagement with policy makers and healthcare leaders to improve state and institutional policies and procedures for supporting linguistically diverse communities	Support for the development of an educational pipeline to build a workforce of qualified bilingual healthcare providers, trained interpreters, and clinicians who are prepared to care for linguistically and culturally diverse communities

Connect

To connect with Alce su Voz, visit alcesuvoz.com or our social media across Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.

Improving Healthcare for Vulnerable Communities

Language Access Education for Speakers of Spanish and Indigenous Languages in Kansas

Language differences should not prevent individuals with non-English language preference from accessing the same health services or public safety information as those whose primary language is English.

The Alce su Voz Community Education Team, a collaboration between Alce su Voz and Salud + Bienestar, was formed to advance language access in health care with financial support from the Office of Minority Health of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In 2024, we held five community education workshops in Wichita, Coffeyville, Ark City, Dodge City, and Liberal, which have increased the awareness of individuals who speak Spanish or Indigenous languages of their right to qualified professional interpreting services and how such services are provided. Through these efforts, we engaged and empowered speakers of Spanish and Indigenous languages in regions with high levels of social vulnerability and ultimately improved health outcomes in Kansas.





189

more than 189 individuals attended
our community workshops



100

more than 100 language access
cards were handed out



Building a Cohort of Medical Interpreters

Enhancing Patient Care and Communication for Spanish-Speaking Patients

In 2020, bilingual Latine students shared stories of being a child interpreter for their parents at medical visits when professional interpreters were not provided, potentially causing them emotional stress. Other stories shared include health professionals being pulled away from their jobs to interpret despite not being hired or trained in that role, further increasing their workload without compensation.

The Alce su Voz Interpreter Engagement and Education Team, led by Rommy Vargas, the CEO of Spanish Ad Hoc Translations, improved healthcare communication and safety for Spanish-speaking patients through various initiatives. These initiatives include professional development workshops, the collaborative development of an agenda for the professionalization of the interpreter role in Kansas, and a 40-hour Spanish medical interpreter training with a Cross-Cultural Communications curriculum.

In March 2024, a new cohort of 15 medical interpreters emerged from our 40-hour training. With grant funding, we are building a workforce of qualified interpreters to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Kansas.



15



15 community members trained through 40-hr. medical interpreting training to bridge language barriers and prevent medical errors



Bridging Language Barriers

Clinician Education for Students

Although language concordant care is beneficial for patient satisfaction and compliance, clinician language proficiency and self-assessment are needed to prevent medical errors and misunderstandings. Cultural humility is another vital aspect of patient care that a healthcare provider must practice to understand their patients and respond appropriately.

In 2024, The Alce su Voz Clinician Development Team published three professional development videos on caring for patients with non-English language preference in collaboration with the University of Kansas-Wichita Department of Family and Community Medicine and the National Association for Medical Spanish. The videos go into depth about the best practices for the care of linguistically diverse patients, clinician language proficiency testing, and clinician language self-assessment that clinicians and healthcare teams should know.

The videos feature Dr. Glenn Martínez of the University of Texas, San Antonio, Dr. Colleen Loo-Gross of the University of Kansas-Wichita, Rommy Vargas-Bezzubikoff of Spanish Ad Hoc Translations, Dr. Pilar Ortega of the University of Illinois at Chicago, and Dr. Karol Hardin of Baylor University.

Striving for a Healthier Future

Offering Recommendations for Improved Healthcare Language Services in Kansas

The Alce su Voz Hospital and Clinic Engagement Team dived into policy research focused on analyzing healthcare language access policies, the challenges faced within Kansas healthcare entities in the provision of language access services, and the government's involvement in supporting language access.

The team published a white paper, *Enhancing Infrastructure for Equitable Healthcare Language Access Services in Kansas*, with the collaboration of Mara Youdelman, the Managing Director of Federal Advocacy at the National Health Law Program, Dr. Nikki Keene Woods from the Wichita State University Department of Public Health Sciences, Dr. Drew Colcher from Alce



Enhancing Infrastructure for Equitable Healthcare Language Access Services in Kansas: A White Paper

Rachel Showstack, Drew Colcher, Melissa Medina, Colleen Loo-Gross, Gabriela Flores, Rommy Vargas-Bezzubikoff, Nikki Keene Woods, and Mara Youdelman

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www.alcesuvoz.com



su Voz, Melissa Medina from Wichita State University, Gabriela Flores from Flores Advisors LLC, Rommy Vargas Bezzubikoff from Spanish Ad Hoc Translations LLC, and our Founding Director, Dr. Rachel Showstack.

Through our surveys administered to healthcare and public health department administrators across the state in 2023, we developed an understanding multiple systemic problems.

Our goal is for this language access research project to amplify the need for change in institutional policies and provide guidance on best practices.



Civic Engagement in Latino Communities

Empowering Community Members to Participate in Government Activities



over 40 community members attended

Increasing voter turnout is a crucial aspect of improving overall health outcomes. The more a community exercises their voting rights, the more equitable health policies can become.

The Alce su Voz team met with Laura Rainwater, Sedgwick County Election Commissioner, which led to the formation of a coalition involving Alce su Voz, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kansas, Loud Light, and interested citizens who are collaborating to advance election language access and voting.

In September 2024, we held an informative workshop discussing the basics of voting, empowering the Latino community with knowledge about their rights as voters, different voting methods, and the importance of civic engagement in the election year. We collaborated with Audé Negrete from the Kansas Latino Community Network, Election Commissioner Laura Rainwater, Denise Romero from Salud + Bienestar, Rommy Vargas from Spanish Ad Hoc Translations, LLC, and the Wichita Public Library.

Amplifying Unspoken Stories

Stories of Language, Communication, and the COVID-19 pandemic in Kansas Latine and Mayan Communities

Storytelling is a powerful tool that can shed light on issues, strengthen communities, and build relationships, ultimately developing community resilience.

In 2024, we began an oral history project, *Stories of Language, Communication, and the COVID-19 pandemic in Kansas Latine Communities*, which focused on oral history interviews in Latine and Mayan communities, with mentorship from Dr. Elena Foulis of Texas A&M San Antonio. The interviews were conducted in Spanish and Akateko in various cities and towns across Kansas.

This community storytelling initiative aims to impact policymakers, support students' understanding of the relationship between language and health equity, and contribute to public knowledge of the history of the pandemic. The interviews will be archived, publicly disseminated, and included in curricula for public health, health humanities, and linguistics courses.



16

interviews
conducted



Vaccination for Mayan Indigenous Communities

Advancing Health in Rural Mayan Indigenous Communities

Mayan community members often experience vaccine hesitancy and distrust of the U.S. healthcare system, ultimately contributing to low vaccination rates.

In 2024, we continued work on supporting vaccination for Mayan Indigenous communities in Cowley and Montgomery Counties, in rural South Central and Southeast Kansas. This sparked a collaboration with the Cowley and Montgomery County Health Departments to offer interpreting in multiple languages at two back-to-school vaccine events. We also initiated the creation of multi-language videos on childhood vaccines and educational materials for healthcare professionals on care for Mayan communities in Kansas. Due to a recent stop work order, we hope to continue this work with alternative sources of funding in the future.



28



children and adults received
multiple vaccines

50



50 language access cards
handed out during tabling events

5



5 interviews conducted with
Akateko and Q'anjob'al-speaking
individuals to learn about their
perspectives on health care
access, maternal health, and
vaccines

5



5 total tabling events in
Coffeyville and Arkansas City

Student Impact



In 2024, our scholars have achieved impressive heights during their academic programs. With their expanded knowledge of language access and health equity, **they have impacted the world.**



Raúl Rangel

Raúl presented at the 11th National Symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language at The University of Texas at San Antonio and Texas A&M University-San Antonio on representing the Mayan presence in Spanish heritage language classes. Through this presentation, he showed the importance of incorporating indigeneity with Spanish heritage language education and its benefits for social equity for Mayan communities.

He also graduated with a Master of Arts in Spanish with a specialization in Linguistics/ Indigenous Language Documentation.



Jorge de la Hoz

Jorge presented at the Spring into Action conference at Miami Dade College Eduardo J. Padrón Campus on professionalizing the role of the interpreter in Kansas and minority rights through interpretation. Soon after, he presented at the Office of Minority Health Meeting in St. Louis on community engagement and public scholarship for improving healthcare language access.

He also graduated with a Master of Arts in Spanish and was awarded as a Graduate Student of the Year Finalist for demonstrating outstanding scholarship, leadership, involvement, and service.

Gabriela Aguilar

Gabriela presented at the Medical Organization for Latino Advancement – National Association of Medical Spanish NAMS Conference at University of Illinois at Chicago on her perspective of Alce Su Voz's community-based research within Latine and Indigenous communities.

She has earned several awards such as Wichita State University Senior Honors, College of Applied Studies Outstanding Senior, and Kansas Hispanic Education and Development Foundation Outstanding Scholar.

She also graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Exercise Science with an Honors General Interdisciplinary Track and Summa Cum Laude distinction.



Alec Schon

Alec presented at the Linguistic Association of the Southwest conference at the University of Texas at San Antonio on civic engagement for Latine health equity. Through this presentation, he highlights the importance of engaging graduate and undergraduate students in Spanish, linguistics, and health sciences to impact local linguistically minoritized communities.

He also received the top award for the best project at the Wichita State University Service Learning Showcase.

His project incorporated the qualities of social causes, innovation, creativity, collaboration and leadership with Alce su Voz.





Drew Colcher

Drew co-authored the white paper, *Enhancing Infrastructure for Equitable Healthcare Language Access Services in Kansas*, and completed his dissertation, *Multilingual Empire: The Impact of Labor Migration on Linguistic Contact and Variation in Kansas*, **which he successfully defended in April 2025.**



Perla Navarrete

Perla is a dedicated volunteer on our team. She has attended and helped multiple Alce su Voz events during 2024. Along with the Alce su Voz team, she attended the Latino Leadership Luncheon, hosted by the KS Latino Community Network in Dodge City, KS where she learned more about health equity in Kansas.



Our students have greatly impacted our coalition with their grit, intellectual curiosity, and resilience. We are incredibly grateful for their passion and involvement.

Academic Presentations Delivered



Dr. Rachel Showstack

Overview of Alce su Voz, Invited Lecture, Global Health Day, University of Kansas School of Medicine, Wichita, January 30.

Engaging Latinx and Mayan Kansans to Improve Language Access, Mid-America Chapter of the American Translators Association Conference, Johnson County Community College, March 23.

A Multi-Pronged Approach to Improving Healthcare Language Access for Latine and Indigenous Communities in the U.S., Invited Lecture, Linguistic Justice Series, University of California, Riverside, April 2.

Un enfoque multifacético para mejorar el acceso lingüístico en comunidades latines e indígenas en EE.UU., Invited Lecture, University of California, Berkeley, April 5.

A Multi-Pronged Approach to Improving Healthcare Language Access for Latine and Indigenous Communities in the U.S., Invited Lecture, University of California, Davis, April 9.

A Multi-Pronged Approach to Improving Healthcare Language Access for Latine and Indigenous Communities in the U.S., Invited Lecture, University of Rhode Island, September 11.

Academic Presentations Delivered

Compromiso comunitario y investigación académica pública para mejorar el acceso lingüístico en Kansas, Invited Lecture, Texas A&M University–San Antonio, September 25.

Advancing Health Equity for Linguistically Marginalized Communities in Kansas, Invited Lecture, University of Kansas, October 10.

Advancing Health Equity for Mayan Communities in Kansas, Invited Lecture, Denson University, October 16.

Advancing Health Equity for Mayan Communities in Kansas, Invited Lecture, Baker University, co-presenter: Margarita Francisco, October 23.

Oral Histories for Linguistic Justice in Health Care: Pandemic Stories from Kansas Latine and Mayan Communities, Oral History Association, co-presenter: Michelle Enke, November 1.

Improving Healthcare Language Access for Latine & Indigenous Communities in Kansas, Invited Lecture, Purdue University, November 12.





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Academic Presentations Delivered by Alce su Voz

Raúl Rangel

La representación de la presencia maya en las clases de español como lengua heredada, National Symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language, The University of Texas at San Antonio, Texas A&M University–San Antonio, co-presenters: Dr. Rachel Showstack and Margarita Francisco, February 23.

Jorge de la Hoz

Professionalizing the role of the interpreter in Kansas: Alce su Voz fighting for minority rights through interpretation, Spring into Action, Miami Dade College Eduardo J. Padrón Campus, co-presenters: Rommy Vargas-Bezzubikoff and Dr. Rachel Showstack, March 17.

Gabriela Aguilar

A Student's Perspective on Alce Su Voz's Community-Based Research Within Latino and Indigenous Communities, Medical Organization for Latino Advancement – National Association of Medical Spanish NAMS Conference, University of Illinois at Chicago, co-presenter: Dr. Rachel Showstack, October 25.

Alec Schon

Civic Engagement for Latino Health Equity, Linguistic Association of the Southwest conference, the University of Texas at San Antonio, co-presenters: Savannah Paschal and Dr. Rachel Showstack, September 27.

Blog Posts

We published five blog posts during 2024 on valuable knowledge that clinicians, health care administrators, and patients should know.



01

Three Things a Clinician Should Know About Working with an Interpreter

By Francisco “Paco” Martínez and Rachel Showstack

02

Three Things You Need to Know when You go to the Doctor

By Francisco “Paco” Martínez and Rachel Showstack

03

Four Things a Bilingual Clinician Should Know

By Pilar Ortega and Rachel Showstack

04

Alce su Voz from 2020 to Today

By Rachel Showstack

05

Three Things a Healthcare Administrator Should Know About Language Access

By Rachel Showstack, Paul Spacek & Sarah Hoy



Donations

Consider donating to our fund with WSU Foundation and Alumni Engagement to support our work, advance health equity, and sustain our three-pronged approach to improving healthcare language access.



If you consider giving, your gift will be through a secure site that provides students with life-changing opportunities and faculty with the resources to make a difference. The Wichita State University Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and all donations are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

Alce su Voz Team



**Rachel Showstack,
Ph.D.**

Founding Director, Alce su Voz



Savannah Paschal

Director of Civic Engagement
Initiatives



**Drew Colcher,
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Program Manager



Denise Romero

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Alec Schon

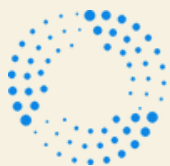
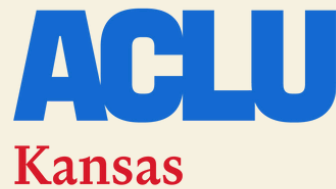
Research Assistant and
Website Manager



Margarita Francisco

Community Liason

Partnerships



National Association of Medical Spanish
Asociación Nacional de Español Médico



*Health Speaks
Every Language*

