



Postsecondary Education Subcommittee Recommendations

*From the Postsecondary Access and Completion for All:
Latinas/os in America's Future Symposium held June 9-10,
2014, New York, NY*

*Report of the
Postsecondary
Education
Subcommittee, The
President's Advisory
Commission on
Educational
Excellence for
Hispanics, April
2015*

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Postsecondary Access and Completion for All: Latina/os in America's Future Agenda

June 9-10, 2014

Roosevelt House: Public Policy Institute at Hunter College

Monday, June 9, 2014

- 12:30 p.m. Welcome Lunch
- 12:40 p.m. Student Guest Speaker: - Rhina Torres
- 1:00 p.m. Progress report from 2012 Symposium -Enriching America through the 21st Century: Increasing Latino Postsecondary Completion: - Alejandra Ceja and Luis Fraga
- 2:00 p.m. Opening Session and Symposium Overview: Co-Chairs Luis Fraga and Lisette Nieves
- 2:20 p.m. Student Guest Speaker: - Elsa Garcia
- 2:30 p.m. First Domain – Moving to the Center of the Latino PSE Landscape-The College Completion Agenda: Opening by Sara Lundquist
- 2:35 p.m. Presentation of Highlights by Authors: David Baime and Deborah Santiago
- 3:05 p.m. Presentation of Highlights by Respondents: Felix Matos Rodriguez and Narcisa A. Polonio
- 3:35 p.m. Open Dialogue: Sara Lundquist facilitates dialogue among all symposium participants based on presentations of authors and respondents
- 4:35 p.m. Identification Key Insights and Initial Recommendations: Sara Lundquist facilitates discussion to identify key insights and initial recommendations
- 5:00 p.m. Break
- 5:30 p.m. Keynote Address: Anthony Carnevale

Tuesday, June 10, 2014

- 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
- 8:45 a.m. My Brother's Keeper Initiative: - Marco Davis
- 8:50 a.m. Student Guest Speaker: - Luis Tejada
- 9:00 a.m. Second Domain – Workforce Development: Facilitated by Lisette Nieves
- 9:05 a.m. Presentation of Highlights by Authors: Anthony Carnevale, Andrea Porter, and Nicole Smith
- 9:20 a.m. Presentation of Highlights by Respondents: Madeline Pumariega and Lazar Treschan
- 9:35 a.m. Open Dialogue: Commissioner Lisette Nieves facilitates dialogue among all symposium participants based on presentations of authors and respondents
- 10:35 a.m. Identification Key Insights and Initial Recommendations: Commissioners Nieves facilitates discussion to identify key insights and initial recommendations
- 11:15 a.m. Break
- 11:30 a.m. Luncheon & Guest Speakers
Opening Remarks: CUNY Vice Chancellor James Milliken
Keynote Address: Undersecretary Ted Mitchell
- 12:30 p.m. Third Domain – College/ University Rating System Facilitated by Luis Ricardo Fraga
- 12:35 p.m. Presentation of Highlights by Author: Anne-Marie Nuñez
- 12:50 p.m. Presentation of Highlights by Respondents: Lorelle Espinosa and Mildred Garcia
- 1:05 p.m. Open Dialogue: Commissioner Luis Fraga facilitates dialogue among all symposium participants based on presentations of authors and respondents
- 2:05 p.m. Identification Key Insights and Initial Recommendations: Commissioner Fraga facilitates discussion to identify key insights and initial recommendations
- 2:45 p.m. Break

3:00 p.m. Closing Session: Lisette Nieves provides closing remarks, synthesizes symposium outcomes, and highlight next steps

3:30 p.m. Adjournment of Symposium

**Report of the Postsecondary Education
Subcommittee, The President's Advisory
Commission on Educational Excellence for
Hispanics, April 2015**

Postsecondary Access and Completion for All: Latinas/os in America's Future

Symposium held June 9-10, 2014, New York, NY

This Symposium was the second action of the Postsecondary Education Subcommittee to contribute directly to President Obama's goal of the U.S. again being the country with the highest percentage of college graduates in the world by 2020. Our first symposium was entitled "Enriching America Through the 21st Century: Increasing Latinas/os Postsecondary Completion." It resulted in 18 specific policy recommendations across the three domains of accessing financial aid, enhancing academic competence, and empowering Latina/o families.

The second symposium invited papers and discussions that met three criteria. First, participants were asked to draw upon research evidence that could shed light on strategies to increase postsecondary completion among Latina/o students. Second, participants were asked to consider strategies that were vertically and horizontally scalable at the institutional, local, state, and national levels. Third, participants were encouraged to propose ideas for building multi-sector, bipartisan coalitions to support policy changes.

We chose three domains that meet these criteria for the second symposium: 1) increasing the role of two-year institutions in the postsecondary education landscape, 2) postsecondary education and workforce development, and 3) a college/university performance-based model and its impact on Latina/o students and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Our rationale for choosing these issues is discussed below. First, community colleges and other two-year institutions are essential linchpins in providing access to working class and first-generation college students and families. In fact, the largest concentration of Latina/o students and families who pursue postsecondary education are found at two-year institutions. They are, therefore, critical to increasing Latina/o postsecondary completion. How can they best be supported to do this work? Second, the transition from postsecondary education to becoming active, engaged, successful participants in the labor force is particularly important for Latina/o students and families. How can this best be accomplished for the largest number of Latina/o students in all types of postsecondary programs? How can they be better prepared to successfully transition into these programs? Third, the Department of Education recently released a new College Scorecard and has solicited feedback on its initial ideas and release through a broad series of meetings and other gatherings. How can the goals of increased accountability and information transparency of such a resource be used to substantially increase the knowledge about and selection of colleges

and universities by Latina/o students and their families? How can increased information about postsecondary institutions' performance improve the work done by HSIs? How can such data be designed to maximize the extent to which postsecondary institutions incentivized to serve Latina/o students? How can those data be placed in context so that institutions with open access policies, such as community colleges and some public universities, receive credit for serving lower-income, first-generation students and are not compared to highly selective institutions?

Prominent scholars were asked to draft knowledge essays assessing what works and what does not work in each of the above-described issues. Invited policy advocates and education practitioners then formally assessed the essays to test the alignment of the research with the knowledge of policy advocates who work directly in education reform and the managerial and operational experiences of education practitioners. It is the interaction of these education leaders across their distinct sectors that, in our view, produces the most salient, pragmatic, innovative, and viable policy recommendations that can best inform policy makers. As we learned from our first symposium, it is from the open and constructive engagement of these researchers, advocates, and practitioners that the best ideas for policy innovation are generated.

The essays, authors, and respondents for each major issue were:

1) "Moving to the Center of the Latina/o Postsecondary Education Landscape – Framing a Community College Agenda," Deborah Santiago, co-founder, Chief Operating Officer, and Vice President for Research, *Excelencia* in Education, and David Baime, Senior Vice President for Government Relations and Research, American Association of Community Colleges (AACC); assessed by Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, President, Eugenio María de Hostos Community College of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Narcisa A. Polonia, Vice President, Education, Research and Board Leadership Services, Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT).

2) "Latinas/os in the Workforce & the Economic Value of Postsecondary Fields of Study: College Completion for What?" Anthony P. Carnevale, Director and Research Professor, Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, Andrea Porter, Director of Strategic Planning and Communications, Georgetown University Center on Education and the

Workforce, and Nicole Smith, Research Professor and Senior Economist, Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce; assessed by Madeline M. Pumariega, President and CEO, Take Stock of Children, and Lazar Treschan, Director of Youth Policy, Community Service Society.

3) “Counting What Counts for Latinas/os and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Federal Ratings System and Postsecondary Access, Affordability, and Success” Anne-Marie Núñez, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, University of Texas at San Antonio; assessed by Lorelle Espinosa, Associate Vice President for Policy Research and Strategy, American Council on Education (ACE), and Mildred García, President, California State University, Fullerton.

All symposium participants were given the essays prior to the meeting. In three separate sessions of one hour and 40 minutes each, panels considered and debated which policies were likely to have the greatest impact on increasing Latina/o postsecondary access and completion. The event was held at Hunter College’s Public Policy Institute—The Roosevelt House, in New York City. This was an ideal location given the history of the CUNY and the influence and contribution of Eleanor Roosevelt in public policy. The event also highlighted the voices of those our policies seek to assist – Latinas/os in education. We invited several young Latinas/os leaders to share their stories. We heard from Cesar V., a young undocumented student who dreamed about pursuing higher education and struggled navigating through systems and policies to achieve his degree; Rhina T., a young woman with a passion for teaching, who is using this as a tool to inspire more Latinas/os to use education as a means to gain stability and self-sufficiency; Elsa G., a young mother returning to school with the assistance of the CUNY Start Program; and lastly, from Luis T., a young man whose postsecondary options were limited, but who found hope in a workforce training program that provided college credits and skills, which prepared him to successfully join the workforce. These narratives provided an important context for the symposium and served as a reminder both of how far we’ve come and of the work that’s left to do.

Domain #1: Increasing the role of two-year institutions in the postsecondary education landscape

Conclusion 1: Community colleges are replete with both overt and covert policies that work against effective navigation into and through the system for Latina/o students

Recommendation: Incent more effective practices and innovative models for support services tied to completion and capacity building.

A myriad of student support approaches have emerged in recent years, ranging from student success courses and mandatory counseling to automated educational planning tools and more – all designed to expedite progress to the finish line. Scaling these practices, with the full support of institutional leaders, is essential to ensuring that they benefit the students most in need of support at critical junctures en route to completion. In addition to scaling these programs, more efforts should be made to encourage continued innovation and testing. Competitive federal grant programs such as those authorized under Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA) provide resources for institutions that serve low-income students and have modest budgets – characteristics that all public community colleges share. A set-aside for community colleges within these programs for student support services, or dollars obtained through the College Opportunity and Graduation Bonus grants to institutions and the America’s College Promise, as proposed by President Obama in the federal budget,¹ would be an excellent start.

Conclusion 2: Although low-income students are eligible for numerous federal and local programs that support completion, not all students know about or apply for these opportunities because of the difficulty in navigating through separate systems.

Recommendation: Align federal and state postsecondary education and skill development funding for low-income students.

Numerous programs exist at the state and federal levels for which community college students

¹ Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Request of the U.S. Government, Department of Education, Higher Education page S-151– <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget16/justifications/s-highered.pdf> (page S-151)

are eligible, but they are fragmented and can be labor intensive for students to navigate. Complex rules governing the various programs limit their efficiency and often leave students to discover and pursue these potentially valuable programs on their own. Interagency coordination in disseminating program information and a simplified grant application process are avenues worth considering to improve the delivery of assistance to the students who need it.

Conclusion 3: The community college system was built for access but contains barriers for transfer to, and degree completion at, 4-year institutions.

Recommendation: Improve transfer and completion of Bachelor's degrees by developing, replicating and scaling effective strategies and encouraging institutions to map and coordinate clear pathways to degree completion.

The lack of clearly defined, explicit pathways to transfer and degree completion deter goal-oriented students from attainment as they frequently must navigate a complex and disconnected set of requirements that result from unclear roadmaps within community colleges and complex pathways from community colleges to universities for upper division studies.²

Conclusion 4: There is a lack of crucial funding for work-study programs at the community college level.

Recommendation: Increase community college participation in work-study programs.

In 2010, public two-year institutions enrolled 34 percent of all students but were allocated only 16 percent of Federal Work-Study resources in comparison with four-year institutions, which enrolled 18 percent of all students but garnered 40 percent of Federal Work-Study funds. Efforts

² This is consistent with the President's American's College Promise proposal to improve pathways between community colleges and four-year institutions. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/09/fact-sheet-white-house-unveils-america-s-college-promise-proposal-tuitio>

should be taken to overhaul the formula used to allocate work-study funds to postsecondary institutions.³

Domain #2: Postsecondary Education and Workforce Development

Conclusion 1: Gains in educational achievement for college-educated individuals will continue, but pursuing a postsecondary degree without career planning may translate into high levels of debt and underemployment for Latinas/os.

Recommendation: Strengthen the connection between Latinas/os students and appropriate employment opportunities (such as career-driven internships) in in-demand fields.

Awareness of what majors lead to certain types of employment and having a clear map of how to get there is one of the biggest challenges for moving students to careers, especially for first-generation, low-income students. Building strong partnerships with in-demand industries in which Latina/o participation is lacking can help to develop, a bridge for this population. Through this approach, students can be provided career-specific mentors and can take advantage of job-shadowing, internships (including those funded through Federal Work-Study), workplace tours and webinars, all of which can lead to a set track for employment. Two successful examples of this are provided by Latina/o-focused organizations such as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, which provide paid internships in federal government as well as with corporate partners to help students increase their level of social capital and civic engagement prior to graduation.

Conclusion 2: We need to aspire to a dual bottom line in high school and college curricula – a pragmatic balance between colleges’ growing economic role and their traditional cultural and political independence from economic forces.

³ The President’s Budget Request in recent years has proposed overhauling the formula to better target FWS funds to institutions that need them. The 2017 Budget request is here: <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget17/justifications/o-sfa.pdf> (page O-38)

Recommendation: Align high school and college curricula with economic workforce demands and build off of success in career and technical education.

Aligning student learning to on-the-job readiness is crucial to increasing persistence and motivation for Latina/o students. Continuing to develop career and technical education (CTE) programs at the high school level and fostering their connections to college will help students to develop skills directly tied to employment after high school and have a deeper understanding of possible career tracks while in college. It appears that the relevant coursework, internships, and other applied learning that CTE schools offer may have an impact not only on high school graduation, but also on students' interest and ability to perform college-level work.

Conclusion 3: Polarization of the postsecondary system matters because resources matter in completion rates, learning, and earning. We need policies that intervene to address growing racial, ethnic, and economic polarization in the American postsecondary education system.

Recommendation: Address the disparities in the college admission process and then increase funding for community and less-selective four-year colleges.

Despite attending college at increasingly higher rates, Hispanics remain concentrated in two-year and less selective four-year colleges that are often underfunded, and which have much lower rates of student completion and subsequent career success. Institutional aid at colleges with high concentrations of Pell recipients, low-income students, and students with disabilities, when used to implement student-centered, evidence-based interventions (such as developmental education, counseling, and other key supports) may improve program completion rates. Additionally, more must be done to provide Hispanic students, particularly high achievers from low-income communities, with pathways into selective four-year colleges. One way to accomplish this goal is through admission policies that equalize the playing field among applicants who come from communities with vastly different resources. For example, the University of Texas allows students in the top 10 percent of their high school class to attend the state university of their choice. Such policies should be explored and considered across the country, as they may increase

access for students from under-resourced schools and communities, and incentivize achievement within the local context.

Conclusion 4: All institutional performance metrics need to take student readiness and socioeconomic characteristics into account to avoid creating barriers for the least-advantaged students.

Recommendation: Institutions would better serve low-income students through the use of readiness measures (such as placement tests) in the context of student socioeconomic status characteristics.

Outcomes viewed in the context of students' academic preparation and college readiness could lead to more focused student counseling and improve the evaluation of program effectiveness based on students' outcomes. Low-income and other nontraditional students typically have lower persistence rates, graduation rates, and labor market success than their more advantaged peers—and tend to come from backgrounds in which they are less prepared academically for college. Not taking this into account could lead some institutions to shut out these students to increase their performance on institutional metrics. A truly innovative system that uses students' academic backgrounds to place their performance metrics in context would not only measure yesterday's successes and failures, but allow information about past performance to feed into program design, counseling systems, and program placement to maximize current and future student success.

Domain #3: College/University Performance-based Model and its impact on Latina/o students and Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Our first symposium was held in 2012 when the Department of Education was still considering that, rather than rate colleges and universities, it would provide a set of information about postsecondary opportunities and performance that would better inform families about postsecondary institutions' access, affordability, and student outcomes through the College Scorecard website, as well as share more information about institutional performance to allow

colleges and universities to benchmark their performance and identify shortcomings.⁴ Our conclusions and recommendations have direct relevance to college choice tools like the Scorecard.

Conclusion 1: The data currently available to determine access, affordability, and value in postsecondary education are flawed and limited.

Recommendation: A national advisory commission that represents postsecondary leaders—including scholars, government officials, school, college and university personnel, employers, students, and families—should be convened to examine how the new data released through the College Scorecard can help inform metrics used to reliably assess institutional performance.

Among the major limits of data currently available at the federal level to determine access, affordability, and value are that: transfer-in and part-time students have not been included in data reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); and reporting of transfer-out students has been voluntary through IPEDS and inconsistently (or unevenly) reported are rarely taken into account. In addition regarding resources, such as per- student expenditures, there is a limit of it being selected for inclusion. Data on transfer-in and part-time students are now being collected through IPEDS for the first time, and the Department plans to update the Scorecard with more comprehensive completion rates when those data become available.

Any institutional performance model should take into account the academic competence of students prior to their enrolling at a specific college or university, state appropriations that can significantly affect the resources available to students in postsecondary institutions, and the increased presence of non-traditional students. Moreover, an institutional performance model should consider examining the value of postsecondary education beyond salaries after graduation. A measure of value that takes into account the “added value” that an institution provides its students, relative to average salaries without such an education in distinct home

⁴ <http://www.ed.gov/blog/2015/06/helping-families-navigate-their-higher-education-options/>

communities, as well as added value in areas such as civic engagement and public service employment, sense of self-worth, and participation in graduate education should be taken into account. These and other types of data limitations can have the effect of mischaracterizing the access, affordability, and value of postsecondary education at institutions serving distinct types of students and institutions with distinct missions, such as two-year community colleges, open-access colleges and universities, and many HSIs, where most Latina/o students enroll. In addition, metrics appropriate to the type of institution and the aspirations of the students it serves should be considered. A national advisory commission should be convened and tasked to assess and propose more accurate data, data reporting techniques, and context sensitive and institution appropriate metrics that can then be collected, disaggregated, and disseminated to enhance accountability and transparency.⁵

Conclusion 2: Latina/o students and their families tend to receive information about postsecondary education and form their college preferences through non-traditional avenues, noticeably different from many other segments of the population.

Recommendation: Strategies and programs developed to disseminate information secured through college choice tools must be designed in ways that are culturally responsive and consistent with how Latina/o families consume information about postsecondary education, and that take into account patterns of preferences held by Latina/o families.

The impact of any college choice tool in enhancing the knowledge and utilization of any new data regarding postsecondary education depends on efforts made to better inform students and families as to where they should invest their educational dollars. Research and testimonials reveal that Latina/o families, especially those who have little prior experience, tend to make decisions regarding where they will pursue postsecondary education based on high-touch personal guidance (rather than consulting an impersonal website), cost, and the geographical proximity of a college or university to a family's residence. Any effort to enhance the capacity of Latina/o families to use college choice tools when making a decision on postsecondary education

⁵ The Department of Education held a Technical Review Panel in December 2015 to discuss the critical data elements for informing consumer choice of colleges and universities.

must take these patterns, practices, and preferences into account. Outreach and utilization programs attempting to increase the use of college choice tools must incorporate culturally responsive methods of education and information dissemination in both Spanish and English and through media, including Spanish-language television, radio, and social media.

Conclusion 3: There is a risk that an institutional performance model that informs assessments of performance funding could offer comparatively little benefit to Latina/o families and could provide disincentives for colleges and universities to admit many Latina/o students.

Recommendation: Any use of institutional performance models should not, at this point, be tied to performance-based funding. A national task force should assess whether a different performance-based funding model places Latina/o families at risk of being marginalized from postsecondary institutions and also puts HSIs at risk of being further depleted of necessary financial resources to better serve Latina/o students and families. This task force should also monitor how institutional performance models are being implemented in colleges and universities throughout the country.

There is very little research that performance funding encourages educational institutions to better serve first-generation college and low-income students, including many Latinas/os and their families. Among practices that might be pursued by some institutions under performance funding might is to limit the number of students who are at higher risk of low performance or non-completion from enrolling at their institutions. Moreover, any increased federal or institutional obligations incurred related to data acquisition and dissemination as a result of using or building an institutional performance model must be compared to the potential advantage of investing those dollars in programs that are designed to increase college access and persistence among groups of students that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, including Latina/o students, such as the Federal TRIO programs (including Student Support Services), the GEAR UP program, and other promising approaches such as dual enrollment opportunities for secondary school students. It is also possible that increased funding made available to HSIs through Title V of the HEA could enhance access, affordability, and value in

postsecondary institutions for Latinas/os to a greater degree than performance based models. A national task force would have the responsibility of assessing how a full range of postsecondary institutions are likely to respond and adapt to any future efforts to assess college performance. They could also identify best practices in place at postsecondary institutions, as well as evidence-based practices reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, that support academic success for Latinas/os and other students. Such practices could then serve as models for other postsecondary institutions to consider.

Three Commissioned Essays and Responses

Moving to the Center Of the Latino Postsecondary Education Landscape- Framing a Community College Completion

Agenda

A Knowledge Essay Prepared by

Deborah Santiago, Excelencia in Education

David Baime, American Association of Community Colleges

This commissioned essay is provided for informational purpose only. The information, opinions, or recommendations expressed in the commissioned essays are the work solely of the authors, and are not adopted or endorsed by the Government, the U.S. Department of Education, or the President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Executive Summary

Community colleges are the nation's gateway to postsecondary education for many Latinos because of their location, accessibility, and affordability. In fact, Latinos are overrepresented at community colleges and under-represented at four-year colleges. Yet too often community colleges are overlooked in the ongoing public policy debate over Latino degree completion, in part because of a deep-seeded emphasis on baccalaureate education and low expectations about community college outcomes. A transformational movement is underway at many institutions to expand their focus from access to degree completion, aligning their policies, practices, and resources accordingly. This transformation can significantly increase Latino college completion and contribute to the nation's goals for a more educated workforce and citizenry.

It is clear that applying a Latino perspective on a community college completion agenda is timely and necessary. Latinos are a young and fast growing population with high college aspirations, increasing college enrollment, but relatively low educational attainment. This brief essay provides an overview of community colleges and a profile of Latinos enrolled in them. The essay also proposes strategic solutions and associated policy changes informed by these profiles to accelerate the transformation of a college completion agenda at the local, state, and federal level and ensure the intentional focus of increased Latino college completion.

This essay proposes five strategic solutions that can significantly advance a community college completion agenda for Latino students. Two of the strategic solutions focus on institutional reform and support for community colleges and the other three focus on aligned simplification and reform for student support.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

1. Incentivize community colleges' capacity-building as a way of promoting completion.

Several competitive federal grants are available to improve colleges' capacity, quality, and outreach. These existing grant programs provide an opportunity to augment and incentivize degree completion at community colleges. Community colleges would have to submit a measureable and effective plan to increase student outcomes within the grant period (five years) to receive support.

2. *Increase community college participation in federal work-study programs.*

Community college students are less likely to receive work-study funds than students attending four-year colleges, even though community college students generally have greater financial need. Increasing and sustaining community college participation in the federal work-study program requires geographic/sector alignment of the campus-based program funding formula to better target students with extreme financial need as well. Further, the administration of the program must be simplified.

ALIGNED SIMPLIFICATION AND REFORM FOR STUDENT SUPPORT

3. *Align federal and state postsecondary education and skill development funding for low-income students.*

Low-income students at community colleges are eligible to receive numerous federal and state programs supporting workforce development, human resources, and income maintenance. Unfortunately, too often the onus is on students to discover the programs and apply separately for each in order to receive benefits. Better aligning these programs and streamlining the application process would facilitate access for and persistence of Latino community college students.

4. *Improve transfer pathways to bachelor degree completion by scaling or replicating effective strategies.*

Institutional data often shows many community colleges students aspire to ultimately earn a bachelor degree. However, data also show too few students transfer to a four-year college to earn this degree. Policies must be implemented that better inform prospective students—especially low-income, first-generation, and Latino student—about the transfer process and that improve all of higher education’s strategies for transfer and completion.

5. *Incentivize and support more effective practices and innovative models for support services tied to completion.*

Aligning the administration and funding for at least some of these programs, and simplifying the application for students, can help ensure that students and trainees complete programs

and progress toward earning postsecondary credentials. The political, policy, and administrative hurdles entailed in effecting this change are worth surmounting.

Introduction

President Obama has set a goal of 2020 as the year the U.S. will again lead the world in the proportion of its population with a college degree. As the largest and fastest growing minority, it will be impossible to achieve this goal without improving the college success rates of Latino students.⁶ We must identify opportunities to expand Latino student success to meet the broader national goals of an educated citizenry that is part of or has access to the middle-class and is essential to a globally-competitive workforce. With the future U.S. economic health linked tightly to the success of Latino students, colleges must think creatively about how they can use their own as well as community resources to improve Latino student success.

In assessing the prospects for Latino access and success in higher education, it is appropriate to look first to community colleges where many Latino students enroll. Community colleges provide unparalleled access to higher education, yet still face challenges in conferring a proportionate number of degrees or sufficient credits to transfer to baccalaureate programs. Some scholars assert that higher education has become fundamentally stratified – with community colleges and for-profit institutions serving overwhelmingly lower-income, less well-prepared students, while most of the other students enroll in four-year public and private institutions. While their overall college participation has increased, so has Latinos' representation in community colleges, which remain the critical gateway to educational opportunity and attainment for most Latinos.⁷

⁶ Mid-2013, there were 54 million Latinos in the U.S., making up 17% of the U.S. total population. The Latino population grew by 1.1 million from the previous year, accounting for nearly half of the approximate 2.3 million total increase in population, U.S. Census Bureau, *Facts for Features – Hispanic Heritage Month 2013*. http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb13-ff19.html

⁷ In 1980, for example, Latinos represented 4% of total Fall enrollees in degree-granting institutions. By 1990, they represented 6%; 10% in 2000, 13% in 2010; and 14% in 2012. The percentage of Latinos has been consistently higher at two-year than four-year institutions, culminating in 20% at public two-year institutions in 2012, compared to 12% at public four-year institutions. Table 306.20, *Digest of Education Statistics 2013*, U.S. Department of Education. http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_306.20.asp

Community colleges across the country continue to receive lower funding per student than other sectors.⁸ At the same time as the cost of attending four-year colleges continues to rise, community colleges are being asked to meet ever-higher public expectations of access, retention, and completion.

This essay addresses: (1) the nature of Latino participation in community colleges; (2) some of the most notable recent developments within the sector; and (3) some policy changes that, if implemented, could significantly boost Latino achievement.

The Landscape

Community colleges are heterogeneous in terms of their state structures, mission, as well as program offerings. To varying extents, community colleges perform the following roles: providing community and economic development through workforce training and community enrichment; preparing for transfer to a college or university; conferring terminal academic credentials, including sub-baccalaureate certificates and associate degrees and on a more limited basis bachelor degrees; offering English-as-a-Second Language and adult basic education programs; and, collaborating with high schools education, in dual enrollment and related programs. Community colleges are continually changing and adapting their “community” mission to successfully meet the shifting demands at the local, regional, and even national and international levels. This is achieved, it must be remembered, within the existing governance structures and in some cases dwindling public financial support.

Latinos have a strong presence on community college campuses. The colleges serve as an essential pipeline of postsecondary opportunity for these students. Consider the following:

- **Enrollment:** 46% of total Latino undergraduates enrolled in college attend community colleges (2012); and while Latinos represent 14% of all postsecondary undergraduate students and 12% of public four-year institutions, they account for 20% of all students enrolled in community colleges.⁹

⁸ *Trends in Student Aid 2013*, College Board, Figures 8A and 8B.

⁹ Digest of Education Statistics, Table 306.30, NCES, U.S. Department of Education, 2013.

- Degrees earned: 17% of all degrees were earned at community colleges (2012); of total degrees earned by Latinos, 24% were earned by Latino community college students.¹⁰
- Overall postsecondary attainment: 22% of Latino adults 25 years and over have earned an associate degree or higher compared to 42% of all adults in that age group.¹¹
- Enrollment intensity and financial profile: in community colleges the majority of Latinos are enrolled part-time (56%) and are financially independent (53%). About 30% work full-time while enrolled, 30% have dependents, and 26% have independent income less than \$20,000 and 25% have dependent income less than \$40,000.¹²
- College readiness: 45% of Latinos at community colleges report taking remediation (this may well be an understatement).¹³
- College awareness: 19% of Latinos at community college have parents with bachelor degrees, compared to 30% of all community college students.¹⁴

Structural Assets & Restraining Forces

Community colleges at their core were conceived more than a century ago and have operated since to provide equal access to postsecondary education. The measure of their success was ever-expanding enrollments of students, many representing historically underserved populations. Moreover, access was the underlying basis for funding for community colleges. What has become known as the completion agenda for all of higher education and as it applies to community college is of much more recent vintage. It was in the late 1970s that Tennessee became the first state to use performance-based funding for public institutions, four-year state

¹⁰ *Postsecondary Institutions and Cost of Attendance in 2013-14; Degrees and Other Awards Conferred, 1012-13; and 12-Month Enrollment, 2012-13*, Table 3, NCES, U.S. Department of Education, July 2013. <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2014/2014066.pdf>

¹¹ Educational Attainment in the United States, 2013: Detailed Tables, U.S. Census Bureau. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/socdemo/education/data/cps/2013/tables.html>

¹² National Postsecondary Student Aid Study: Undergraduates, 2011-2012 (NPSAS: Undergraduates, 2011-12) AACC Analysis.

¹³ NPSAS: Undergraduates, 2011-12. According to NPSAS 41% of community college undergraduate take at least one remedial course, which is much lower than other studies, some with findings as high as 68%. See, Shana Jaggars and Georgia West Stacey, "What We Know About Developmental Education Outcomes," *Research Overview*, Community College Research Center, January 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

colleges and universities and community colleges. Today, 39 states either have in place or making progress toward having performance-based funding plans; some, but not all that include community colleges.¹⁵

While access is a necessary precursor to completion, it is not sufficient to guarantee completion. In fact, the previously prevailing mentality of “*Que Vayan con Dios* (go with God) we have admitted you, now it’s up to you to complete” is no longer acceptable. The challenges of and the constraints imposed on community colleges, however, remain. These include:

- Insufficient funding to meet defined goals
- Overbroad expectations
- Underprepared students
- Few institutional incentives for completion
- Sub-optimal relationships with high schools and four-year colleges

Getting To Student Success: Strategic Solutions

The current structure of community college support is not conducive to achieving the significantly higher levels of college completion needed to meet broadly articulated and generally shared national goals of degree attainment. The following are five strategic solutions for reform and support informed by the current context of community colleges and Latino students that can frame a community college completion agenda. Two of the strategic solutions fall in the category of institutional reform and support for community colleges and the other three in the category of aligned simplification and reform for student support.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

Sanctions for failing to meet externally imposed completion goals are generally not constructive at community colleges. These colleges enroll all who apply and have been successful at providing broad-based access in communities with limited resources for many years. Sanctions would only serve to jeopardize the colleges’ ability to provide the access necessary for students to ultimately complete a degree. To better implement initiatives that continue providing access while also enhancing student outcomes, community colleges need

¹⁵ Performance-Based Funding: The National Landscape, University of Alabama, Education Policy Center, September 2013. http://uaedpolicy.ua.edu/uploads/2/1/3/2/21326282/pbf_9-17_web.pdf

practical financial incentives and support for themselves and their students, such as the following:

1. *Incentivize community colleges' capacity building as well as completion strategies.*

One way to incentivize measured improvements in degree completion at community colleges is to build on existing federal institutional development programs (such as Title III, Part A, and Title V-Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions [HSIs] of the Higher Education Act) with supplemental funds. These competitive grant programs provide additional resources for institutions with a high enrollment of needy students and insufficient revenue to increase their capacity and quality over five years. Community colleges meet both criteria. They have limited resources from the state and local levels and enroll a high percent of needy students (low-income). As a result, federal support to increase the capacity and quality of institutions can improve the support services and strategies to completion of community colleges.

Capacity building and quality improvement investments, however, do not necessarily translate immediately to increased degree completion. Therefore, one strategic solution to consider is to use the existing programs and develop a set-aside within the program (or explicit components of the program) for community colleges to supplement their capacity building grants with degree completion grants. Community colleges could be asked to submit a measureable plan to increase degree completion and/or transfer performance within the grant period, taking into account the student population served. In its FY 2015 budget the Obama Administration has proposed Pell "bonus" grants program that has features similar to this strategy.

2. *Increase community college participation in federal work-study programs.*

Increasing and then sustaining community college participation in the federal work-study program requires two things to occur. First, there must be geographic/sector alignment of the campus-based program funding formula to better target students with extreme financial need. Second, the cumbersome current campus-based program administration (i.e., match requirements, allocation of community services and other placements) must be simplified.

This is important because in 2010, public 2-year institutions enrolled 34 percent of all students (as measured in FTE) but were allocated only 16 percent of federal work-study funds. In

comparison, private 4-year institutions enrolled 18 percent of all students in higher education and were allocated 40 percent of federal work-study funds. Further, institutions in the West and South (where many Latinos enroll) received lower percentages of work-study allotment relative to their enrollment of students than the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast.

In the last 10 years, there has been a decrease of community college students participating in federal work-study, while there has been an increase of students at 4-year institutions. Some community college administrators have stated that the process for participating in the program, and the administrative costs for implementation have constrained their ability to participate. Simplifying the regulations and requirements for participation may encourage more community colleges to participate and provide work-study aid to their students. In addition, more explicit targeting of the support to needy students may be necessary.

ALIGNED SIMPLIFICATION AND REFORM FOR STUDENT SUPPORT:

The task of choosing a college (and perhaps even whether to go to college) and identifying and accessing the financial means to pay for a quality education through to degree completion is challenging for many traditional students who have the benefit of a support group, including parents and peers, who has had a similar experience. The complex nature of college and student financial aid application is all too often not necessary and can be simplified for students through both structural and policy reform efforts. Consider the following three recommendations for simplifying and reforming student support.

3. *Align federal and state postsecondary education and skill development funding for low-income students.*

There are numerous federal and state programs for which low-income students at community colleges are eligible, including workforce development, human resource and income-maintenance support, postsecondary and adult education, and career and technical education. The lack of integration among these education and human resource programs is a major drag on the system.

The rules that govern these programs, unfortunately, limit their efficient administration and implementation. Furthermore, the onus is usually on the students to discover the programs and require applying separately for each one in order to receive support. Therefore, aligning the administration and funding for at least some of these programs, and simplifying the application for students, can help ensure that students and trainees complete programs and progress toward earning postsecondary credentials. The political, policy, and administrative hurdles entailed in effecting this change are worth surmounting.

One model gaining in popularity across the country is one in which community colleges are partnering with a variety of government offices and community organizations is Single Stop USA. Single Stop works with students and administrators to help students with multiple financial needs—such as applying for a multitude of government benefits, filing their taxes, and receiving financial and legal counseling from community organizations. This model provides access to low income and first generation students who often lack college and financial savviness to the benefits of a wide variety of government community services and programs.

4. *Improve transfer and completion of bachelor degrees by replicating and scaling effective strategies.*

Currently, transfer policies and information about them are decentralized and not uniform or standardized. Fortunately, there are examples of states and institutions that have successfully dealt with the transfer issue. Policies must be implemented that better inform prospective students, especially low-income and first-generation students about the transfer process and more effectively achieve transfer and ultimately completion. The lack of clearly defined, explicit pathways to transfer and degree completion beyond the community college must be rectified for many community college students, including Latino and low-income students.

In California, two pieces of legislation have been enacted to establish a guaranteed pathway for students to transfer from community colleges to California State Universities, along with support services to facilitate degree completion or transfer. Further, the University of California system has placed a renewed emphasis on transfer from community colleges. In Virginia, students who

graduate from one of the state's 23 community colleges with an associate's degree and a minimum grade point average guaranteed admission to more than 20 of the commonwealth's colleges and universities. In addition, eligible community college students may receive a college transfer grant to help subsidize additional costs incurred by attending the four-year college. There are also efforts at the institutional level to improve the transfer process., For example, El Paso Community College and University of Texas at El Paso coordinate along with their feeder school districts to have early college high school linked to the institutions, as well as joint admissions and financial aid applications and shared data to support students' transfer and completion.

As compelling as these examples are, there needs to be a national standard, rather than isolated instances of state or institutional transfer and completion efforts. Improved transfer needs to be catalyzed in particular at the state level because the federal government lacks the means by which to stimulate needed reform.

5. Incentivize and support more effective practices and innovative models for support services tied to completion.

The completion agenda has radically altered the way that community colleges look at what can be done outside the classroom to support that goal. Low completion rates at community colleges are due in part to the absence of resources to provide support outside of the classroom.

A myriad of student support approaches have emerged. These range from student success courses and financial literacy programs to sophisticated and even automated education planning tools that enable students to plot more efficient academic routes and in between peer support cohort models and mandatory counseling among other ideas. These approaches have been recognized and highlighted by various national organizations, such as the League of Innovation, American Association of Colleges and Universities, and *Excelencia* in Education. Moreover, they have potential to be replicated and scaled to serve more students at community colleges. Scaling up to wider implementation from limited evidence-based practices requires incentives for community colleges to adopt new strategies. It is also imperative to generate faculty buy-in,

as they play an essential role, whether in the classroom or in an advising capacity, in encouraging students to stay on their education path.

Summary and conclusion

Implementation of the proposed five strategic solutions – those involving institutional reform and support for community colleges as well as those espousing aligned simplification and reform for student support – may not guarantee that the United States regains its top ranking for an educated population. However, without the reforms, which will raise the educational attainment of Latinos, the largest and fastest growing minority, it is certain that the U.S. will not achieve this goal.

First Comment in response to “Moving to the Center of the Latino Postsecondary Education Landscape – Framing a Community College Agenda”

A Response Essay Prepared by

Félix V. Matos Rodríguez, Ph.D., President, Eugenio María de Hostos Community College, The City University of New York

This commissioned response is provided for informational purpose only. The information, opinions, or recommendations expressed in the commissioned essays are the work solely of the authors, and are not adopted or endorsed by the Government, the U.S. Department of Education, or the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Taking the stimulating concept paper prepared by authors David Baime and Deborah Santiago as the point of departure, I will comment on some of the suggestions they provide.

Degree Completions Grants

- With regard to the developing “degree completion grants,” I would need to have more information about how these would work before giving my endorsement. My concern is that these grants have the potential of doing more harm than good.
- As for the effectiveness of providing performance-based funding of community colleges, the jury is still out. Even though we have no convincing data that this is an effective approach, many elected officials seem eager to adopt it. If these kinds of incentives are established, what are their consequences for the future? Why are so many states moving so quickly to follow this funding model without adequate research or evidence of results?

Increased Participation in Work-Study

- To achieve this increased participation, the number of hours and the rate of pay for work-study jobs need to be commensurate with or better than those that are offered off-campus.
- Students may choose to take off-campus part-time jobs because they offer more hours, better pay, less complicated paperwork, and perhaps other benefits.
- The administration of work-study programs is complicated. Simplification and greater accountability are needed to maximize the use of current funds and to expand.

Improve Pathways to Completion

- More dual-degree (2+2) programs are needed. First generation students benefit from a clear roadmap of goals and expectations since the beginning. These dual programs make

it easier for community college students to transfer. They also improve communication and collaboration between faculty in 4 yr and 2 yr colleges since the faculty have to agree on the curriculum to create the programs.

- Is it reasonable to require students to graduate from the community college before transferring to a four-year institution? Would this be a good policy? Do we have any data on policies like this one?

Other Issues not addressed in paper

- There is an urgent need to develop programs that help part-time students persist and graduate. Most of the existing programs, such as ASAP, CUNY Start and others, require that participants attend full-time. Many simply cannot.
- There is a need to develop programs with two-generation strategies. 30% of Latino Students have dependents. This is a smart use of our limited resources.
- There is a need to develop programs that improve and expand community colleges' infrastructure and endowments.
- There is a need to develop more programs with faculty buy-in so that they have a better chance of being institutionalized on the campus.
- There is need to provide better advisement for community college students. Example: Hostos' Student Success Coaching Unit provides every entering freshman with the necessary connections to keep these students in school and on track.
- In this initiative, full-time student affairs personnel are assigned to all entering students (except those who are transfers) and remain assigned to them until graduation. We expect to have nearly all of our students covered by the end of the 2014-2015 academic year.

Second Comment in response to “Moving to the Center of the Latino Postsecondary Education Landscape – Framing a Community College Agenda”

Catapulting Latino Student Success to a New Level

A Response Essay Prepared by

Narcisa A. Polonio, Executive Vice President for Education, Research and Board Services

Association of Community Colleges, Washington, DC

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In addressing the issue of Latino students in higher education, are we talking about the same problem that we were talking about 20 years ago? This was the question that came to my mind when I read “Moving to the Center of the Latino Postsecondary Education Landscape: Framing a Community College Completion Agenda”. The authors provide an excellent overview of the landscape, community colleges’ structural assets, and the constraints that they face, such as insufficient funding and lack of incentives.

However, the problem has changed on two counts over the last 20 years, and our conversation should reflect that. First, according to the [National Center for Education Statistics](#), minority students will make up an expected 50.3% of all public school students this fall, outnumbering white students for the first time. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), this shift has resulted from a rapid rise in the numbers of U.S.-born Hispanic and Asian children. As these students graduate high school, a similar change will eventually occur in higher education. As Latinos become one of the largest groups in the post-secondary population, we can no longer treat them as some sort of “special problem or special small group with unique needs.” Latinos students will be sitting in classrooms not just in the states which have traditionally had a large concentration of Hispanic population such as California, New York, Texas, Chicago, New Mexico but the growing presence in other states in the south and central part of the country.

Second, our nation increasingly acknowledges the role of community colleges in providing opportunities for students who would otherwise lack them. Community colleges are found in every U.S. state and U.S. territory. They provide a strong, ready-made system for delivering workforce training and transfer preparation, with a proven track record of serving the needs of local communities. It is said that almost every American citizen is within commuting distance of a local community college. There has never been as much national and media attention given to the important role of community colleges as in the last few years. Giving attention and providing testimony to the key role Community colleges have played in helping revitalize local economies and provide affordable and quality educational opportunities.

In light of these changes, I would like to extend the recommendations found in “Moving to the Center”, by suggesting three areas of concern that government, policy makers, educators, and

experts should consider; how we deal with each has the potential to catapult our efforts to increase Latino student success to new heights. Not to do so means we will continue with business as usual or to significantly slow down any gains.

The first area of concern is the impending leadership crisis in the community college sector, as an unprecedented number of presidents retire or otherwise exit their positions. Leadership matters, and is a critical element necessary to sustain the organizational focus needed to tackle difficult issues. As the number of Hispanic students continue to grow, it will not be possible to increase their success without effective leadership from the highest level. How we handle this massive leadership transition will have long-term impact on all of higher education. For example, will the large number of newly open positions also presents an opportunity: do we have a supply of up-and-coming Latino leaders in the pipeline ready to join the ranks of college presidents? Do we have a supply of new community college leaders in the pipeline prepare to tackle the numerous educational needs of the new majority minority population?

The more than 700 local, state, and university governing boards of community colleges will prove equally critical. These boards provide oversight and define policy priorities, but we often overlook the important role that they can play in providing leadership and supporting efforts to carry out change.

The third area of concern is our ongoing fascination with small-scale efforts. We keep looking for the magic solution by investing in boutique projects that, while successful, focus on small numbers of students. We are no longer talking about a small number of students. We need to direct our efforts to taking what works and making it work at on a larger scale.

The Community College Leadership Crisis

According to surveys conducted by the [American Association of Community Colleges](#) and the [American Council on Education](#) (ACE), about three-fourths of community college presidents plan to retire over the next decade. This significant transition will have a long lasting impact on community colleges and higher education in general. If we are to succeed in improve outcomes

for Latino students—or, for that matter, any of the other challenges that community colleges face—we must replace these presidents with effective leaders.

Of the presidents of associate-granting institutions who responded to ACE's 2011 survey, 5.0% were Hispanics—down from 6.1% in 2006, but still much higher than at four-year institutions. The decline mirrors a similar decline in Hispanic presidents across higher education, after steady increases over recent decades. By contrast, the number of African-American presidents held more or less steady between 2006 and 2011 (5.3% vs. 4.9%), from, while the (still-small) representation of Asians increased from 1.0% to 1.5%. The number of women heading community colleges continued to grow, from 29.1% in 2006 to 32.3% in 2011, but not nearly at the rate of the 1980's and 1990's.

While the decline in Hispanic presidents may seem discouraging, a forthcoming study by the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) suggests that the numbers of minority presidents, including Hispanics, may increase over the coming decades: since 2001, minorities have made up a steadily increasing percentage of new hires among the rapidly growing ranks of non-teaching professionals, and we hope the opportunities will be available for many of these professionals to move into leadership roles.

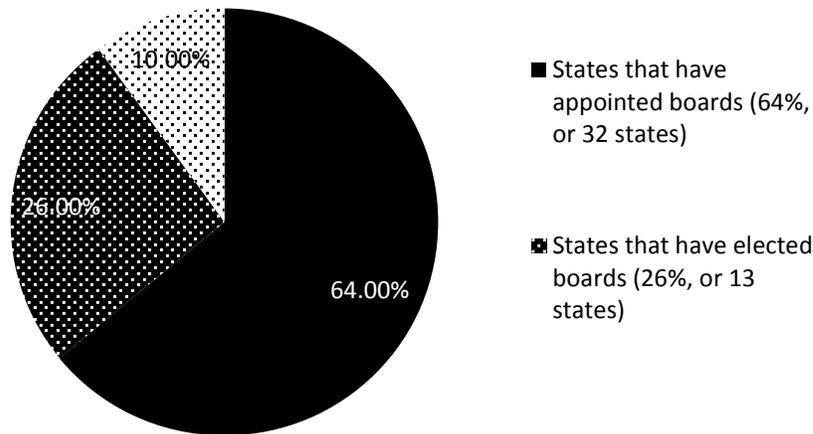
Nonetheless, selecting more Latinos as community college presidents will not by itself solve the completion problem for Latino students: most Latino students will still attend colleges headed by members of other races or ethnicities at president, vice president, and dean level. As the student bodies of community colleges become more and more Hispanic, success for Hispanic students will increasingly become indistinguishable from the success of community college students in general. Meeting this challenge will require effective leadership by *all* community college presidents, regardless of race or ethnicity—and by colleges' governing boards. We will need courageous leaders committed to student success and completion regardless of the profile of the student body they will serve. Current presidents have the responsibility to reflect on the passion they had when they first considered becoming a community college leader and ensure that this passion also translates to serving the growing Latino student population. This means

understanding and respecting the cultural heritage and life experiences of Latino students and how academia can be perceived as being “out of reach” when it comes to the Latino community.

Governance

What can we do to strengthen efforts by state, local, and university governing boards to improve student success? The governing boards of community colleges are made up of community leaders who are either appointed by state governors, the legislature, local elected officials, or elected directly by the voters. Whether they are appointed or elected, these governing boards, in partnership with their presidents, help to determine the priorities and allocate the resources critical to student success and completion.

Method of Selection of Public Community College Trustees by State



Community College Governing Structures	
36	States have local governing or advisory boards
11	States have state-wide governing boards
Community College Governing Board Selection	
31	States have governor- appointed boards
14	States have publicly elected boards

Within these states some colleges have appointed trustees and some colleges have elected trustees

One of the best investments we can make is to build awareness and influencing board members on the needs of African-Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, and other populations that have only recently begun to take advantage of the opportunities offered by higher education. Doing so will create a significant ripple effect throughout higher education. It is imperative for governing boards to understand the unique needs of Latino students but also the important contribution that Latinos will make to their community as productive citizens. There many barriers to higher education. Some are perceived barriers such as believing that certain type of students or communities are not welcome. There are also real barriers when registration or financial aid is made so complicated that the most at-risk students become discourage and when cultural differences and economic limitations are ignored.

I do not mean to imply that community college governing boards are not paying attention to the issue of success for Latino students, or any other group of community college students—many boards have already placed success and completion among their top priorities. However, we need to accelerate and expand our efforts to address this issue to better reflect the growing population and the changing profile of today’s student body. Governing boards must play a key role in making the push for greater accountability and ensuring that completing is a priority at all level of the institution. They can provide an independent voice that defines the urgency and potential impact to their community and the country. The power of the governing board in influencing institutional goals and priorities should not be underestimated.

Scaling Up What Works

Governing boards, philanthropic investors, and governments need to find ways take the many small initiatives that have succeeded within our colleges and bring them to scale. We can see successful strategies at work in programs targeted at “missing” African-American males, the “Comadres” types of initiatives aimed at helping Latinas enter higher education. We can also see the impact of national efforts such as Single Stop’s impressive efforts to keep students in school

by providing all the necessary support in one place and the work of Excelencia in identifying the most successful efforts by colleges and universities serving Latino students. In other words, we need to move innovative homegrown projects from being isolated, boutique programs, to serving students campus-wide. We also need to support national models being replicated throughout the country.

Our goal should be universal—providing all community college students with what they need to succeed. However, the reality is that home-grown innovations—at least, those programs that pass the test of independent assessment and validation—have a greater chance of succeeding at scale and gaining acceptance within each college. We need to invest in what works *at a given college*, meets the needs of *that college's* students, and fits *that college's* institutional culture. Every college has its own innovations and innovators, and we need to provide the encouragement and incentives necessary to expand the programs that work.

Navigating the impending transition in leadership, ensuring effective governance, and having the courage to invest in what works, will help us expand the efforts to better serve Latino students. Our public schools are already becoming minority-majority; this means that we are running out of time to get ready for serving the ever-growing minority population, especially the Latinos who make up most of the growth in that population. We will need additional resources, but just as important, we will need to provide the right kind of encouragement to the new wave of community college leaders, and governing boards with the information, tools, and advice they will need to accelerate our efforts to improve student success and completion. In addition, they need a greater understanding of the needs of the growing Latino students and how to make strategic investment in policies, programs, and services that break down barriers and lead to academic success for this growing population. I believe we are up to the challenge.

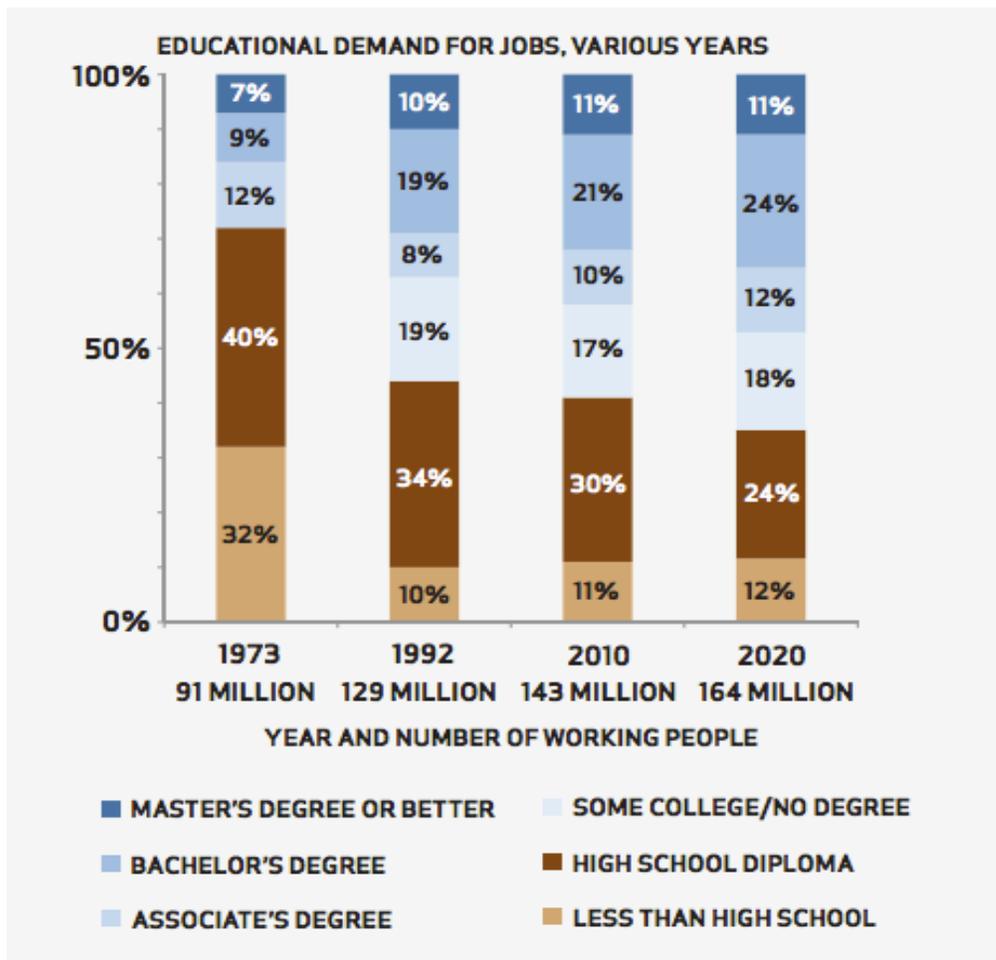
Latinos in the Workforce & The Economic Value of Postsecondary Fields of Study: College Completion for What?

A Knowledge Essay Prepared by

Anthony P. Carnevale, Andrea Porter and Nicole Smith, Center for Education and the Workforce, Georgetown University

Since the 1980s, the relationship between postsecondary education and economic opportunity has grown ever stronger. More and more jobs will require postsecondary education. Individuals who only possess a high school diploma will have fewer employment options. Our projections show that by 2020, 65 percent of jobs will require at least some postsecondary education, up from 28 percent in 1973.

Figure 1. Educational demand for jobs since 1973 has more than doubled.



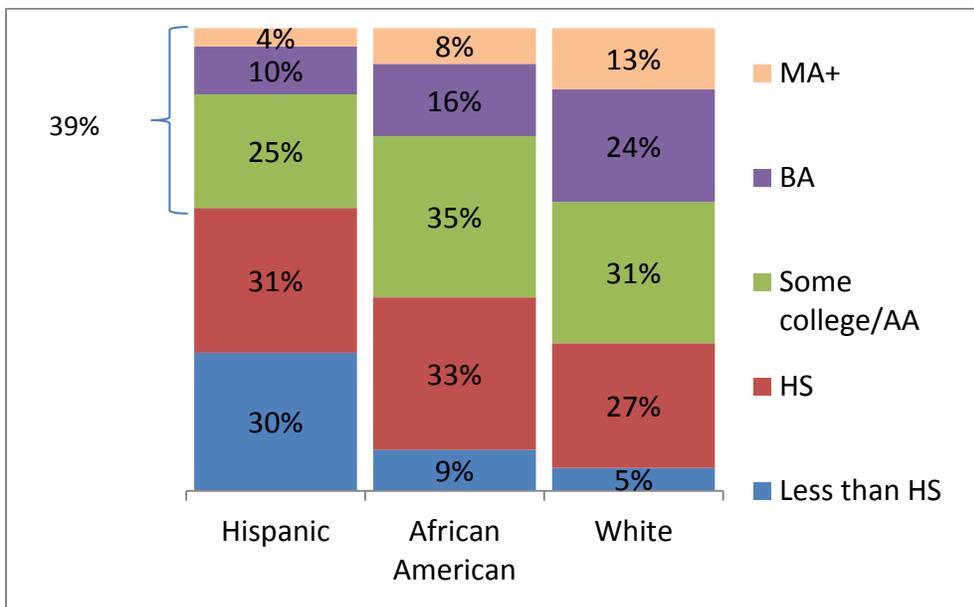
Source: Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce, 2013.

As the population adapts to new economic realities, educational attainment levels are increasing substantially. Between 1995 and 2009, new freshman enrollments at postsecondary institutions grew by 107 percent for Hispanics, 73 percent for African Americans, and 15 percent for whites.

In response to those new economic realities, Hispanics are enrolling in postsecondary institutions faster than any other group. But while Hispanic enrollments have more than doubled over the past two decades, Hispanics still lag behind other ethnic and racial groups and are losing ground relative to their growing population shares.

- The majority of Hispanic workers only have a high school diploma or less, 61 percent compared to 32 percent of whites and 42 percent of African Americans. A sizable gap in educational attainment also remains.
- Only 39 percent of the Latino workforce has achieved some form of postsecondary education, compared to 59 percent of African-American workers and 68 percent of white workers.

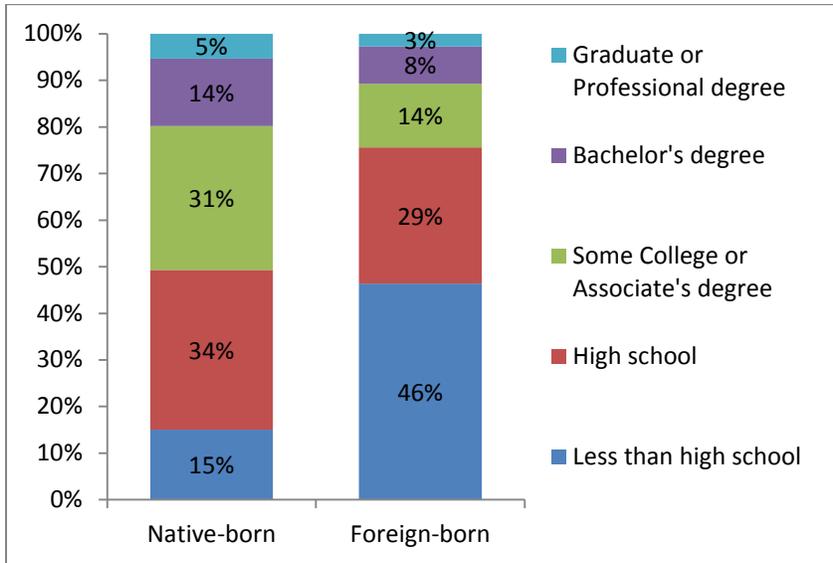
Figure 2. Hispanic attainment levels still lag national averages.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of March Current Population Survey (CPS), 2012.

Of course, the Hispanic community includes wide variations by nativity and ethnicity. The high school dropout rate for foreign-born Hispanics (46%) is more than three times the dropout rate for native-born Hispanics (15%). The share of foreign-born Hispanics with at least some college is half the rate of native-born Hispanics with at least some college (See Figure 3).

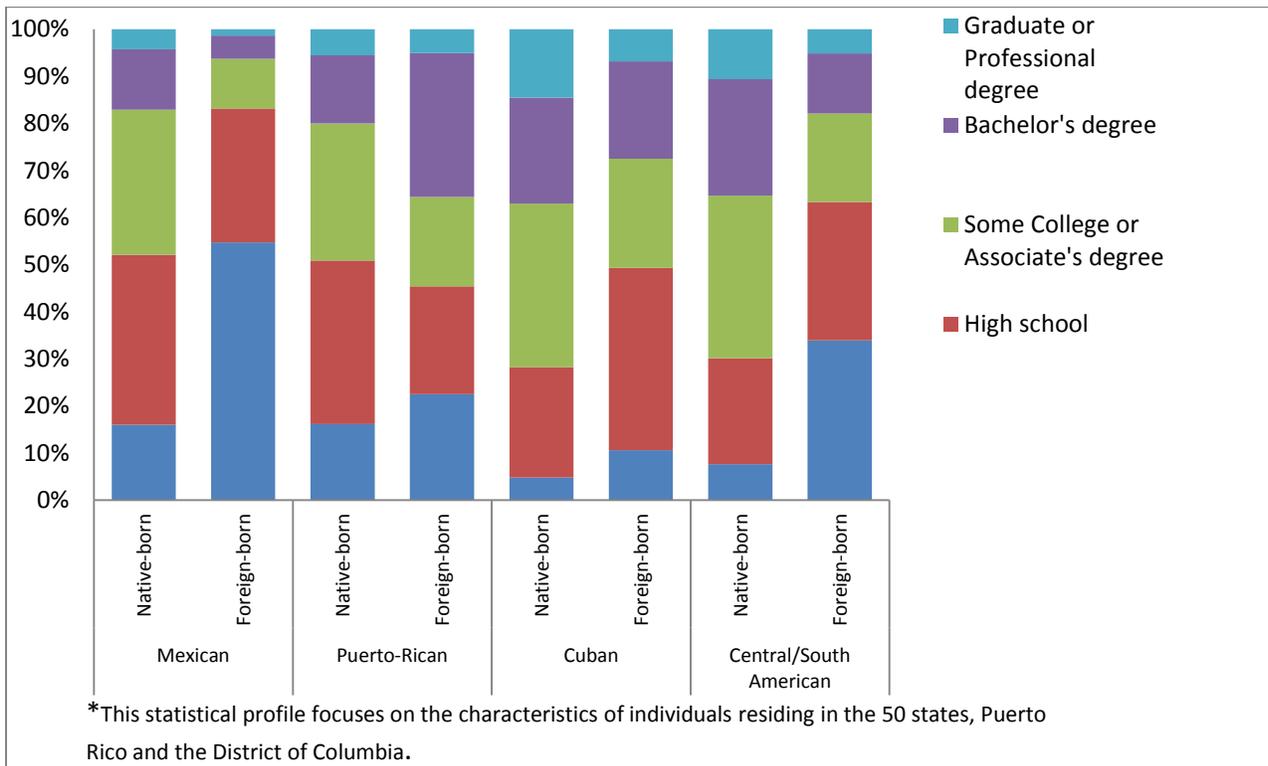
Figure 3. Attainment among Hispanics is higher for native-born than foreign-born.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of March Current Population Survey (CPS), 2013.

As a general rule, foreign-born students don't do nearly as well as native-born students among all Hispanic groups. This is especially true among Mexicans. For example, native-born Mexicans have a 16 percent dropout rate compared to a 55 percent dropout rate for foreign-born Mexicans.

Figure 4. Attainment levels for Hispanics vary by ethnicity.



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of March Current Population Survey (CPS), 2013.

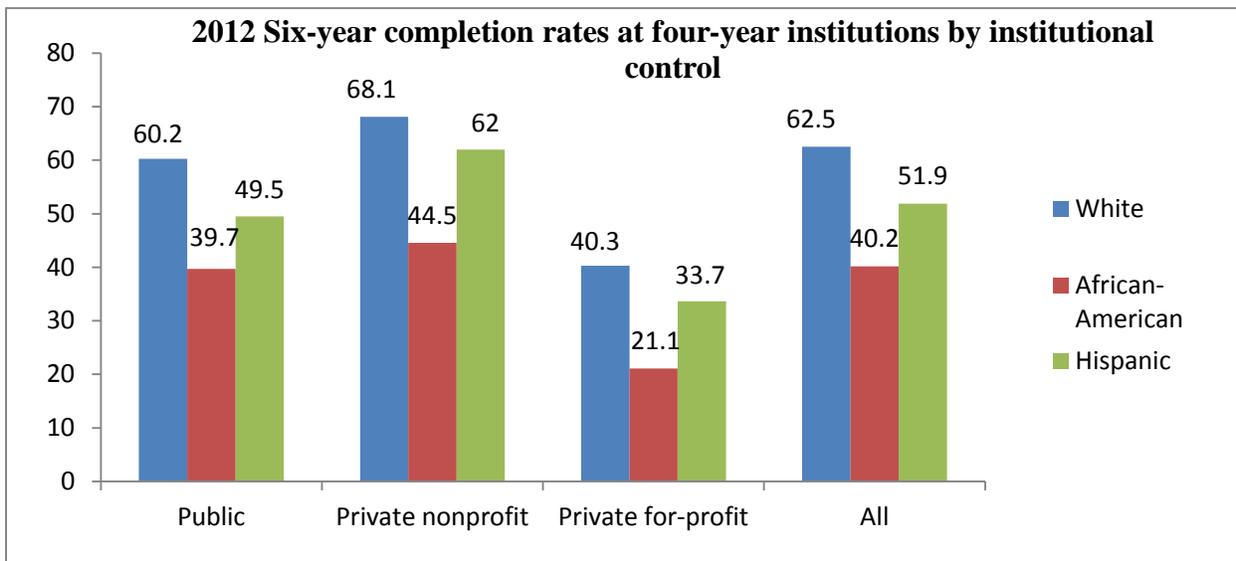
Completion rates vary by the institution's selectivity and resources, and the preparation of students.

Despite the low attainment levels among Hispanics, the number of Hispanics graduating with either an Associate's or a Bachelor's degree has increased in recent years. In fact, while Hispanic completion rates still lag behind those of whites, they have outpaced that of African Americans – except in two-year for-profit institutions (see figure 5). Most of the growth, however, has come from a rise in vocational awards, Associate's degrees and some college credit.

- Among four-year colleges there is an enormous range in graduation rates between selective schools and open-access four-year institutions. In 2012, the six-year completion rate was 41.3 percent of whites at open admissions schools, but only 19.3 of African Americans and 30.3 percent of Hispanics (See figure 6).

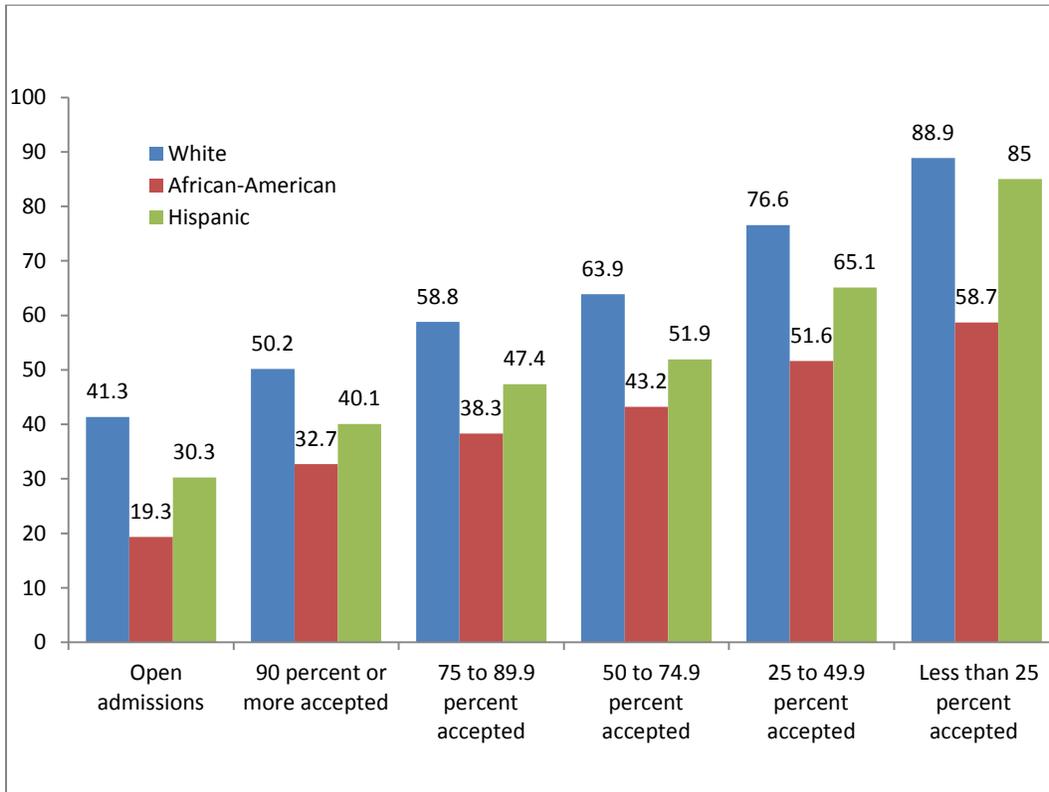
- The higher the selectivity, the higher the completion rate. Among whites at the most selective institutions, 88.9 percent completed a degree, while 58.7 percent of African-Americans and 85 percent of Hispanics obtained a degree.
- Completion rates are substantially lower at two-year institutions for Hispanics (21% and 27 % [see figure 7]), compared to roughly 50 percent in all four-year institutions (see table 5).
- Hispanic students at for-profits have the lowest success rates in four-year institutions and the highest success rates at two-year institutions, compared to other postsecondary providers.

Figure 5. Completion by race at four-year institutions over a period of six years (public, private non-profit and private for profit)



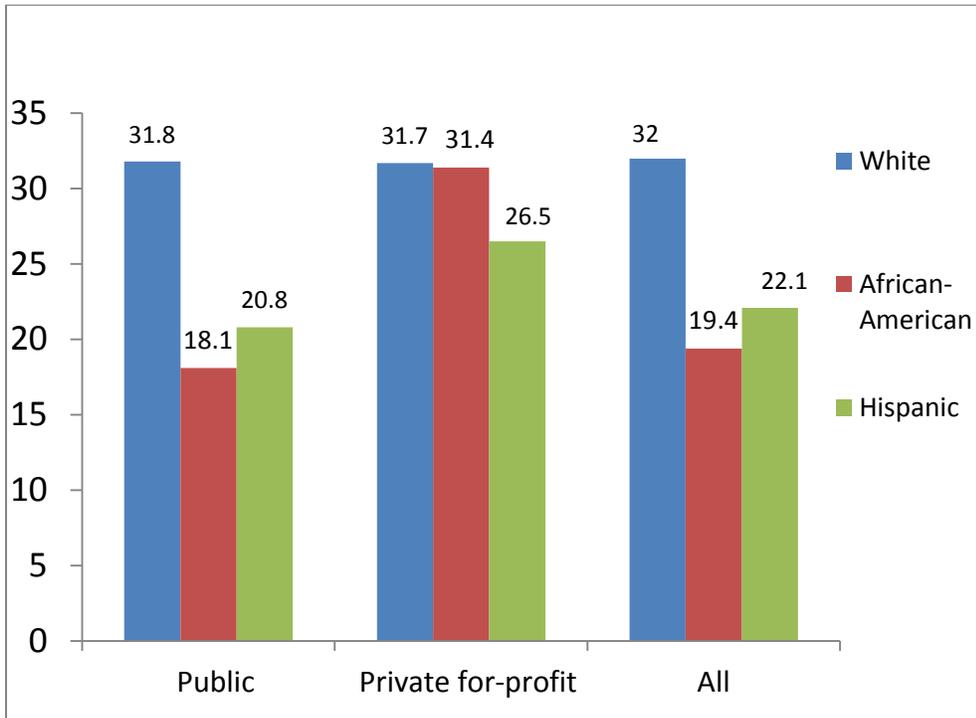
Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Digest of Education Statistics Table 326.10 (2011-2012 data). 2013

Figure 6. Six-year completion rates at four-year institutions by selectivity



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Digest of Education Statistics Table 326.10 (2011-2012 data). 2013.

Figure 7. Six-year AA or better completion for students who started in AA program



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS), 2003/04-09.

One of the biggest challenges for Hispanics has been navigating a polarized education system that has developed two unequal postsecondary pathways.

Hispanic students enroll in overcrowded and underfunded two- and four-year colleges with lower graduation rates and fewer resources. Whereas 36 percent of whites enroll in Bachelor's-degree programs, only 17 percent of Hispanics enroll in the same programs, and they are more likely to pursue certificates or Associate's programs (Figure 2).

Access to the more well-funded selective institutions matters because resources matter. The most selective 468 schools tend to have greater funding along with higher retention and completion rates. Spending per student at the 468 most-selective colleges is almost five times higher than at open-access colleges (at least \$27,900 compared to \$13,400). And the completion rate for open-access colleges is 49 percent, compared to 82 percent for selective schools.

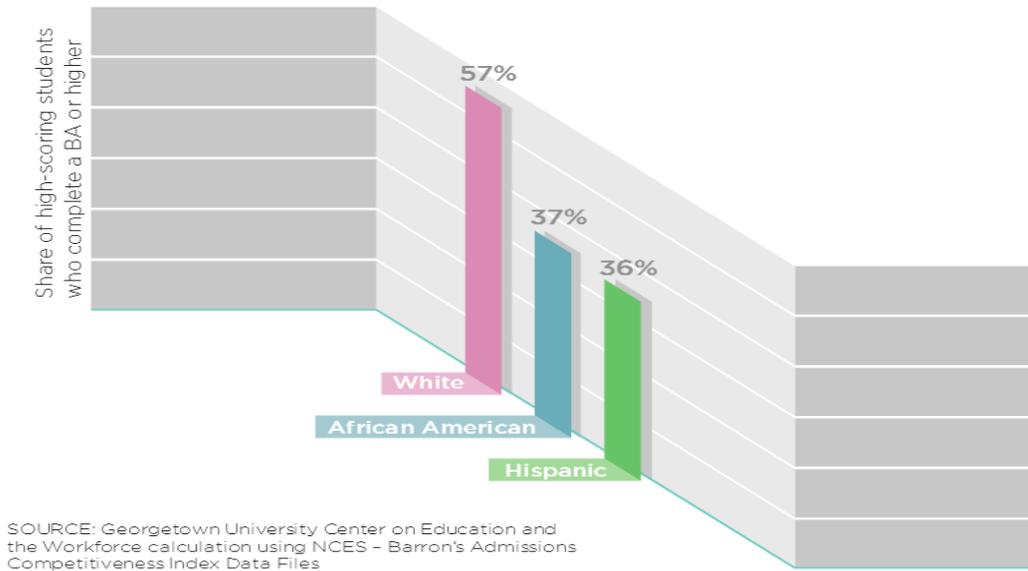
The most telling metrics of racial polarization in postsecondary education are comparisons of white and Hispanic enrollments to their respective shares of college-age population.

- In 2009, the white share of college-age population was 62 percent, their share of enrollment at the top 468 colleges was 75 percent, and at open-access schools was 57 percent.
- In 2009, the Hispanic share of college-age population was 18 percent, their share of enrollment at the top 468 colleges was 10 percent, and at open-access schools was 17 percent.

The relative lower attainment levels for Hispanics are not simply a matter of preparedness. Every year there are:

- More than 60,000 Hispanics in the top half of their senior high school class who have not achieved a certificate or degree within eight years of their high school graduation.
- Furthermore, among high-scoring students who attend college, only 36 percent of Hispanics complete a Bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 57 percent of white students (Figure 8).

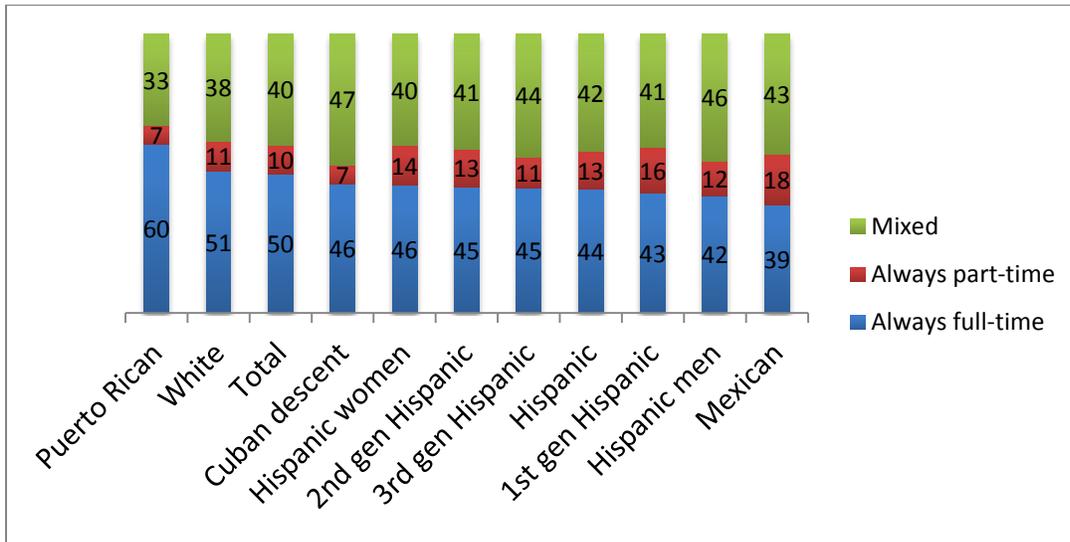
Figure 8. Comparison of completion rates of high-scoring students by race



Source: Carnevale, Anthony P., and Jeff Strohl. *Separate & Unequal*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce, 2013.

Family ties and obligations among Hispanics seem to supersede personal educational aspirations and may thwart higher attainment levels. Among undergrads, Hispanics disproportionately enroll part-time in college – men more so than women – and they are more likely than whites to pursue certificates or not enroll in a degree program at all (Figure 9).

Figure 9. Undergraduate enrollment in part-time programs by gender and ethnicity



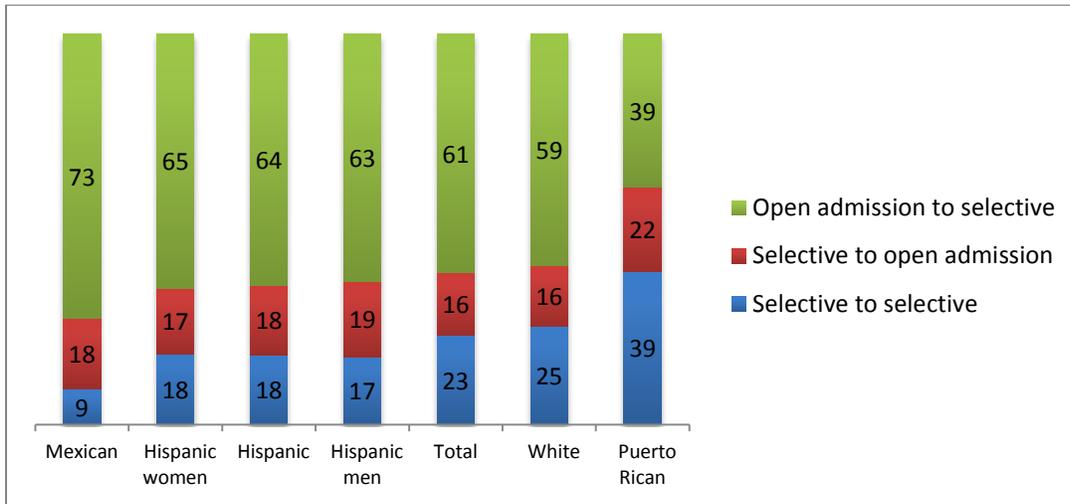
Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2003-09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Study (BPS:04/09). Computation by NCES PowerStats on 3/31/2014.

A 2009 Pew Hispanic Center poll sponsored by The Nielsen Company and Stanford University found that 87 percent of Hispanics value higher education, but an astounding 74 percent of young Hispanics who did not complete a postsecondary degree indicated that having to support their family was the main reason for not pursuing more education.¹⁶ These poll results, coupled with data showing that 61 percent of Hispanic workers have not earned any college credit, are signs that family responsibilities are probably trumping education goals.

Fortunately, however, the story does not end there. Though Hispanics are more likely to enroll in an open-access college or pursue a certificate, they are also more likely than whites to transfer from an open-access college to a selective college (Figure 10).

¹⁶ Pew Hispanic Center. “Between Two Worlds: How Young Latinos Come of Age in America,” Washington, D.C. (December 11, 2009). <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/117.pdf>

Figure 10. Transfer rates by gender and ethnicity



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics 2003-09 Beginning Postsecondary Students Study (BPS:04/09). Computation by NCES PowerStats on 3/31/2014.

Additionally, certificates provide Hispanics with a larger benefit than other racial groups because they serve as an equalizer, as Hispanics with a high school education or less earn very low wages (Table 1).

Table 1. Hispanics receive a large premium for certificates over a high-school diploma.

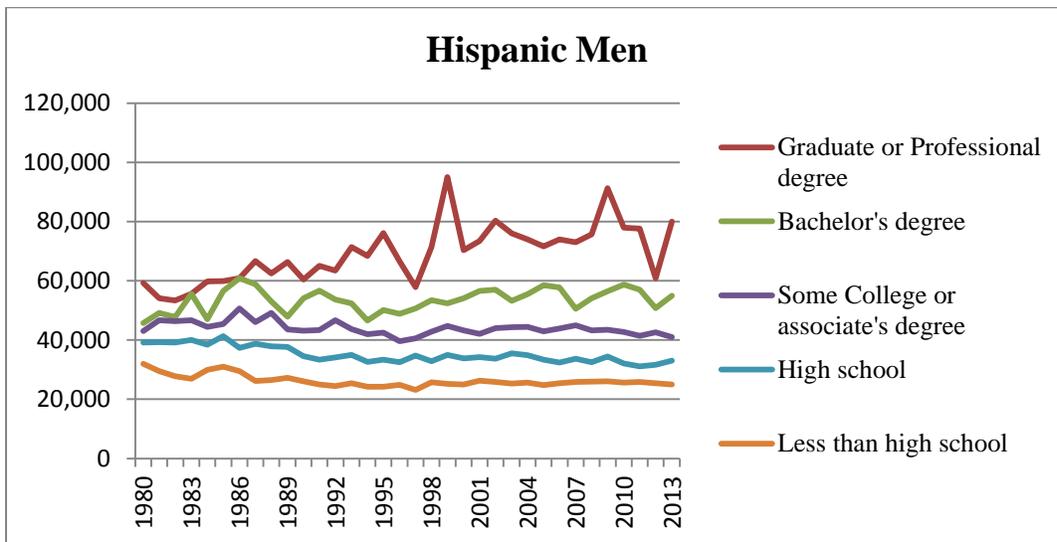
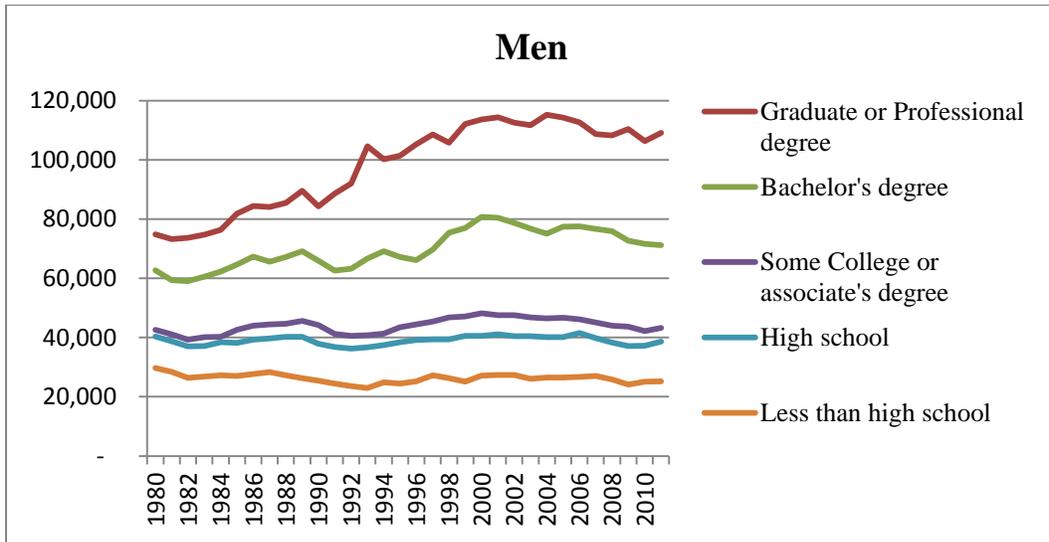
Race/ethnicity	Earnings of high school educated worker	Earnings of certificate holder	Certificate premium over high school diploma
<i>Women</i>			
All	\$24,020	\$27,864	16%
White	\$26,011	\$29,653	14%
African American	\$22,421	\$24,887	11%
Hispanic	\$19,086	\$26,911	41%
<i>Men</i>			
All	\$34,796	\$44,191	27%
White	\$39,107	\$47,320	21%
African American	\$27,559	\$35,000	27%
Hispanic	\$27,718	\$39,914	44%

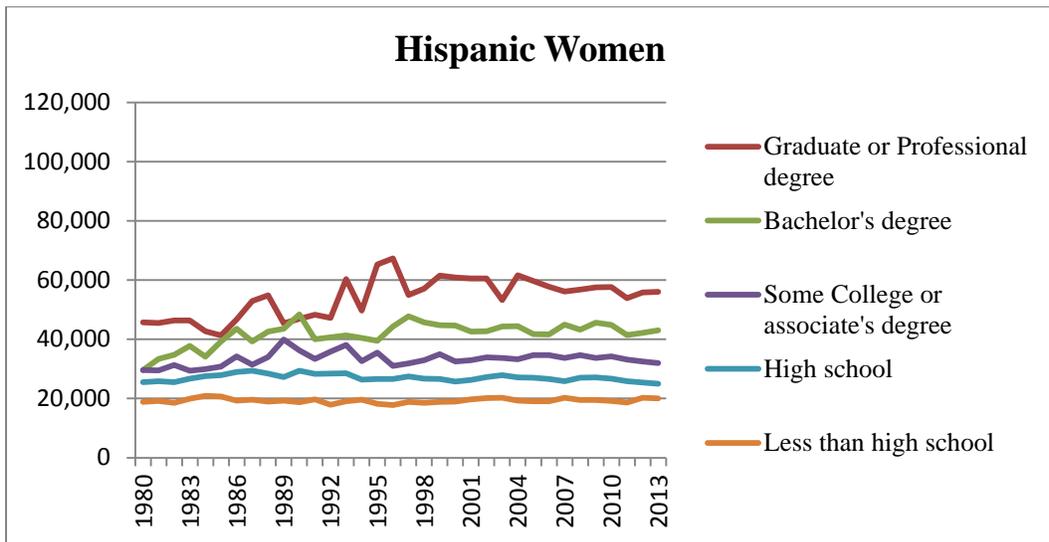
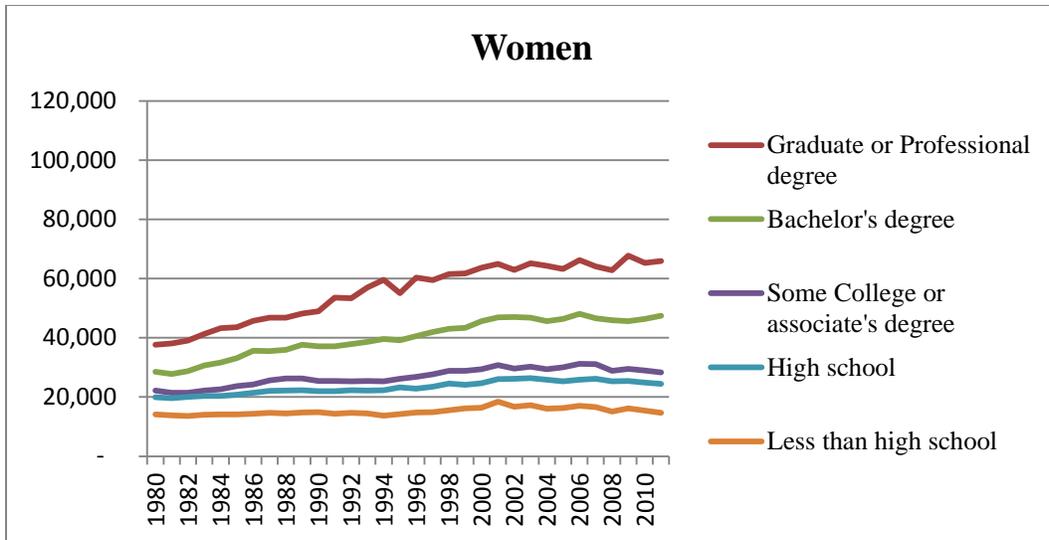
Source: Carnevale, Anthony P., Stephen J. Rose, and Andrew R. Hanson. *Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees* Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce, 2012.

The remarkable increase in college going ties directly to an increasing wage premium for postsecondary education.

Wage premiums for college degrees have held up for all Americans including Hispanics, but are higher for men, especially for white men (See figures 11-14).

Figures 11-14. Wage premiums by education levels, race and ethnicity



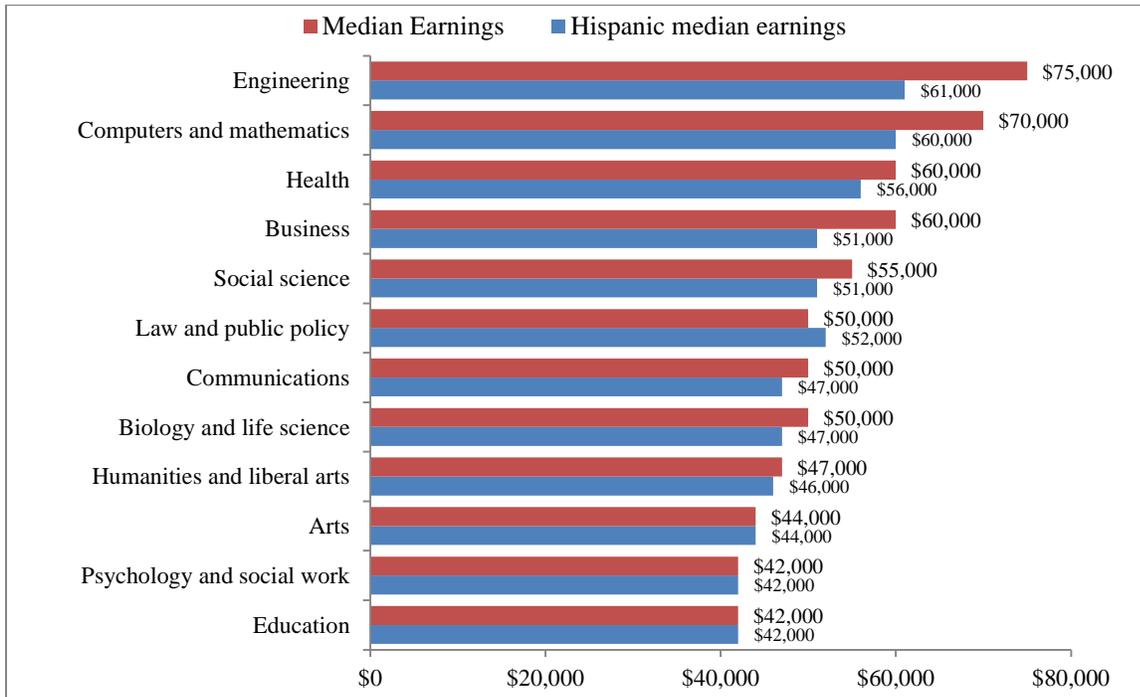


Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of March Current Population Survey (CPS), 1980-2013.

Unequal attainment, exacerbated by cultural barriers and discrimination, leads to unequal opportunities in the workforce

Hispanics are also paid less than whites in most college majors and occupations. Hispanic Bachelor's degree-holders earn less than the average wages for all Bachelor's degree-holders. Only in the fields of arts, education, and psychology and social work do Hispanics earn equal pay (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Median earnings by college major for all graduates and for Hispanics

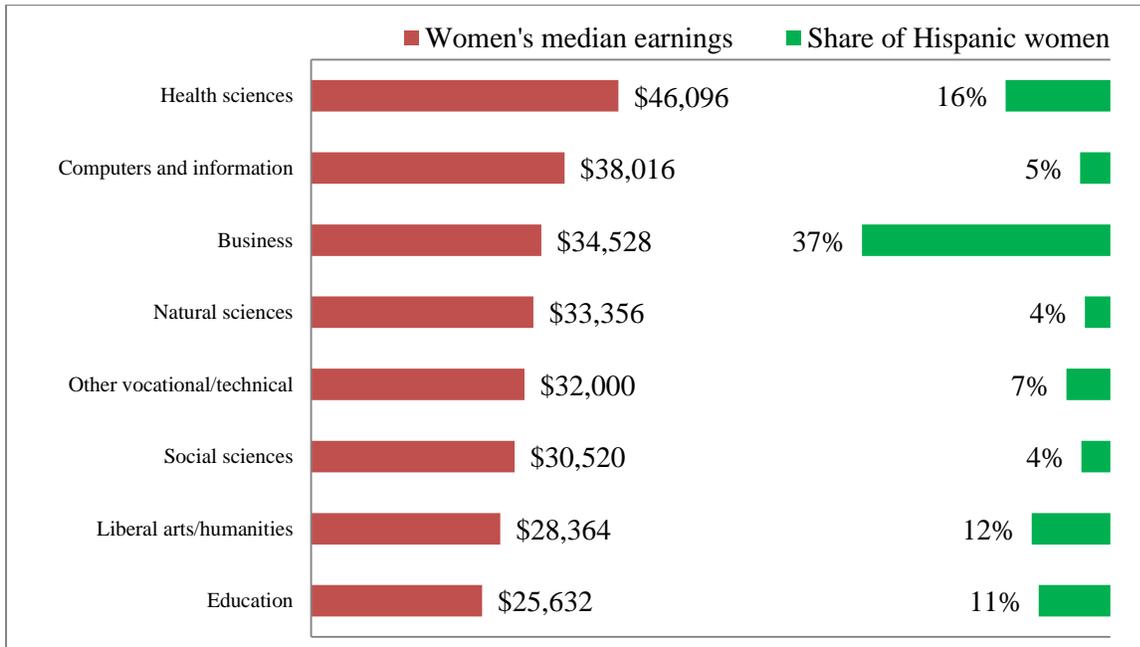


A portion of the wage disparity for Hispanics may be attributable to discrimination in the workplace. For example, a 2009 Pew Research Center survey found 70 percent of adults think Hispanics face a lot more or some form of discrimination.¹⁷

Differences in earnings between Hispanic men and women are not as dramatic as the wage differences between races, but a wage gap exists nonetheless. Hispanic women who hold an Associate’s degree are concentrated in business (37%) and health sciences (16%). Hispanic women in business, however, make less than Hispanic men, even with the same attainment levels (\$34,528 and \$50,448 respectively). And median earnings for Hispanic men in health sciences are \$48,926, while women’s earnings are \$46,096. (Figure 16)

¹⁷ Pew Research Center. “A Year After Obama’s Election: Blacks Upbeat about Black Progress, Prospects,” Washington, D.C. (January 12, 2010). <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/blacks-upbeat-about-black-progress-prospects.pdf>

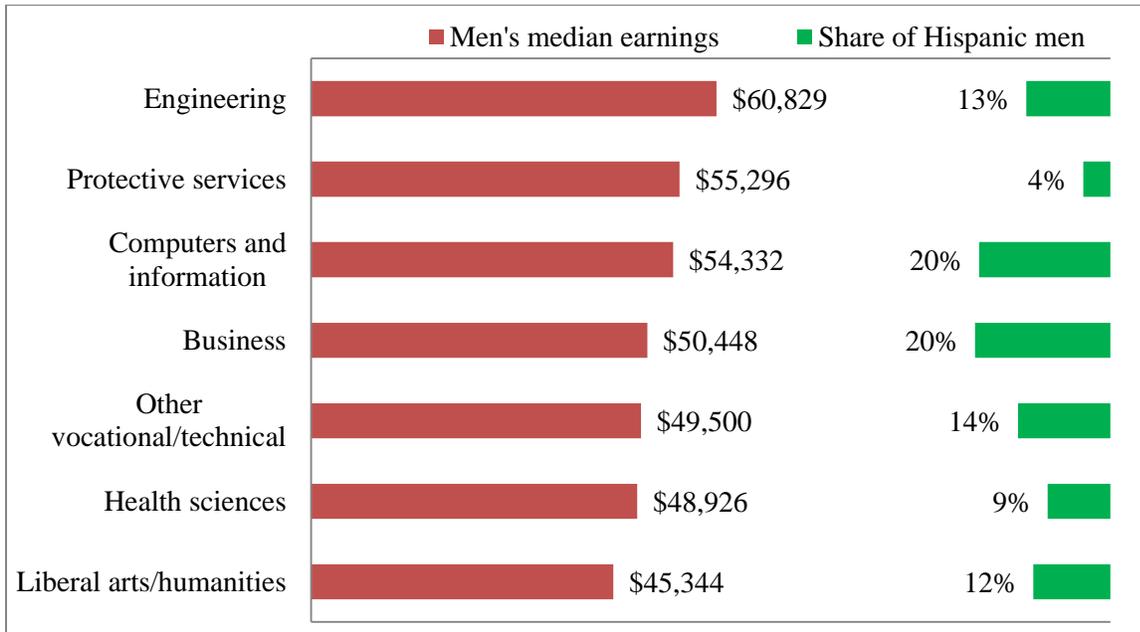
Figure 16. AA earnings for women by fields of study and Hispanic enrollment



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation 2004-2008.

Hispanic men with an Associate’s degree are concentrated in computers and information technology (20%) and also in business (20%). Median earnings for Hispanic men in computer sciences are \$55,296, while women’s earnings are \$38,016. (Figure 17)

Figure 17. AA earnings for men by fields of study and Hispanic enrollment



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (combined 2004 and 2008 surveys).

Hispanics who enter college do not major in fields associated with the highest levels of earnings in the labor market (Figure 15).

Even though an unequal education system and ongoing discrimination have reduced postsecondary attainment and employment in higher paying jobs, career preference plays a major role in depressing earnings among Hispanics.

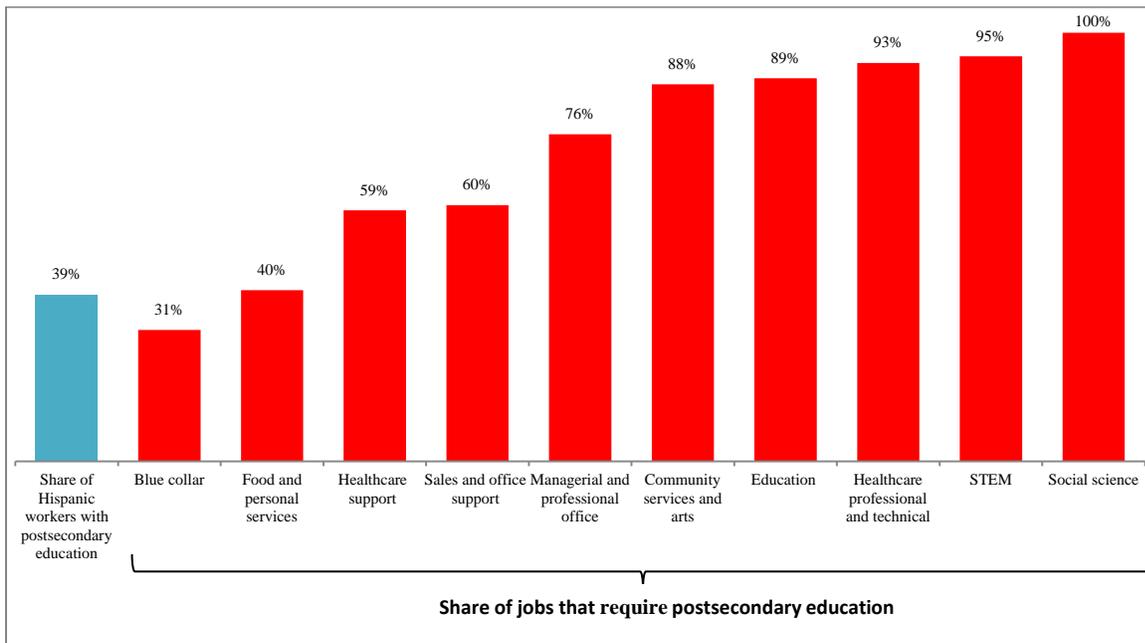
The occupations with the highest median earnings are engineering (\$75,000), computers and mathematics (\$70,000), healthcare (\$60,000) and business (\$60,000).

The occupations with the lowest median earnings are the arts (\$44,000), education (42,000) and psychology and social work (\$42,000). Higher concentrations of Hispanics with Bachelor's degrees are found in only two of the higher paying occupations, business (29%) and engineering (11%). The smallest share of employment for Hispanics is in biology and life sciences (3%).

Furthermore, when compared to the education requirements of the fastest growing occupations, Hispanics are underprepared (Figure 18).

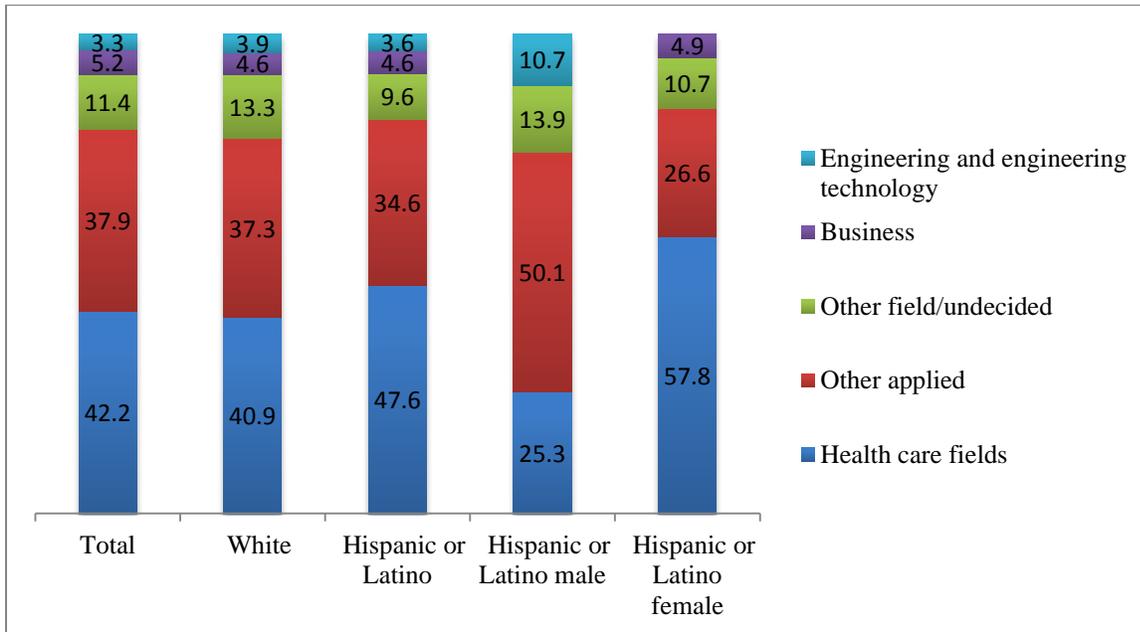
For example, although healthcare occupations are some of the fastest growing occupations and are third in earnings, Hispanics are more concentrated in healthcare certificate programs than whites, and healthcare occupations are only tightening their postsecondary requirements (see figure 19). In addition, higher wage jobs in healthcare usually require advanced degrees. Nurses, for instance, are increasingly required to hold a Bachelor’s degree.

Figure 18. Share of jobs that require postsecondary education by occupational clusters



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of March Current Population Survey (CPS), 2012 and Carnevale, Anthony P., Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. *Recovery: Job Growth and Education Requirements through 2020*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center for Education and the Workforce, 2013

Figure 19. Certificate enrollments by race and ethnicity



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2011-12 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:12). Computation by NCES PowerStats on 3/31/2014.

A high labor participation rate among Hispanics in low-skill, low-wage jobs matters because it becomes more difficult for a family to bear the high costs associated with obtaining higher-level degrees.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Gains for college-educated individuals will continue, but pursuing a postsecondary degree without career planning may translate into high levels of debt and underemployment.

Not only have Hispanics had to work within an education system that diverts them into underfunded and under-resourced colleges where they are less likely to succeed, they also have had to endure education programs that fail to connect to employment.

The journey to a career path is an arduous process for most people. Only the rare few have the opportunity to define that path straight out of college, and even rarer still are Hispanics who are able to do so. With the recent recession, even traditional educated professionals – who in the past faced fewer challenges to finding employment opportunities quickly that established a clear career path – have seen those opportunities evaporate rapidly. Now more than ever, as the economy recovers, the spotlight is on connecting higher education to employment and longer term career pathways.

Recently, public outcry over rising tuition costs and the student debt burden after graduation places higher education in a pivotal era which demands adaptation and increased equity. It is clear that in order to improve opportunities for all students, including Hispanics with their unique challenges, and to meet the demands of the rapidly changing workforce, the current postsecondary education system must find new ways of linking particular courses of study to viable career pathways.

We need to aspire to a dual bottom line in college curriculums – a pragmatic balance between colleges’ growing economic role and its traditional cultural and political independence from economic forces.

The core college mission remains the same. In a republic, colleges exist, first and foremost, to empower individuals to live fully in their time.

The core mission endures but times change. The biggest changes have come in the relationship between colleges and the economy. Today, at least some education is a baseline requirement for anyone who aspires to live free of the most pressing forms of material necessity and public dependency. Access to postsecondary education has become a proxy for middle-class earnings.

America’s colleges are the gateway to middle-class earnings, especially for the nation’s working families, minorities, and immigrants. Our colleges need to be hard at work welcoming the American future into their institutions. We are once again an immigrant nation. We are, for the first time, becoming a majority/minority nation. More than 40 million Americans are foreign

born. By 2050, one in three Americans will be foreign born, and by 2042, a majority of American workers will be members of a racial or ethnic minority group.

The increasing economic value of education is generally good news but not without risks, especially for liberal arts curriculums. Some fear that the increasing economic value of education may force a choice between narrow economic needs and broader educational goals, and that the result will be a “commodification” of education. They make an important point. The temptation to provide narrow vocational training rather than more general learning is strong in a market economy, especially in our current resource-poor environment.

As the economic value of education increases, we will need to remember that education is about more than dollars and cents. Colleges should do more than provide foot soldiers for the American economy. Education has intrinsic as well as extrinsic value. Educators in both secondary and postsecondary institutions have cultural and political missions to ensure that there is an educated citizenry that can continue to defend and promote our democratic ideals.

Ultimately, however, the economic role of colleges, especially their role in preparing American youth for work and helping adults stay abreast of economic change, is central. The inescapable reality is that ours is a society based on work. It’s hard to live fully in your time if you are living under a bridge; it’s hard to be a lifelong learner if you’re not a lifelong earner. Those who are not equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to get and keep good jobs are denied full social inclusion and tend to disengage from the mainstream culture, polity, and economy. In the worst cases, they are drawn into alternative cultures, political movements, and economic activities that are a threat to mainstream American life.

If postsecondary educators cannot fulfill their economic mission to help grow the economy and help youths and adults become successful workers, they also will fail in their cultural and political missions to create good neighbors and good citizens. Increasing the economic relevance of education, if done properly, should extend the educator’s ability to empower Americans to do work on the world, rather than retreat from it.

We need policies that undermine the growing racial, ethnic, and economic polarization in the American postsecondary education system.

Overcrowding and underfunding in the less selective colleges in which minorities and lower income students are concentrated is the willfully unnoticed elephant in the room in the policy dialogue on the future of postsecondary education. There is an increasing polarization in financial resources available to students in the top tiers of institutions – in our research of the top 468 institutions.

Stratification is not just about differences in student family incomes – it is also about the kind of education available to students from different income strata. The best life and career preparation that money can buy is still an education that combines the richest mix of general preparation with professional training. Those at the top of the postsecondary system get the most general preparation and are on the professional track. Those at the bottom are tracked into narrower job training that diverts them into good but less secure mid-level jobs.

Polarization of the postsecondary system matters because resources matter in completion rates, learning and earning.

The 468 most selective colleges spend anywhere from two to almost five times as much per student as the open-access schools. Higher spending in the most selective colleges leads to higher graduation rates, greater access to graduate and professional schools, and better economic outcomes in the labor market, even compared with white, African-American, and Hispanic students who are equally qualified but attend less competitive schools.

Every new student at a selective four-year college brings more than enough new revenue. New students pay enough tuition to pay for their education and maintain high spending levels per student. At the open admission two- and four-year colleges, new students represent a fiscal burden. They don't bring enough tuition aid or state support to pay for themselves and each new enrollee reduces spending per student. The differences in spending per student matter. Even among equally qualified students, higher per-student spending in the selective four-year colleges

leads to better outcomes than the outcome for similarly qualified students who attend the overcrowded and underfunded two-year schools.

If we cannot move large numbers of less-advantaged students into expensive high-quality programs at selective colleges, then we may need to move quality programs, and the money to pay for them, to the community colleges and less-selective four-year colleges where the least-advantaged half of American postsecondary students are currently enrolled.

Moving more money into the schools with the most nontraditional students can be done in a variety of ways. Institutional aid for colleges with high concentrations of Pell recipients, low-income students and special needs students for developmental education, counseling and other relevant purposes seems an obvious way to improve choices and program completion.

We need greater transparency in postsecondary outcomes.

As all of us in the postsecondary education world are painfully aware we have entered into an age of austerity in the use of public resources. At current productivity rates in many of our public institutions, we cannot afford all the public services we need to support a thriving republic and a thriving opportunity based economy. The budget climate is not likely to improve markedly as we continue to disinvest in education and public funds increasingly flow to healthcare and publicly funded retirement benefits.

The bottom line seems to be that with growing austerity in public budgets we need more efficiency in our public programs, including our education, employment, and training programs. We are, by our back of the envelope calculations at the Georgetown Center, at least \$150 billion short of the revenues necessary to meet the President Obama's postsecondary educational goal of making us number one in global postsecondary completions.

The surest way to efficiency and maximum choice without interference in complex institutional and consumer driven decisions is transparency in measured outcomes. This is the essential lesson

in private sector productivity and quality improvements since the '80s. The top down hierarchies of Big Business in manufacturing, for example, have been displaced by complex global networks that allow us to assemble and sell cars by coordinating the work of thousands of parts suppliers who work under careful outcome standards that allow a final assembly of fitted parts.

These fundamental shifts toward outcome-driven production and service networks have moved well beyond manufacturing into private sector services and a growing array of governmental services. Education and healthcare have become the last frontiers in the spread of this fundamental shift from top-down hierarchies to complex networks driven by common outcome standards.

The fledgling movement toward higher education reform reflects these trends. Affordability, debt, and default issues have fostered a growing interest in measured outcomes that gauge costs and completion rates at education and training institutions. In our view, cost and completion are good outcome indicators but they raise questions of education and economic value. The essential question that we still haven't reckoned with is: completion for what? The most obvious answers are: completion for learning and earning. Cost calculations only make sense in the context of measured learning and economic benefits.

Learning and earnings outcomes are less about institutions and more about fields of study and majors. What you learn and whether you get a job and what you make depends principally on what you study. The school teacher who went to Harvard and the school teacher down the hall who went to an open admissions college tend to be equally employed and compensated. Field of study can trump degree level. A certificate in HVAC can earn more than 20 percent more than worker with a Bachelor's degree.

Choosing a postsecondary program is the first big investment decision made by young people, especially the majority of students who will finance their postsecondary programs with loans. They need to understand the risks and rewards associated with their choice of colleges and fields of study. As the cost of particular certificates and degrees grows and the labor market returns

shift, prospective students need more information to guide their choices and to ensure high returns on their investments.

Aligning education more closely with learning and career outcomes is also the best way to encourage student success. People with some sense of where they are going are more likely to get there. A student's choice of field and career are the primary motivations for going to and persisting in college. Helping students connect their college studies with their future careers captures this motivation and increases graduation rates.

The basic elements of a college and career information system already exist (including the Department of Education's College Navigator system); we just need to connect the dots. All the necessary data exists we just need to move it from the nation's statistical warehouses to the kitchen tables where college and career choices are made. Ultimately, we need to make the connection between postsecondary costs, completion and gainful employment at the institutional and program levels.

All ratings and performance metrics need to take student readiness and socio-economic characteristics into account to avoid discrimination against the least-advantaged students.

The most effective metrics for judging institutions need to be weighted by student readiness measures such as placement tests and student socioeconomic status (SES) characteristics. These measures would lead to more focused student counseling and would improve evaluation of program effectiveness in terms of expected-versus-actual outcomes. Low-income and other nontraditional students have much lower persistence and graduation rates than their more advantaged peers. Nontraditional students' success rates in the labor markets are also lower. Not taking this into account will lead institutions to shut out these students to increase their performance and avoid sanctions.

A truly innovative system that used expected-versus-actual performance metrics would not only measure yesterday's successes and failures, but allow information about past performance to feed into program design, counseling systems, and program placement to maximize current and

future student success. Moreover, controlling for student readiness in evaluating program success weights outcomes by student characteristics encouraging institutions to serve the least-advantaged without being penalized for it.

First Comment in Response to “Latinos in the Workforce & the Economic Value of Postsecondary Fields of Study: College Completion for What?”

A Response Essay Prepared by

Lazar Treschan, Community Service Society of New York

This commissioned response is provided for informational purpose only. The information, opinions, or recommendations expressed in the commissioned essays are the work solely of the authors, and are not adopted or endorsed by the Government, the U.S. Department of Education, or the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

The paper presented by Carnevale, Porter and Smith provides compelling data and analysis about college-going trends for Hispanics. Despite broadly increased enrollment, Hispanic students face challenges in getting appropriate returns from their investments in higher education. This document provides some thoughts and responses, offering three recommendations:

1. Address college admissions challenges through state-level public policy
2. Enhance and build off of the success of career and technical education (CTE)
3. Prevent tradeoffs that young Hispanics may perceive between work and higher education

1. The postsecondary system polarization cannot be solved without addressing college admissions

The paper makes the very important point that despite attending college at increasingly higher rates, Hispanics are becoming concentrated in two-year and less selective four-year colleges that are underfunded, and which have much lower rates of student completion and subsequent career success. The paper calls for increased funding of community and less-selective four-year colleges as the solution to this problem. Yet this can be only part of the answer. More must be done to provide Hispanic students, particularly those high achievers from low-income communities, with pathways into selective four-year colleges. This can only happen through thoughtful admission policies that reward merit and equalize the playing field among applicants who come from communities with vastly different resources. This is particularly true at selective public colleges, which are increasingly more attractive to students as the costs of private colleges spiral beyond the means of middle class families of all races and ethnicities. In New York City, the recession led to a rapid increase in applications to public universities from white and Asian students, who crowded out black and Hispanic students at local selective colleges.¹ As a result, Hispanic students who previously succeeded in four-year colleges, were placed in two-year schools that offer much weaker educational and supportive environments.

With affirmative action under full-scale attack, other policies, such as “percent plans,” offer promising methods for selective public universities to provide opportunities to all high achieving students. Most famously, the University of Texas allows students in the top ten percent of their high school class to attend the state university of their choice. Such policies, as well as variations on this theme, should be explored and considered across the country, as they both reduce the

unfairness of students competing across differently-resourced schools and communities, as well as provide clear and strong incentives for achievement within the local context. These policies tell students that even if their school does not offer every advanced placement class, or that their family cannot support them to prepare for college in the ways that others might, if they work hard and achieve within their local context, they will be rewarded. And there is no reason we cannot be creative with these ideas. What if students in the top 25 percent of their class were guaranteed entry into at least one four-year college in their state?

2. Enhance and build off of success in career and technical education

The paper points out that Hispanics often enroll in college programs that are relatively less likely to support them to achieve employment outcomes. The paper calls for a “dual bottom line,” in which colleges increase their responsibility in connecting students to the labor market, in addition to the cultural and political benefits it provides.

One method of doing so may be in continuing to develop career and technical education (CTE) programs at the high school level, and fostering their connections to college. CTE programs, particularly those that have moved on from traditional shop classes, offer high school students not only the chance to develop skills for possible employment directly after high school, but an understanding of the fields in which college may be beneficial to students, and a deeper understanding of the reasons to make targeted investments in postsecondary education. In addition to considerable national data about CTE, the Community Service Society of New York recently published a study of students in New York City CTE high schools, and found strong boosts in graduation for students in these schools.¹ Hispanic students, and males in particular, who traditionally have the lowest high school graduation rates in New York City, had the greatest gains in CTE schools, and even saw increased college readiness if they attended a CTE school. It appears that the relevant coursework, internships, and other applied learning that CTE schools offer may be having an impact on not only high school graduation, but interest and ability to perform college level work.

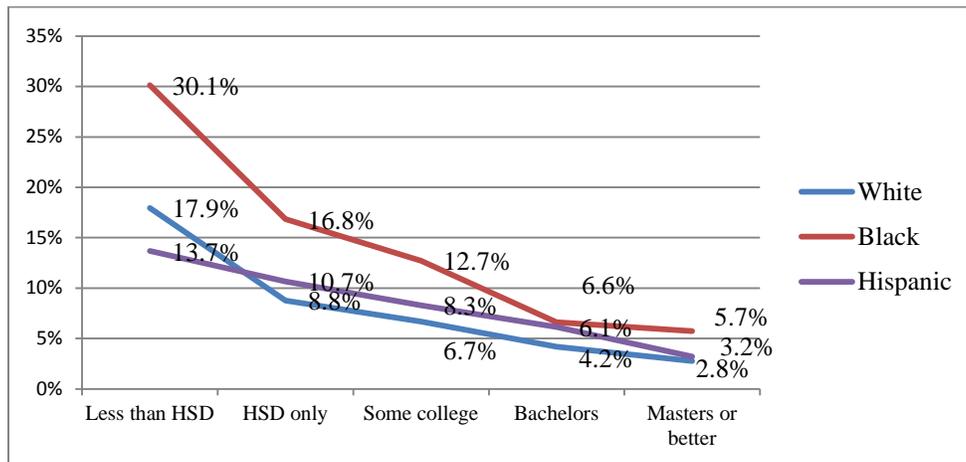
One model of CTE high schools allows students to stay enrolled beyond 12th grade and receive college credits, often free of charge. “9-14” schools, such as P-TECH and HERO High in New

York City, offer students the opportunity to graduate with Associates degrees after six years in high school. Students can then enter work directly, through relationships the school has with private employers, or transfer their credits into a four-year college program.

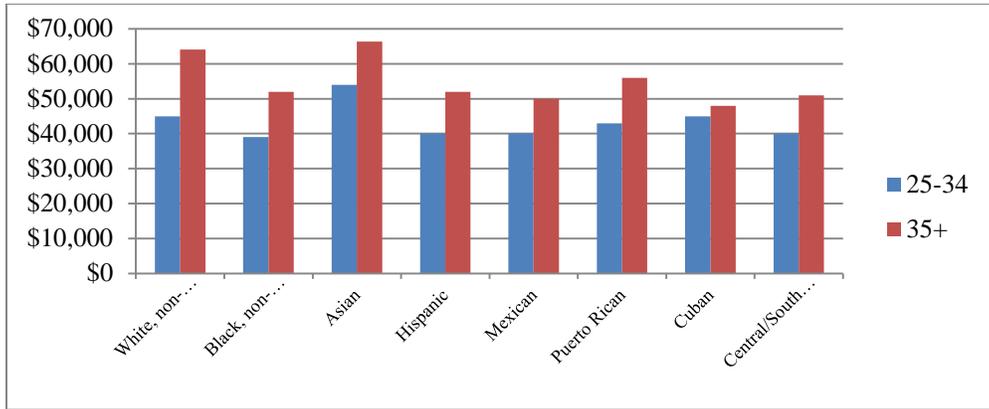
3. Recognize the potential trap that Hispanics face in terms of early workforce participation, college tradeoffs, and implement policies to prevent it

Using the same dataset as the authors (2013 CPS, March Supplement), we find data that suggests a potential trap for young Hispanics who may be choosing between working and pursuing higher education. Unemployment rates for Latinos with the lowest levels of education are relatively low, and drop less dramatically with increased education for Hispanics than for other groups. As such, younger Hispanics just finishing high school may not see the investment in college as worth the effort. Similarly, as shown in the second chart below, Hispanic BA holders see less of an increase in earnings as they age than other groups.

Unemployment Rates Across Race/Ethnicity by Education Level



Median Earning for BA Holders by Race/Ethnicity and Age



*Both charts are based on CSS analysis of the March supplements of the 2012 and 2013 Current Population Survey, conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau

Policies to make the decision to attend college more attractive to young Hispanics include ensuring internship and work-study opportunities during college, as well as strong career advisement and counseling about how choices of courses of study are related to specific employment opportunities. As the paper discusses, it is these decisions that will have the greatest impact on the extent to which the benefits of college will accrue to Hispanic students.

Second Comment in Response to “Latinos in the Workforce & the Economic Value of Postsecondary Fields of Study: College Completion for What?”

A Response Essay Prepared by

Madeline Pumariega, President & CEO, Take Stock in Children

This commissioned response is provided for informational purpose only. The information, opinions, or recommendations expressed in the commissioned essays are the work solely of the authors, and are not adopted or endorsed by the Government, the U.S. Department of Education, or the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

Anthony P. Carnevale, Andrea Porter and Nicole Smith bring to light some critical points about Latino college education (many of which also apply to students of color or those living in poverty generally) in their article “Latinos in the Workforce & The Economic Value of Postsecondary Fields of Study: College Completion for What?”

Two of the recommendations made by Carnevale (et al.) are:

- 1) The creation of high school-college-career pathways
- 2) The infusion of resources into higher education – can benefit from further detail on how they could be implemented and have strong impact on Latino students.

In this paper I discuss the two recommendations, suggesting that there may be areas where further information or analysis may strengthen the recommendations.

High school-college-career pathway

The authors appropriately recommend stronger career pathways, however, they place the burden for this at the feet of higher education. The reality is that many of the career and academic choices made by students in middle and high school (even as early as 8th grade) can affect college completion. This is especially true in high-demand careers like engineering, science, and software development, where the cumulative nature of mathematics and other subjects could mean students are shut out by poor course selection before they even decide to go into college. The development of career pathways must start as early as 8th grade with targeted support that assists a student’s ability to persevere on his or her pathway and intervenes when help is needed. This pathway needs to fully align from 8th grade through college.

However, the pathway is not enough. As the authors highlight, even with appropriate academic credentials, Latino students may still have difficulty connecting to appropriate employment opportunities.

In light of this, I recommend developing strong partnerships with key, high-demand industries in engineering and technology. These partnerships can support Latino children in three ways.

First, they can provide a connection between educational pathways and careers. One of the greatest challenges for moving students to career, especially for students in poverty and first generation college-attendees, is being able to connect with attractive, high-demand professions. Put simply, how can a student map a pathway to a career if they do not have the knowledge that these types of opportunities exist (e.g. clinical trial leaders, network systems analysts, or financial examiners)? These are all high-demand professional careers that require a Bachelor's degree. By partnering with heads of industry, a bridge can be developed with this population of students. These students will be able to take advantage of events such as workplace tours and webinars, which may even lead to opportunities for job-shadowing and internships.

Second, businesses can provide career-specific mentors. Though the strategy of career-specific mentoring is still emerging, it can potentially benefit students by instilling “soft skills” and providing an understanding of specific career-paths. Mentoring also has the potential to provide invaluable social capital for students.¹ We know that regardless of a student's background social connections can be critical to finding jobs. This is even more important for Latino students, especially those living in poverty, for many of them lack the connections to employers of high-demand jobs. Through career-specific mentoring, there is the potential to find the job, pathway and connections to move the student from college to career.

Third, business partnerships can provide much needed financial resources – for students, their families, and the system overall. Specific mechanisms for giving are detailed below, but it is important to note that many businesses understand and recognize the direct link between a college-educated workforce and their talent demands. Additionally, unlike other points on the educational continuum, such as early learning, investment in college education has a shorter time from investment to market impact.

Additional Resources in Higher Education

The other recommendation made by Carnevale (et al.) that can benefit from additional detail is the need to provide greater resources, public and private, into higher education. There are only three ways to achieve this, and that is through increased:

1. Contributions by families – which considering the income levels of many Latino families will mean increased borrowing, diminishing wealth accumulation throughout the student’s lifetime, and slow economy (e.g., house sales are slower nationally due to large college debt loads reducing families’ ability to purchase homes).
2. Funding by government – which has increased (at the federal level and in many states), but lags behind the demands of families and the system overall.
3. Testing and use of new funding vehicles – which would blend portability, private and public funding, and known tools to increase college success. One could easily imagine family accounts for students in poverty starting as early as middle school, which would provide the initial aspiration for college and allow time for the investment to accumulate interest and grow (the latter is how government-sponsored pre-paid tuition programs already leverage funding). These accounts could be tied to participation in mentoring, career pathway development, and other strategies which we know correlate with college attendance and completion, thereby increasing the likelihood that funding will be effective. Additionally, we know that, when provided with an incentive (such as a government match or tax credits), businesses can be a co-investor in college success. This could be a voluntary leverage point, providing new funds without creating student debt.

Anthony P. Carnevale, Andrea Porter and Nicole Smith have done us all a great service by clearly articulating the challenges faced by Latino youth and the barriers, personal and system-wide, standing between them and an education that will bring a better quality of life. The challenge for us all is how we will further develop and implement these strategies in ways that are sustainable and realistic.

Counting what counts for Latinas/os and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A federal ratings system and postsecondary access, affordability, and success

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Executive Summary

Although more Latinas/os than ever are enrolling in U.S. postsecondary education, they continue to have the lowest postsecondary educational attainment rates among the largest U.S. racial/ethnic groups. Because of Latinas/os' current and expected growth in the U.S. population, raising their educational attainment is critical to ensuring the economic and social well being of Americans in future years. This knowledge essay addresses the question: How can a federal postsecondary institution ratings system promote goals of Latina/o postsecondary enrollment and attainment? To address this question, we must also consider two others: What counts in encouraging Latina/o students and families to enroll and succeed in higher education? How can a ratings system support the federally designated institutions that the majority of Latina/o students attend (Hispanic-Serving Institutions) to advance Latina/o educational attainment?

The empirical evidence synthesized in this essay raises four main issues that must be considered for a federal postsecondary ratings system to advance Latina/o educational attainment: (1) Preferences, (2) Populations, (3) Pathways, and (4) Power. Each of these issues must be considered with respect to *both* Latina/o students and families (at the individual level) *and* Hispanic-Serving Institutions (at the institutional level) to: (1) maximize the accuracy and utility of a proposed federal postsecondary ratings system and (2) minimize the unintended but potentially negative consequences of such a system. Specific recommendations are provided to apply knowledge about these four issues to inform the development of a federal postsecondary ratings system in relation to advancing Latina/o postsecondary access, affordability, and educational attainment.

Raising overall U.S. postsecondary attainment will be impossible without raising the postsecondary attainment of Latinas/os (Kelly, Schneider, & Carey, 2010). Although now the largest non-White postsecondary student population (Fry, 2011), Latinas/os' postsecondary attainment remains lower than that of other racial/ethnic groups (Fry & López, 2012). One reason is that Latinas/os attend community colleges and less selective four-year institutions at higher rates than members of other racial/ethnic groups (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009; Fry, 2004; Posselt, Jaquette, Bielby, & Bastedo, 2012). Even the most academically qualified Latina/o students may forego attending a geographically distant but more

selective institution, in favor of one that is closer to the family of origin, less costly, or has a more comfortable climate (Santiago, 2007). While less selective institutions fill a critical niche in the postsecondary landscape, the reality is that, holding other factors constant, enrolling in a less selective institution is negatively related to college degree completion (Alon & Tienda, 2005).

Some observers have argued that this tendency to “undermatch” their college choices is the most important reason that Latinas/os don’t have a higher postsecondary attainment rate (Bowen et al., 2009). But why are Latina/o students more likely to undermatch? Research has clearly documented that Latina/o students and families are more concerned about affordability in choosing a college and have comparatively limited access to information about preparing for the college decision process and financing, leading them at times to misestimate college costs (Contreras, 2012; Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008; Rendón, Nora, & Dowd, 2012). Furthermore, staying close to home influences Latina/o college choice more than that of other students (Contreras, 2012; Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, & Cabrera, 2008). Some observers argue that, in states that have curtailed affirmative action policies, Latino students receive signals that they do not merit spots in selective public four-year institutions, a condition which can adversely affect their application rates to these institutions (Brown & Hirschman, 2006; Tienda, 2010).

One solution to advance Latina/o postsecondary educational attainment is to provide Latina/o students and families with better information about college access, affordability, and quality. To that end, a proposed federal postsecondary ratings system could serve as an important tool to promote well-informed decisions about further schooling. Another intended end-use of the ratings system is incentivizing college success through performance funding -- linking federal funding to the quality of institutional performance, which the ratings system aims to measure (Espinosa, Crandall, & Tukibayeva, 2014).

“Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts,” is a statement often attributed to Albert Einstein, but it speaks to the challenge of measuring illusory and complex phenomena such as higher education institutional performance. What should be counted in such a ratings system, and how should it be counted? The rating system’s goals of postsecondary access, affordability, and quality undoubtedly align well with the needs of

Latina/o students and families. However, multiple stakeholders have questioned the potential accuracy and utility of such a system (e.g., Borden & Lee, 2008; Espinosa et al., 2014), particularly because it is linked to performance funding. Notably, empirical research based on twenty years of state-level data indicates that performance funding has not significantly improved higher education graduation rates in states where it has been implemented (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Tandberg & Hillman, 2013). Conversely, research indicates that performance funding has influenced *negative* consequences like raising admissions standards (thereby diminishing college access), relaxing academic expectations, and misreporting data to paint a better picture of institutional performance (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013).

In this knowledge essay, I briefly review the complexity inherent in implementing an accurate and useful ratings system, and then apply this understanding to the case of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), which enroll over half of Latina/o students in U.S. postsecondary education (HACU, 2012). Then I synthesize a considerable body of empirical research to identify four critical issues to address in developing a system of conveying postsecondary information that would be most accurate and useful to Latina/o students and families: Preferences, Populations, Pathways, and Power. For each issue, I discuss the implications of a ratings system for two key stakeholders: (1) Latina/o students and families and (2) Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). I conclude with recommendations to “count what counts” to advance postsecondary access, affordability, and quality for Latina/o students and HSIs.

Complexity in developing a federal postsecondary ratings system

The challenges inherent in developing appropriate and accurate measures for a ratings system have been well documented (e.g., Borden & Lee, 2008; Espinosa et al., 2014). These include: (1) the diversity of higher education institutions’ student bodies and missions, (2) accuracy of currently available and future data sources, (3) the extent to which potential data indicators can measure what they intend to measure, and (4) decisions about how to weight the importance of different measures in understanding a broader phenomenon like institutional performance. Observers have also pointed out several potential unintended consequences of a tightly constructed rating system, particularly when a rating system is tied to performance funding (e.g., Borden & Lee, 2008; Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014).

Empirically, there is also evidence that a ratings system might not actually distinguish among institutions in ways that are useful to Latina/o students and families. Recently, some researchers simulated how 1700 different four-year institutions might be ranked, using likely indicators from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to measure institutional performance. Parallel with the proposed system's goals, these measures included access (percentage of student body on Pell Grants), affordability (net price, or out-of-pocket costs beyond grants and scholarships paid by the student in a given year), and success (the outcome of six-year graduation rate) (Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014).

Notably, the analysis revealed that *none* of the institutions performed above the average score for all of the institutions on *all three* measures of access, affordability, *and* outcomes. Relaxing their criteria, the researchers found that just 19 out of 1700 institutions (just over one percent) enrolled at least 25% Pell-eligible students, charged a net price of below \$10,000, and had at least a 50% six-year graduation rate. The rest of the institutions scored average or below average on at least one, if not two, of these measures. Specifically, one-third of all institutions clustered together as having average rates on all three dimensions, what the analysts called a large “muddle in the middle.” Another three in ten clustered together as having average access, below average affordability, and above average completion, what the analysts called “Pretty Good, but Pretty Expensive.” The remaining institutions were roughly divided between “high access, high to average affordability institutions, low completion” (one-fifth on institutions) and the 14% of “low access, low affordability, high completion” institutions (Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014, pp. 4-5).

These findings reflect what postsecondary leaders have referred to as an “iron triangle,” meaning that performing well on all three dimensions is important—yet virtually impossible at the same time—because positive achievements in one area normally come at the expense of performance in another (Public Agenda, 2008, as cited in Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014). Thus, unintended consequences might ensue if performance funding is tied to scores on these indicators. For instance, institutions aiming to score higher on quality (six-year graduation rate) could use the well-known, easiest and most effective route: implementing more selective admissions policies to recruit an incoming student body that, because of their higher levels of academic preparation and by association increased socioeconomic advantage, will be independently better positioned

to graduate even before they ever enter the college doors (Astin, 1985; Astin & Antonio, 2012; Espinosa et al., 2014; Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014; Titus, 2006a, 2006b). If community colleges had the option, admitting more academically prepared students would likely also be the most cost-effective way to improve transfer and degree completion (Belfield, Crosta, & Jenkins, 2014). However, institutions moving in this direction would be challenged in addressing the “access” dimension of the “iron triangle,” because they would likely have to curtail access for the historically underrepresented groups (including Latina/o and low-income groups) who disproportionately receive lower academic preparation for college (Contreras, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Oakes et al., 2006). Needless to say, such a practice would violate the missions of community colleges (Cohen, 2008) and compromise the missions of many open access four-year institutions (Kirst, Stevens, & Proctor, 2010).

These issues are critical to understanding a ratings system in relation to Latina/o students and families for several reasons. First, if the data measures are unreliable or inappropriate, Latina/o students will be misinformed about potential college options. Second, a ratings system may not differentiate effectively among different types of institutions and therefore may provide Latina/o students and families with a limited or even distorted understanding of the distinctive types of higher education institutions. Third, the rarity of high institutional performance on access, affordability, and quality suggests that this goal may practically be an “iron law,” a balance too difficult for nearly all higher education institutions to achieve. In fact, no higher education reform has ever before *simultaneously* targeted the three points of the iron triangle – access, affordability, and quality (Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014). Setting up excessively unrealistic expectations to reach such goals could exacerbate negative unintended consequences of ratings (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013; Rodríguez & Kelly, 2014).

Hispanic-Serving Institutions, ratings, and impact on Latina/o students and families

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) play a critical role in educating Latina/o students, because these institutions enroll over half of these students and graduate 40% of Latina/o baccalaureates in the U.S. (Harmon, 2012; HACU, 2012). The case of HSIs therefore compels us to consider how a federal ratings and performance funding system could affect Latina/o students’ higher education access, affordability, and success. HSIs are not-for-profit public or private higher

education institutions with greater than or equal to 25% full-time undergraduate enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2007, 2011). About half of HSIs are four-year and half are two-year institutions, with the four-year group split nearly evenly between public and private institutions (HACU, 2012; Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2014). Notably, on average, just over half (53%) of students at four-year HSIs receive Pell Grants (Núñez et al., 2014). Due to the growing Latino population and increasing enrollment of Latinas/os in college (Fry, 2011), more institutions are becoming HSIs (Torres & Zerquera, 2012).

Because three-quarters of HSIs are public institutions, they have been especially vulnerable to sharp declines in states' funding for higher education during the past three decades (McMahon, 2009; St. John, 2003). Accordingly, HSIs have far fewer resources than non-HSIs to support their students. They are also less expensive than non-HSIs and receive far less money in tuition (HACU, 2012; Santiago, 2006). Their contributions in serving low-income students and in producing large numbers of Latina/o baccalaureates and STEM graduates have led some observers to characterize HSIs as “doing more with less” (Malcom, Dowd, & Yu, 2010).

Regardless, HSIs are often identified negatively as having lower graduation rates for Latina/o and other students (e.g., Contreras, Bensimon, & Malcom, 2008). These criticisms, however, typically do not take into account the characteristics of the student population, as well as institutional resources, each of which independently affects an institution's student outcomes (Astin & Antonio, 2012). In fact, mounting empirical evidence that adjusts for these factors indicates that, rather than inferior “institutional performance,” HSIs' lower graduation rates are mostly due to: (1) the qualities of their incoming student bodies (with demographic characteristics that place students at risk of not graduating before they ever enter college) and (2) far lower levels of institutional resources than non-HSIs (García, 2013; Núñez & Elizondo, 2012; Rodríguez & Calderón Galdeano, 2014, 2015; Vega & Martínez, 2012). In other words, the gap between HSIs' and non-HSIs performance can be explained primarily by these factors, rather than by dimensions of organizational behavior. Yet, if assessed on the metric of graduation rate without this context, HSIs would be evaluated negatively for their outcomes in a ratings system. This practice would penalize HSIs for serving largely Latina/o and low-income populations that are also less academically prepared (Núñez & Bowers, 2011), and potentially perpetuate a

downward cycle in the capacity of these critical institutions to promote historically underserved students' college access and success.

How can a ratings system be developed that is accurate and useful, yet minimizes unintended penalties, for Latina/o students and HSIs? In the next section, I will argue that a ratings system needs to take into account four dimensions from *both* the perspectives of Latina/o students and HSIs: (1) Preferences, (2) Populations, (3) Pathways, and (4) Power.

Preferences

The issue of *preferences* entails how Latina/o students and families make choices about colleges. Yet it also relates to institutional preferences, with respect to colleges' intended missions. Research tells us that, to gather information and make decisions about college, Latina/o students rely primarily on personalized advice or guidance, rather than sources like rankings, written information (i.e. brochures or websites), or connections with school personnel (Contreras, 2012; Fann, Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009; Kim, 2004; McDonough & Calderone, 2010; Pérez & McDonough, 2008). For instance, one intervention found to be effective in increasing Latina/o and low-income students' likelihood to apply for and receive financial aid is personalized guidance to complete a Federal Application for Student Financial Aid form (FAFSA), which is more effective than merely being provided information about how to complete the forms (Bettinger, Long, Oreopoulos, & Sanbonmatus, 2009). The effectiveness of personalized and trusted guidance likely relates to the fact that Latinas/os show lower levels of trust than other racial/ethnic groups in any government agencies—including schools—to help in the college choice process (McDonough & Calderone, 2010; Taylor, López, Martínez, & Velasco, 2012). This research suggests that it might be incorrect to assume that Latina/o students and families would extensively use a ratings system to make decisions about college.

Furthermore, Latinas/os' preferences for a postsecondary institution differ from those of other racial/ethnic groups. Namely, in choosing a college, Latinas/os are more likely to want to remain closer to home and attend less expensive institutions than their counterparts from other groups (Cejda, Casparis, Rhodes, & Seal-Nyman, 2008; Hurtado et al., 2007; Rendón et al., 2012; Valadez, 2008). Feeling comfortable on campus – through increased Latina/o enrollment,

representation of Latina/o faculty and staff, or presence of Latina/o cultural environments – can also play a role in Latina/o college choice (Santiago, 2007). Regardless of the source, information about these factors would be important to Latina/o students and families.

It can also be said that institutions have singular preferences, in that they have unique missions. HSIs provide college access for historically underrepresented groups and enroll a large share of historically underserved students (Núñez & Elizondo, 2012; Núñez et al., 2014). Holding other critical student and institutional factors constant, students who attend HSIs are more likely to express a desire to stay close to home (Butler, 2010; Cejda et al., 2008; Núñez & Bowers, 2011). HSIs therefore play a key role in educating students in their local service areas, and contribute substantially to educating local and regional populations (Butler, 2010; Vega & Martínez, 2012). Because they tend to charge lower tuitions, HSIs offer relatively affordable college options (Santiago, 2006). HSIs are also more likely than their non-HSI counterparts to enroll less academically prepared students for college (Núñez & Bowers, 2011). Therefore, HSIs provide critical doorways to those who might not otherwise attend college due to limited access to: (1) academic preparation, (2) proximity of higher education institutions, (3) finances, and (4) admissions slots in more selective public institutions, especially when affirmative action is prohibited (Núñez & Bowers, 2011; Perna, Li, Walsh, & Raible, 2010). Providing this access constitutes a cornerstone of many HSIs' missions (Contreras et al., 2008). To advance Latina/o college success, any ratings or evaluative system needs to fully capture the role HSIs play for students and communities that might otherwise not be served by higher education.

Populations

A ratings system must also recognize diverse student populations among Latinas/os and within HSIs (Núñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vázquez, 2013), because “experience suggests that students who are not counted, won’t count when decisions are made and priorities are set” (Engle & Lynch, 2009, p. 7). Latina/o college students and those in HSIs disproportionately come from non-traditional backgrounds – older, independent, low-income, or employed full-time (Contreras, 2012; Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011; Rendón et al., 2012). They also are more likely to speak English as a second language, and to be documented or undocumented immigrants (Contreras, 2011, 2012; Núñez et al., 2013). These populations often

face structural challenges independent of the institution that make it difficult for them to complete their degrees (Kanno & Cromley, 2013; Núñez & Cuccaro-Alamin, 1998; Núñez et al., 2011; Núñez et al., 2013; Rendón et al., 2012). Although information about these unique sub-populations is typically not collected in federal postsecondary data (e.g., Espinosa et al., 2014), any college information source should provide data about these groups to make college information more relevant to Latina/o students and HSIs' contributions. Providing college information in Spanish and English would also be valuable for Latina/o students and families.

Pathways

Latina/o students and students in HSIs are also more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to follow non-traditional pathways through college. These pathways include delaying entry, transferring institutions, and “stopping out” temporarily from college enrollment (HACU, 2012; Contreras, 2012). Latinas/os also take longer (nine years, on average) to complete their degrees (Contreras, 2012). One recent study found that over one-third (35%) of Latina/o bachelor's degree recipients were once transfer students from two-year colleges (Cataldi et al., 2011). However, the six-year graduation rate currently collected in IPEDS is only based on first-time, full-time, beginning students; it does not count students who transfer from one institution to another nor those who take longer than six years to complete their degrees (Cook & Pullaro, 2010). Because HSIs enroll larger proportions of transfer students and fewer first-time full-time enrolled students than other institutions (HACU, 2012), any information source claiming to be useful and relevant for Latina/o students and HSIs needs to collect and report data on these alternative postsecondary pathways.

What works in promoting successful postsecondary pathways for Latinos may differ from effective strategies in promoting other students' success. For instance, scholars have found that Californian community colleges that transfer high proportions of Latina/o students to four-year institutions are not necessarily the community colleges known for transferring high numbers of students in general (Gándara, Alvarado, Driscoll, and Orfield, 2012). Other research indicates that Latina/o students at four-year HSIs, compared with their counterparts at non-HSIs experience higher academic self-confidence and community engagement (Cuellar, 2014). These

studies account for dimensions that are overlooked in conventional databases and reveal important information that is possibly more salient to Latina/o students and HSIs.

Reliable information sources need to take into account “differential validity” (Borden & Lee, 2008) and consider the extent to which standardized measures may or may not apply to the success of underrepresented students who forge different types of postsecondary pathways. Furthermore, any information source about college quality should recognize that variations in institutional graduation rates arise more from variation of student characteristics and behaviors *within* institutions, rather than variation of these qualities *between* institutions (Borden & Lee, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Therefore, using standardized measures to compare institutions on access, affordability, and outcomes can distort reality considerably. When these measures are tied to resource implications like performance funding, the stakes rise in their potential to disadvantage the least well-resourced students and institutions.

Power

An accurate, useful, and equitable ratings system should also account for differences in student and institutional *power*, defined as the extent to which an individual or institution has control over its fate. Many factors outside of individuals’ and institutions’ purview shape educational attainment. Latinas/os tend to come disproportionately from low-income backgrounds, with about one-quarter living at or below poverty level (López, 2011). Many Latinas/os attend under-resourced high schools where they lack access to college preparatory coursework, teachers who are highly trained in their subject matter, or informed college counselors with the time to devote to college planning (Contreras, 2011; Education Trust, 2011; Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Oakes et al., 2006). These economic and structural conditions mean that Latina/o students often have fewer academic and financial resources with which to pursue higher education (Rendón et al., 2012). Being from a lower socioeconomic status background, or in an institution with a higher share of students from such backgrounds, is independently and negatively related to institutional graduation rates (Titus, 2006a, 2006b). Naturally, these limitations beyond their control can compromise Latinas/os’ postsecondary opportunities and broader life chances.

Less well-resourced postsecondary institutions like HSIs tend to suffer most from public disinvestment trends in higher education. Higher education is not seen as an essential item in state budgets, and is therefore often the first to be reduced (McMahon, 2009). Yet, research suggests that bachelor's degree attainment within a state is positively related to state appropriations and state provision of need-based aid to students (Titus, 2009). Continual declines in state funding for higher education have taken place with erosion in the purchasing power of Pell Grants and increases in Latina/o postsecondary enrollment, resulting in what Santos and Sáenz (2013) call a “perfect storm” that could well compromise Latina/o access and success in the coming years. One stark example of having limited institutional resources is evidenced in California community colleges, which enroll some 70% of Latina/o college students in the state, yet spend less to educate each student than K-12 schools do (Martínez-Wenzl & Márquez, 2012). Overall, lower levels of institutional resources are independently and negatively associated with graduation rates (Bound et al., 2010).

Therefore, if graduation rates are used as a primary metric to evaluate institutional quality and corresponding performance funding, it is likely that the institutions with significant financial resources and more control over funding sources (such as wealthy private colleges with large endowments) that serve more traditional student bodies will grow richer, while less well-resourced institutions (including many HSIs) will become poorer. Such declines would compromise the capacity of less well-resourced institutions to promote student success.

Counting what counts in advancing Latina/o postsecondary opportunity

Higher education has come to be seen as an increasingly private good that only confers benefits to individuals (St. John, 2003; McMahon, 2009). Yet, higher education provides manifest social and public benefits as well (Bowen, 1977). Economist Walter McMahon (2009) empirically documented several “non-market private” benefits of higher education, including increased individual and familial health, capacity to educate children, fertility, longevity, and happiness (p. 37). Social benefits of higher education include enhanced social connectedness, knowledge creation, and functioning of civic institutions (through activities such as voting), and indirect positive influences on environmental sustainability. Other documented benefits include reductions in crime levels and associated criminal justice costs, health care and public assistance

costs, and poverty and inequality (McMahon, 2009; p. 38). There is rightfully much concern about the affordability of higher education. However, it is often framed as a cost, rather than as an investment enhancing the broader economic and social well being of the nation. When these public benefits are considered, the research indicates that both the state and federal government are actually *underinvesting* in higher education to a large degree (McMahon, 2009).

In fact, McMahon (2009) calculated that social benefits comprise “about 52% of the total benefits of higher education,” (p. 255), meaning that focusing solely on individual profit overlooks about half of what higher education offers to individuals and society. It is important to document and provide information for students and families about the full range of individual and social benefits of higher education, so that they can make the most suitable college choices. This is especially true for families with limited past college experience.

Conversations about higher education accountability and any ratings system should bring together various stakeholders who may hold diverse views on higher education’s benefits. Together, these stakeholders can address the “intended use, conceptual basis, evidence of claims, appropriate implementation, *and* fairness in use” of various accountability measures (Borden & Young, 2008, p. 33, emphasis added). Including the perspectives of historically underserved groups can enhance the potential for such accountability efforts to advance postsecondary equity.

Recommendations

In light of challenges regarding preferences, populations, pathways, and power, how can a proposed ratings system positively shape postsecondary educational opportunity for Latinas/os? A considerable body of research informs the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Convene a national advisory commission that represents postsecondary leaders, scholars, government officials, school personnel, employers, students, and families to examine how a ratings system can address multiple dimensions of validity in developing higher education accountability measures (Borden & Young, 2008). This board should examine how to leverage existing national data collection efforts and not “reinvent the wheel” in collecting and analyzing institutional information. The group should also address how to collect, disaggregate,

and disseminate data according to different populations, pathways, institutional missions, and contextual factors (such as state appropriations) that also affect student outcomes.

Recommendation 2: Apply our knowledge about Latina/o students' and families' preferences for making college decisions to provide comprehensive, intelligible, and culturally responsive access to information about higher education access, affordability, and outcomes. For instance, compared with consulting an impersonal website, Latina/o students and families would benefit more from personalized guidance to interpret a ratings system in terms of relevant preferences, populations, pathways, and power. Accordingly, provide equivalent information and personalized guidance about college in Spanish and English.

Recommendation 3: Research suggests that a ratings system, particularly one related to performance funding, could offer comparatively little benefit and possibly even perpetuate inequities in Latina/o postsecondary access and success. Before investing extensively in a ratings system, consider the relative costs and benefits of implementing different interventions for enhancing Latina/o postsecondary opportunities. In contrast to unproven practices like performance funding, research tells us that several federal interventions have been effective for Latina/o students and families in broadening college access, affordability, and outcomes. These include federally funded TRIO programs such as GEAR UP and Student Support Services (Cabrera et al., 2006; Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, & Goodwin, 1998; Núñez & Oliva, 2009), as well as dual enrollment opportunities in college courses, early college high schools, and related innovations in educational delivery and credit awards. Increasing investments in HSIs by increasing funding to the Title V grant programs designated for HSIs will also enable the federal government to positively affect postsecondary access, affordability, and success for greater numbers of Latina/o students (Núñez et al., 2013).

Recommendation 4: Fund research to identify and refine cost-effective and successful interventions in advancing access, affordability and quality for Latina/o students and families. Among other avenues, this research might address the potential of technological devices to facilitate college access and success, since Latinas/os use mobile phones at high rates (Contreras,

2012; López, González-Barrera, & Patten, 2013). Further examining the role of personalized guidance is also critical to advancing Latina/o postsecondary attainment.

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First Comment in Response to “Counting what counts for Latinas/os and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A federal ratings system and postsecondary access, affordability, and success”

A Response Essay Prepared by

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This commissioned response is provided for informational purpose only. The information, opinions, or recommendations expressed in the commissioned essays are the work solely of the authors, and are not adopted or endorsed by the Government, the U.S. Department of Education, or the President’s Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanics.

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Background

In her paper titled, *Counting what Counts for Latinas/os and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Federal Ratings System and Postsecondary Access, Affordability, and Success*, Dr. Anne-Marie Núñez (2014) defines well the current challenges facing both Latina/o¹ students and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and the context and consequences for both under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Education's planned Postsecondary Institutions Ratings System (PIRS). In this response essay, I further frame the issues, build upon Núñez's key points within her "Preferences, Populations, Pathways, and Power" framework, and extend her subsequent recommendations. As Núñez importantly articulates, raising overall national postsecondary attainment rates will be impossible without 1) raising the attainment rates of Latinas/os, a growing proportion of America's college-going students and 2) ensuring the success of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs); critically important tasks not without their challenges.

According to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (2014), just 15 percent of Latinas/os held a bachelor's degree in 2013. In contrast, over 35 percent of non-Hispanic Whites held bachelor's degrees. And while Núñez confirms that HSIs perform a critical role in educating roughly half of the nation's Latina/o students, unpublished analysis by ACE shows that two-year HSIs¹ performing in the bottom ten percent in terms of degree completion graduate

ten percent or fewer (and as low as three percent) of students in three years; while the bottom ten percent of four-year HSIs graduate 20 percent or fewer (and as low as 12 percent) of students in six years¹. While these statistics have limitations for reasons discussed in this essay (particularly for two-year HSIs), they nonetheless speak volumes in a policy environment that is increasingly critical of higher education as an industry with too many “underperforming” institutions.

President Obama’s administration aims to address both consumer information *and* accountability through the creation of PIRS – information on the “value” of a given institution for families and an avenue by which policymakers can hold institutions accountable for their performance along dimensions that have yet to be made publicly available. To the first aim, advocates have supported better information for students and their families, particularly those coming from low-income and first generation to college backgrounds (see, for example, Morgan & Soares, 2010; Long, 2010). To the second, there exists appropriate political interest in holding institutions accountable for their student outcomes given the more than \$150 billion that the federal government provides in the form of student financial aid (White House, 2013).

As Núñez points out in her essay, the Obama administration has admirable goals for its conceptualization of PIRS. Yet its execution will likely be flawed for several reasons, the most important of which concerns existing data availability on all students, particularly on Latinas/os; the utility of the ratings in low-income and Latina/o communities; and the use of performance measures that don’t fully capture the meaning of success for diverse institutions including HSIs.

It is our responsibility as a community of educators and advocates for Latina/o students to ensure that *accurate*, not just more data are used for the purposes of information sharing and accountability. It is further critical that investments in informing students and families about their postsecondary options be shared in a way that is meaningful and respectful of how communities of color access and consume information and how a growing body of diverse institutions engages such students.

Populations and Pathways

Núñez frames her knowledge essay around the complexity and challenges of the planned ratings system for both HSIs and Latina/o students via a construct made up of four critical issues referred to as “Preferences, Populations, Pathways, and Power.” Concerning the middle two, the most salient points made by Núñez pertain to the nontraditional higher education pathways taken by Latina/o students. These include delayed and part-time enrollment, working full-time while enrolled, transferring institutions, and taking time off and returning to higher education.

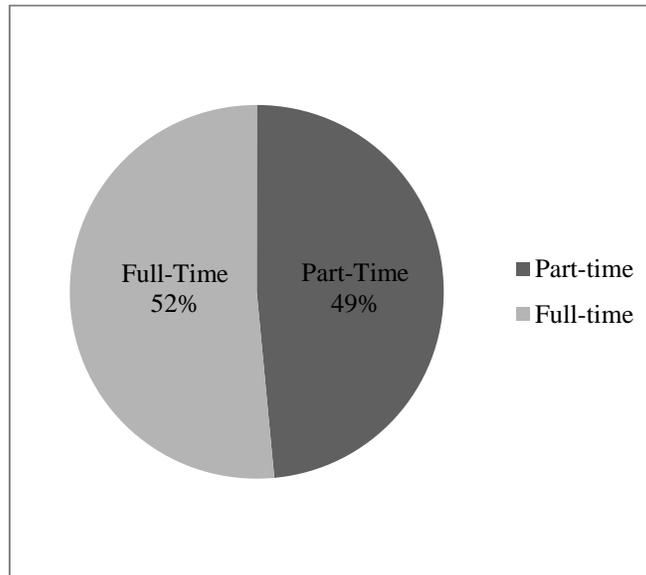
Misrepresentation of Latina/o Students in Federal Education Data

As many have said in recent years, the nontraditional student is “the new traditional” and yet the very students who traverse so-called nontraditional pathways are not reflected in national census data collected by the Department of Education through its Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The Department has indicated that PIRS will utilize outcome measures such as institutions’ retention and completion rates, which in IPEDS are limited to first-time, full-time degree/certificate-seeking undergraduates. Furthermore, graduation and retention rates in IPEDS characterize students who transfer from one institution to another as “dropouts,” regardless of whether they ultimately complete a degree. As outlined in a recent report by the Institute for Higher Education Policy (Voight, Long, Huelsman, & Engle, 2014), the Department’s current data systems were designed for a very different student population, resulting in significant information gaps that leave important questions about students’ educational pathways unaddressed.

Fortunately, the Department makes available its collection of data for several nationally representative sample studies. Analysis of the National Center on Education Statistics’ most recently released National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey findings allow a glimpse into the many profiles of Latina/o students. As these data show, 49 percent of Latinas/os are enrolled part-time (Figure 1), 37 percent are *both* low-income and first generation, 26 percent are working full-time, and 36 percent delay postsecondary enrollment (Figure 2). Of a Latina/o student population that is 58 percent female, 34 percent of all Latinas have dependents and 21 percent are single parents (Figure 2). Institutional pathways are also diverse, with a full 44 percent of

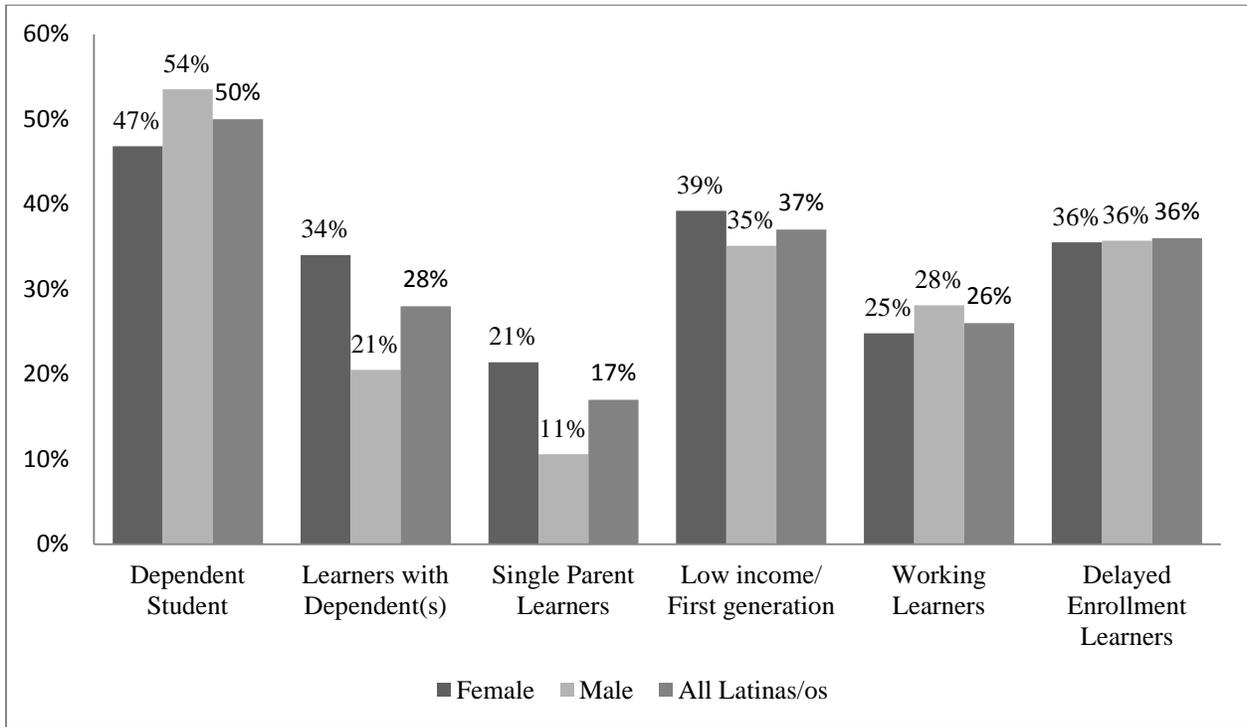
Latinas/os attending public two-year institutions and 15 percent attending private for-profits in 2011-12 (Figure 3).

Figure 1. Percentage of Latina/o Student Enrollment, by Enrollment Status (2011-12)



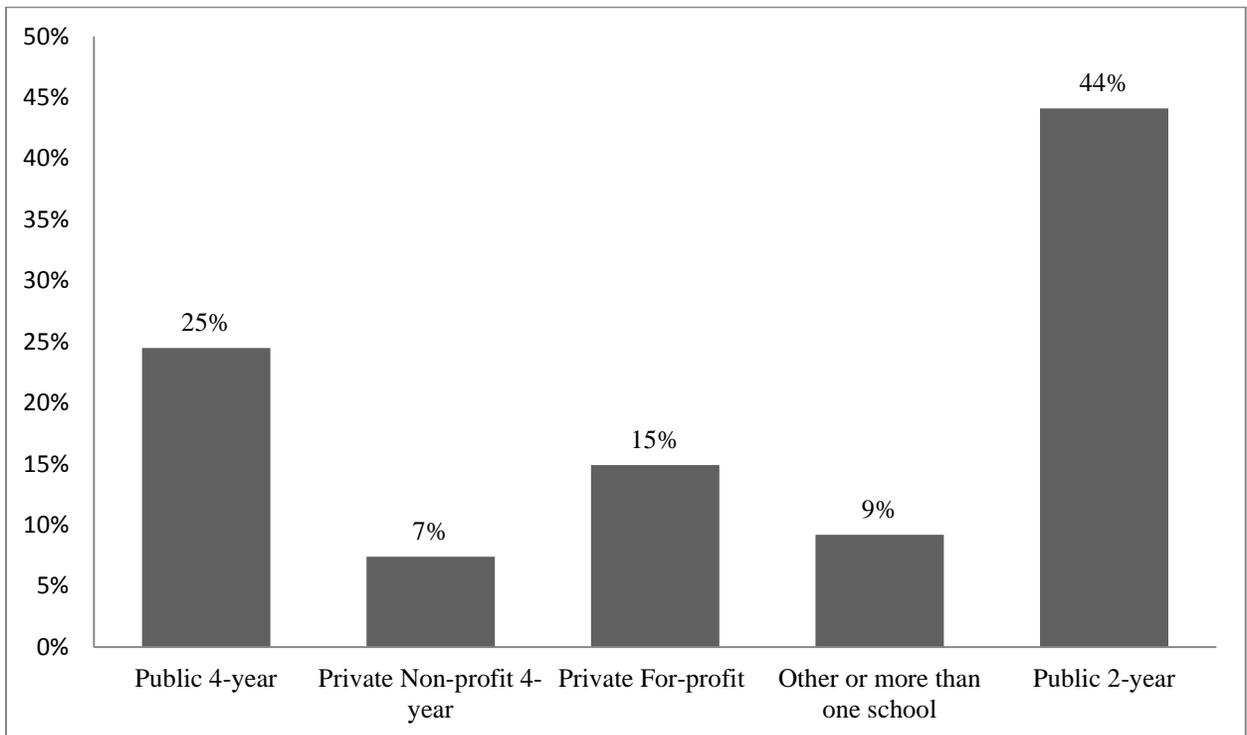
Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2011-2012.

Figure 2. Percentage of Latina/o Student Enrollment, by Gender and Other Factors (2011-12)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2011-2012.

Figure 3. Percentage of Latina/o Student Enrollment, by Institutional Sector (2011-12)



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, 2011-2012.

Given what we know about Latinas/os and the institutions they attend, we can be confident that the Department's most likely source of data for PIRS (i.e., IPEDS) will fail to adequately capture the majority of these populations and pathways given its focus on first-time, full-time students and misrepresentation of two-year college students and other outcomes. An aggregate measure of some students attending some institutions is not a sufficient base on which to rest a postsecondary ratings scheme, particularly one that has great potential to inform institutional funding in the future given president Obama's proposal to tie institutional ratings to Title IV funds.

Power and Preferences

Counting what Counts

While the administration is right to focus on affordability as an overarching agenda under which PIRS falls, value, access, and completion focused data points such as tuition/fees, percent of students receiving Pell Grants, and retention/graduation rates say very little about how students approach and experience their education. Hence the criticism levied by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (2013) and others on a paradigm that rests on a far too simplistic notion of college value. Yet even if we try to land on a set of easy-to-understand measures of institutional performance – serving a policy audience that requires simple indicators as well as the purported need for families to have access to straight forward information – it remains the case that the measures the Department has in mind are those that Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), including HSIs, have expressed do not appropriately capture their meaning of success (Jones, 2014; Rodriguez, et al., 2012).

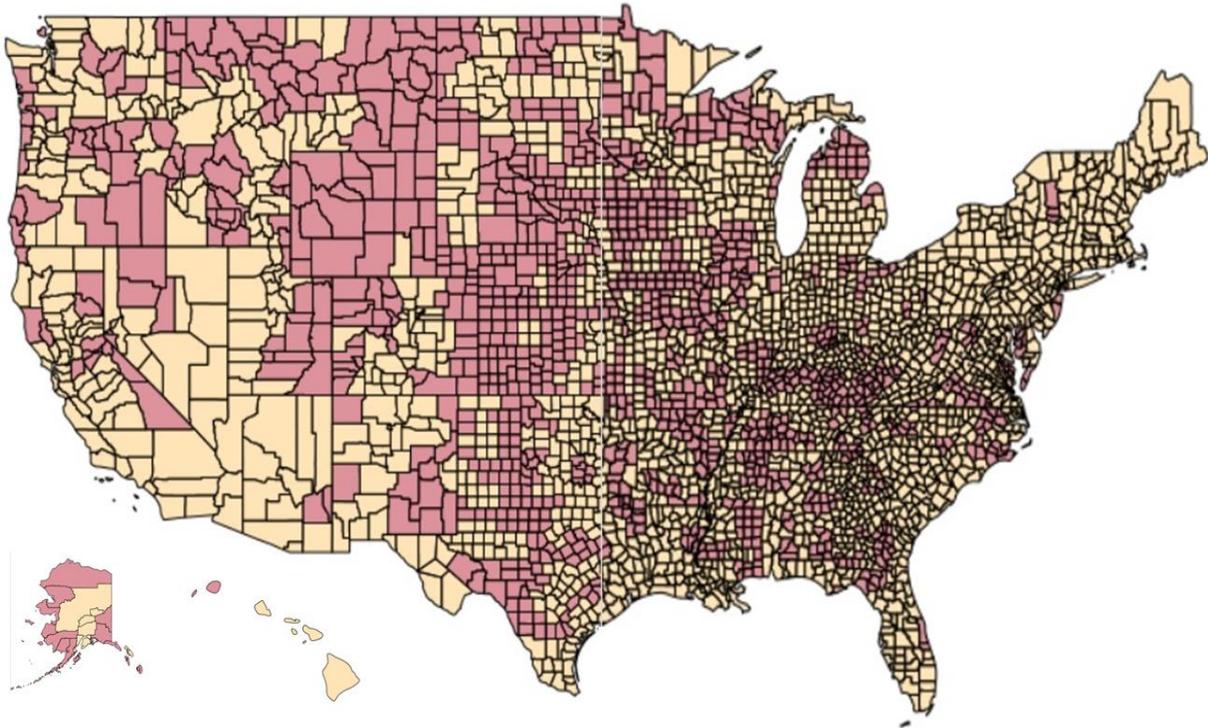
The use of measures with little meaning to institutions is an incredibly dangerous ground on which to build a performance funding scheme; particularly when state-level performance funding models, as Núñez points out, can result in negative consequences such as diminished college access, relaxed academic standards, and the misreporting of data. Although some states have used performance funding for decades, as Dougherty and his colleagues (2014) articulate, early “1.0” models consisted of “bonus” monies over and above appropriated state funds whereas newer “2.0” models are instead embedded in base funding (p. 1).

These 2.0 approaches require broad support garnered through intensive communications and transparency by a multitude of actors such as institutions, advocacy coalitions, political figures, state coordinating board officials, philanthropic supporters, legislative leaders, and the business community. Yet even with a well-coordinated approach and favorable political environment, Dougherty and colleagues (2014) found that institutions of varying missions – particularly those with open-access policies – may still not see certain measures as adequately capturing what “success” means on their campuses. In addition to PIRS likely not capturing the meaning of success to many HSIs given its data limitations, it remains the case that the Department’s development process has been opaque, without meaningful consensus building activities.

Problematic beyond adequate measures is the lack of reach provided by the ratings scheme in that it will fail to inform students living in areas of the country where educational options are limited or non-existent. Forthcoming work by Dr. Nicholas Hillman of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, outlines what he calls “education deserts” or geographic areas of the country where access to affordable and well-resourced educational opportunities are scarce and drawn along lines of race and class.

More specifically, Hillman defines education deserts as any commuting zone where a) there are no public colleges or b) community colleges are the only public option. According to his analysis, there are 363 education deserts (Figure 4) with 2.8 million Latinas/os.

Figure 4. Map of “Education Deserts” in the U.S. (2013)



Source: Figure from forthcoming study by Dr. Nicholas Hillman at University of Wisconsin, commissioned by UCLA Civil Rights Project.

Students living in these deserts and in search of an institution with high(er) ratings may have no public alternatives, resulting in a reduction of postsecondary access or a push towards more expensive alternatives such as private or for-profit institutions. Hillman’s point is this: an effective and equitable ratings system must be sensitive to the fact that not all students have the luxury of “shopping around” for college. Preferences indeed mean something very different to these students.

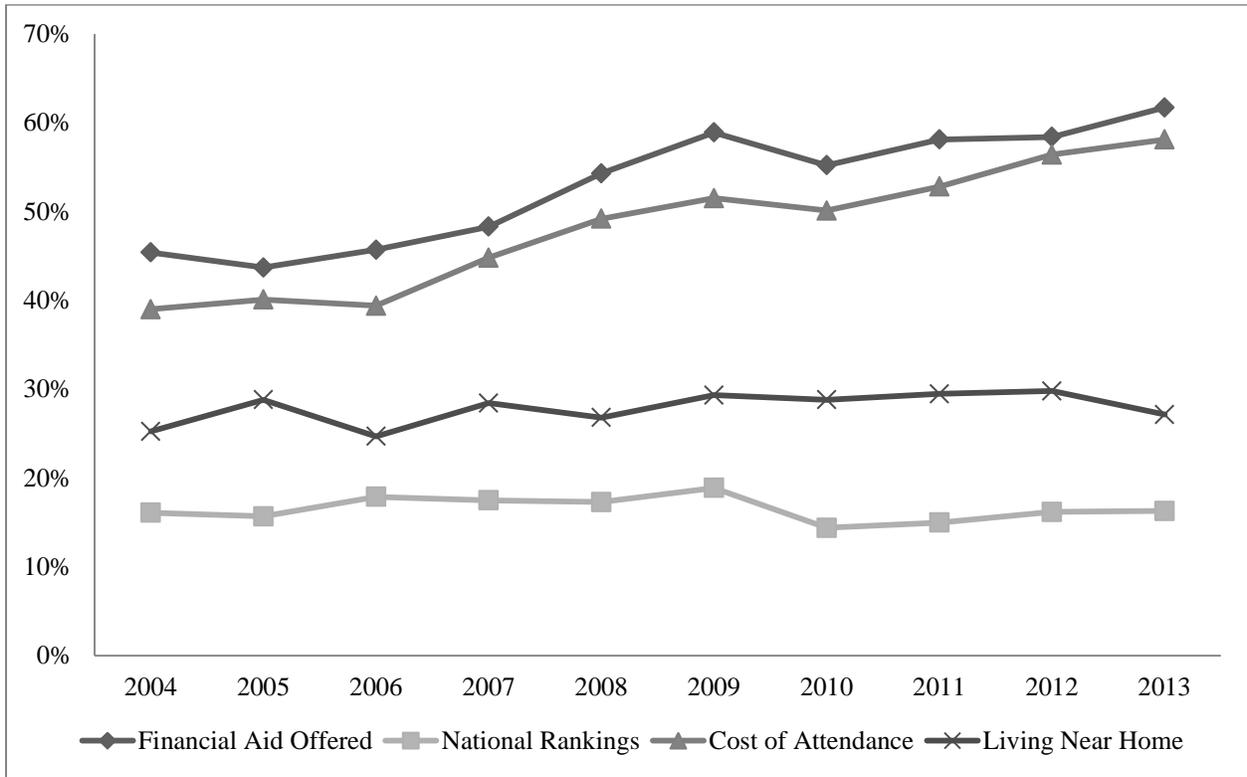
How Students Choose Colleges and Universities

As Núñez articulates in her section on preferences, the college choice process for all students – including Latinas/os – is inherently complex and highly personal. Research has shown that nontraditional students, including low-income and Latina/o populations, take into consideration different things when choosing an institution to attend than do their traditional counterparts (Contreras, 2012; Grodsky & Jones 2007; Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Hurtado, Sáenz, Santos, &

Cabrera, 2008; Paulsen & St. John, 2002)). Yet even when considering the traditional-aged college student – the very profile of student that PIRS will likely represent – there exists compelling evidence that low-income and Latina/o populations don't use popular rankings when making college choice decisions. And while the administration has said that its ratings are not another college and university “ranking,” many in the higher education community believe that the ratings scheme will nonetheless become a de facto ranking in terms of both construction and consumption (Espinosa, Crandall, & Tukibayeva, 2014).

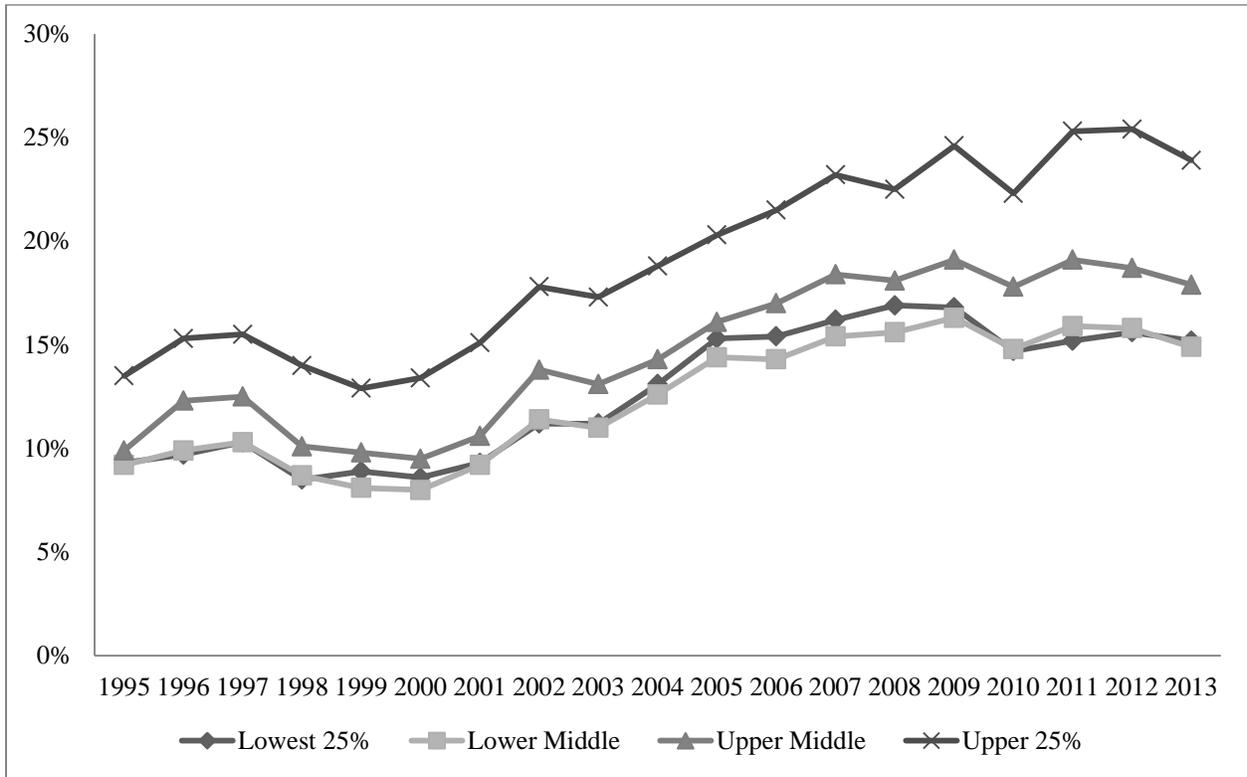
According to data out of UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute, the percentage of freshmen indicating that rankings were “very important” ranges from 15 percent to 24 percent, with a 9 percent gap between low- and lower-middle-income and high-income students. More salient factors for low-income students include institutional cost, receipt of financial aid, and proximity to home (Espinosa, Crandall, & Tukibayeva, 2014). Data published for the first time in this essay further show that receipt of financial aid is more important than ever for Latina/o students, with a full 62 percent citing aid as very important when deciding which institution to attend in academic year 2013-14 (Figure 5). Other salient factors for Latinas/os include cost of attendance (58 percent) and living near home (27 percent). When it comes to national rankings of colleges and universities, only 16 percent of Latina/os indicated high importance when choosing an institution. As the HERI data show, rankings are most relevant to students from high-income families and for those who attend highly selective institutions (Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 5. Percentage of Latina/o Freshman Indicating Factor as “Very Important” in Choosing their College, by Year (2004-2013)



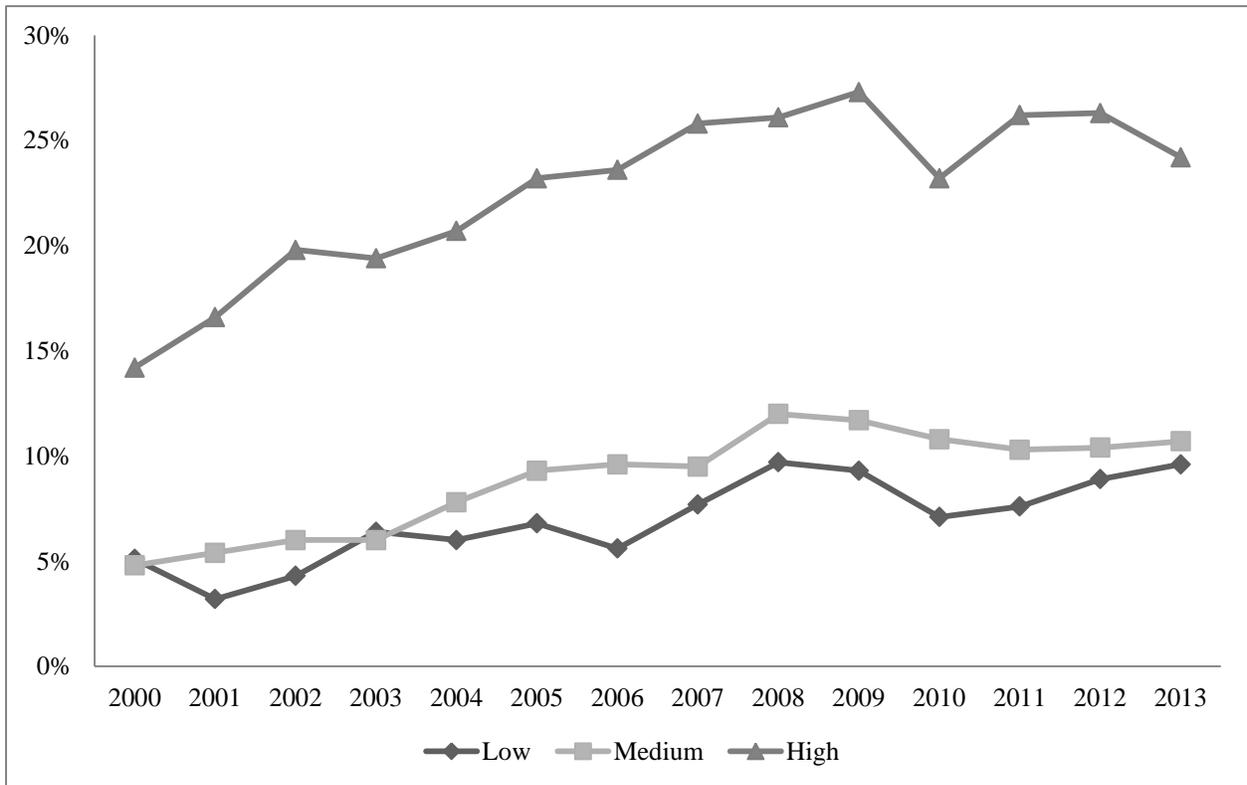
Source: Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, 2004-2013.

Figure 6. Percentage of Latina/o Freshmen Indicating Magazine Rankings as "Very Important" in Choosing Their College, by Year and Income Quartile (1995-2013)



Source: Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, 1995-2013.

Figure 7. Percentage of Latina/o Freshmen Indicating Magazine Rankings as "Very Important" in Choosing Their College, by Year and Selectivity Level of Chosen College (2000-2013)



Source: Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, 2000-2013.

The lack of relevance of national rankings to the college choice process of low-income, first generation, and Latina/o students (many of which fall into the first two categories) has a great deal to do with how such students access and actively utilize information on college-going and the related search and selection process. Analysis of the college choice literature by ACE (Espinosa, Crandall, & Tukibayeva, 2014) supports Núñez's claim that low-income, Latina/o students and families will not find a static resource like the planned ratings system useful without high-touch, personalized guidance.

Context Matters

Taken together, Núñez's Preferences, Populations, Pathways, and Power framework reveals a higher education landscape in this country that is incredibly localized in mission and operation.

Not only can institutions of the same sector (e.g., two-year, four-year) reveal vastly different characteristics (e.g., student body diversity, resource availability, programmatic specialty), they also serve their surrounding communities in different ways depending on the makeup of that community. For example, a given community's socioeconomic diversity, K12 resources, regional workforce needs, postsecondary availability, and makeup and challenges of communities of color; a context of critical importance to open-access HSIs, referred to by Núñez as the "cornerstone" of the HSI community.

State and system policy differences also vary – for example, policies that govern two-to-four year transfer, access for undocumented students, and availability of need- versus merit-based aid. The policy environment is further defined by higher education appropriations, governance, and business models including the use and quantity of performance funds. Given the incredible relevance of this local context, it is immediately apparent that any plan utilizing data to assess institutional performance requires attention to the state and regional levels where the local context and can be taken into account with a focus on how institutions are responding and serving students in their communities. A more appropriate action would be to incentivize state governments to work with institutions to develop their most meaningful signals and evidence of performance in terms of student outcomes, and holding them to these standards. Accountability is possible, but it must be inherently context-driven

Context at the institutional level also matters, particularly when considering how institutions collect, utilize, and report data. If the completion agenda has taught us anything, it's that accurate data are both needed and powerful. In addition to the U.S. Department of Education's need to rethink its higher education census data, this and other agencies have within their power to assist institutions in doing a better job of utilizing data to identify performance and resource gaps and meaningfully act on that information through institutional policy and practice.

Recommendations

Given what we know about PIRS to date, the proposed ratings system will no doubt prove a blunt instrument to address educational inequities. Yet we do have in front of us an opportunity use the Department's focus on the collection of data and creation of metrics to spur needed

changes and initiatives that will be appropriately meaningful to Latina/o students and the institutions they attend. Recommendations are as follows:

1. Overhaul the suite of surveys fielded by the U.S. Department of Education with the intention of wiping the slate clean and revisiting data needs for the 21st century student and institution on balance with data collection needs at the state, regional, and institutional levels and the reporting burden on institutions;
2. Incentivize states to build upon the work being done to link data systems and identify educational and workforce gaps with the intention of driving resources to institutions in the best position to educate Latina/o and other underrepresented populations;
3. Empower institutions to build an infrastructure that allows for rigorous data collection and analysis, for example, through Title III and V grant programs that make institutional research capacity a priority;

In alignment with Núñez's 2nd recommendation:

4. Invest in initiatives that provide families with information on institutions with a track record of success educating nontraditional students in conjunction with high-touch advising in high schools and through community based organizations;

Building on Núñez's 3rd recommendation:

5. Incentivize institutions to engage in evidence-based practices that the administration has already endorsed (e.g., dual-enrollment, early college high schools, innovations in education delivery and credit awards) and strengthen the First in the World Program Development Grant to educate institutions on findings with the intention and resources to scale effective models; and

6. Given the administration's sharp focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), follow through on the America COMPETES directive of creating an HSI program within the National Science Foundation.

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Second Comment in Response to “Counting what counts for Latinas/os and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A federal ratings system and postsecondary access, affordability, and success”

A Response Essay Prepared by

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I want to thank Dr. Nuñez for a very thoughtful essay on the proposed rating system that will be implemented by the Education Department before the start of Fall 2015. She makes a strong case regarding the importance of the rating system and captures the values that are most important to Latino students and their families. I also would like to applaud President Obama for highlighting and focusing our attention on this very critical issue.

The topic requires our focus as we have been discussing the graduation rates of historically under represented populations for almost three decades. My own dissertation completed in 1987 dealt with these very issues. It is when the institutional leaders and its college constituencies make learning and completion of all students an institutional priority that we see progress. As we heard yesterday, we must move away from the deficit model. I would argue that we have evidence from several institutions across the country that have demonstrated critical gains in the access, affordability and completion rates of Latinos, low income students and other historically underrepresented students.¹⁸ They have done so by institutionalizing efforts to close the completion gap. We will see true progress when there is intentionality and quality of execution; when we accept responsibility to account for our progress or lack of it; and when a consistent, intentional plan that has measured benchmarks and built-in accountability is implemented. We can no longer hide or blame the students solely for not completing goals of a college degree.

I always tell my colleagues at Cal State Fullerton that no student enrolls in college to fail.¹⁹ We should be angry about the dropout rates of Latinos and other students of color. We cannot avoid responsibility for academic underperformance and the graduation gaps we see throughout higher education. It is our students, from our communities who are denied the tremendous benefits that a college education provides and it is our nation that loses the enormous talent needed to support a stronger democracy.

¹⁸ Mary Nguyen, et al. Advancing to Completion: Increasing degree attainment by improving graduation rates and closing gaps for Hispanic students, September 2012, http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/Advancing_Hisp.pdf

¹⁹ Cal State Fullerton, Fall 2013 student population-38,325; Latinos 35%-13,500; Asian/PI 21%-8,177; African Americans 2%-891; Multi Race 4%-1,492; International 6%-2,201; White 27%-10,206; #1 in California # 8 in nation graduating Latinos; #13 for students of color.

While many in higher education are arguing that the Federal Government should not implement a rating system with accountability, I believe we need more accountability, meaningful expectations, equitable and fair measures, and above all, a system that rewards institutions whose expectations are met and divvies out consequences to those who fall short. I would also say we should call it an accountability system. Of course, we must be careful to know what we are measuring and carefully monitor for unintended consequences and pitfalls of such a system. As we know, instituting a rating or accountability system that is fair and equitable will not be easy. Comparing and rating over 7000 institutions with different missions, demographics, and funding models is very difficult and perhaps unmanageable. Therefore, these measures must be based on the institutional context, mission, and realities.

If the Federal Government wants to take on what could prove to be an impossible task in rating our colleges and universities, then it needs to take into account the different types of institutions in higher education. For example, it must look at the operating budget per student, the number of low-income students an institution admits, and the preparation of the students an institution serves. For example, in New York City there is a difference between the resources available and the academic experiences provided between those students who attend a private school in Riverdale or Manhattan versus those who attend public schools in the low-resourced, neighborhoods of Brooklyn or the Bronx.

Further, as we all know the IPEDS data fails to capture the full graduation rate picture by tracking only first time, full-time students. In fact, it overlooks the majority of students in our colleges and universities. For example, in Fall 2013 at Cal State Fullerton transfer students accounted for slightly more than half of our incoming class. In 2012, nationally over 45% of Latinos were enrolled in public two-year institutions. So clearly, when we look at graduation rates we do not include them. IPEDS must be revamped as recommended in December 2011 by the Committee on Measures of Student Success. Yesterday we heard the data that highlighted that HSIs, and many public 4-years serve low-income students, students of colors, transfer students and adults, which, by the way, are today's true "traditional students."

Since we are talking about a rating system that has not been unveiled, some higher education scholars have stated that earnings after graduation should be considered. I strongly caution against basing the system on starting salaries. We all know that engineering graduates earn more money than liberal arts graduates but we must be careful not to undervalue careers that are critical to the nation's success despite lower average salaries. We need teachers, social workers, public service employees, students in the arts, historians and many others in the liberal arts; thus, we need to avoid sending an unfortunate message that may end up pulling students away from schools and fields that are important to them and have public service orientation.

We must also ensure that a rating system does not move an institution to practice selective enrollment in order to gain access to additional federal dollars, thus closing the doors to the very students we aim to serve. Or worse yet, reward institutions that do not uphold high academic standards and thus don't provide the learning required of a college degree. If this nation is to reach its goal of being first in the world in a college-educated populace and capture the needs, knowledge, and careers necessary to propel us into a successful future, then we must remain cognizant of the possible unintended consequences of incentivizing practices counter to our needs.

In turning to Ms. Nuñez's recommendations, I would change recommendation one to include an advisory board that monitors the implementation of a rating system and its attached funding model. The purpose of this advisory board would be to detect any possible unintended consequences, provide feedback on the progress, and ensure benchmarks are established. It would be extremely important to provide a grace period before any dollars are tied to outcomes so institutions have the chance to establish reasonable baselines and adjust their operations accordingly. The advisory board cannot be populated only by those from elite institutions; it must also include the public practitioners from institutions that actually enroll low-income students and students of color.

While I wholeheartedly agree with Nuñez's second recommendation that we must make our informational outreach relevant to Latino communities, this effort is perhaps best left to the institutions rather than the Federal Government to implement. I would propose that the Federal

Government underscore the importance of reaching out to Latino students, families, and our communities and provide additional funding for that outreach.²⁰ It is important to establish upfront clearly delineated goals, benchmarks, strategies, and unexpected outcomes for outreach funding. For example, programs like the collaborative partnership with Univision and 109 community partners that began at Cal State Dominguez Hills, while I was leading that institution. Commissioner Sylvia Acevedo coordinated the Es el Momento Education Fair that in its fifth year brought in over 50,000 people. With the support of Univision through advertising and educational lectures by Jorge Ramos and Marielena Salinas, workshops on completing FASFA forms, and much more, the partnership has resulted in one of the largest Spanish educational fairs in our country's history.

Responding to the third recommendation, I would share that the rating system is coming; the representatives of the White House have made it clear that it is coming and thus we need to prepare.²¹ We know that multiple voices are being heard and we must be on the forefront to advocate for additional funding needed for critical programs like CSU Early Start, TRIO, GearUP, and pre-college programs.²² We must lead the conversation and take action so we can provide input and prepare reasonable measures.

As campus leaders we have the opportunity to prepare our campuses to respond to public accountability. While there are many presidents in the country who are actually monitoring measuring our progress on underrepresented, low-income, and Latino students, not all presidents are as vigilant like President Matos, Fernandez, and others in the country. All higher education institutions must be held accountable. For example, at Cal State Fullerton we are data driven. We monitor what peer institutions are doing across the country. Our graduation rate of 51% in 6 years for all students and 48% for Latinos is acceptable, but acceptable is not good enough. If we

²⁰ National Center for Education Statistics, Digest 2013 prepared November 2013, Table 306.20. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and race/ethnicity of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2012. Hispanic Total Enrolled: 2,979,400; Hispanic 4 year Public: 1,007,800 (33.8%); Hispanic 4 year Private: 525,500 (17.6%); Hispanic 2 year Public: 1,358,100 (45.6%); Hispanic 2 year Private: 88,000 (3%).

²¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/08/22/fact-sheet-president-s-plan-make-college-more-affordable-better-bargain->

²² For more information on the CSU Early Start program go to <http://www.fullerton.edu/admissions/prospectivestudent/earlystart.asp>.

look at our peer group, San Diego State for example, that has a similar mission and perhaps similar students, we know we can do better as they have a graduation rate of 65% and for Latinos it is 58%. We know what is possible and that is why our Strategic Plan has set goals to increase our retention and graduation rates in 5 years by 10% for both first-time first-year and transfer students.

In addition to Dr. Nuñez's recommendations, I would firmly state that what remains missing in the conversation is the more critical question of what are our students learning. When the conversation about the rating system began, we heard officials of the Federal government speak about the value and worth of a college degree. As chair of the board of Association of American Colleges and Universities we responded to President Obama's Proposed Rating system and said the following, "The date being proposed for inclusion in the proposed rating system do not address – and should not be described as – metrics for the value and worth of college. We ask that the administration not describe its work as a rating system for college value and worth."²³ We did so because nothing addresses these public good value benefits from this nation's investment in higher education and we are not recommending that it be included. We are recommending that in describing the rating system we do not equate what we are measuring, such as affordability and starting salaries, as definitions of the value and worth of a higher education.

We all know that a college degree increases the likelihood of gaining not just a job, but a career and the true value of college is ultimately about learning. The difference a good education makes in many aspects for our graduates' lives is the public good argument; it is about the long-term success in a changing economy; the civic participation a college education ensures; the immeasurable impact, vitality, and integrity in supporting our democracy; developing research; advancement of knowledge; building community partnerships; global and economic development; and enhancing innovation.

In conclusion, I urge the Federal Government to work with our regional accreditation agencies to ensure that students are progressing based on student learning outcomes. Of course graduation

²³ <http://www.aacu.org/about/statements/2013/ratings.cfm>

matters, cost matters, economic outcomes matters, but what is equally important is the academic quality of our students' learning a value that translates directly to the success of not only the students themselves, but also their families, communities, and the social fabric of our nation.