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Closing the Latino/a Transfer Gap: Creating Pathways to the Baccalaureate

Executive Summary

In October 2010, the White House Summit on Community Colleges, the first-ever convening of its kind, acknowledged the critical role of community colleges in achieving President Barack Obama's goal of making America the most educated country in the world within a decade. This call to action came with a great sense of urgency for community colleges to create pathways to a baccalaureate and to design interventions that would

lead to greater numbers of students completing college. Latinos are far more likely to begin postsecondary education in community colleges, and in fact roughly 51% are concentrated in this sector. Yet it is well documented that few manage to successfully complete the transition from a two- to a four-year college or university, making transfer the key leakage point in the pathway to the baccalaureate. In fact, Latino and Black students transfer at lower rates than White students. Consequently, closing the transfer gap has become

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one of the most important policy issues in higher education. This policy brief addresses how to build the capacity of community colleges to foster Latino student transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

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Introduction

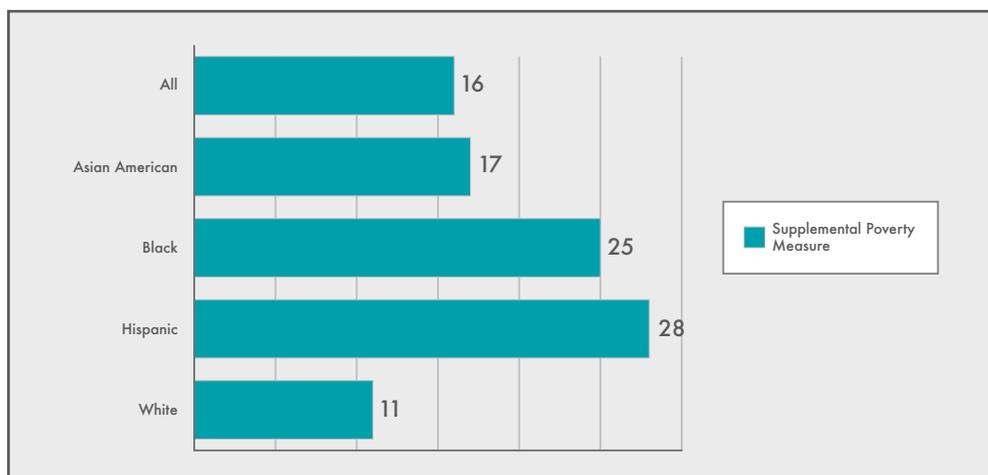
Although Latinos¹ have become the largest population of color in both the United States and in higher education, their economic opportunities have not kept pace with this growth. In 2011, Latinos became the largest group of students of color on the nation's two- and four-year campuses. While Latinos represented 13% of all 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled on the nation's four-year campuses, they represented twice as many students — 25% — on two-year campuses (Fry & López, 2012). Despite these advances in college enrollment,

... one in five Latinos (19%), half the proportion of Whites (39%), works in management, science, law, education, the arts and health care fields ...

Latinos' supplemental poverty rate² now exceeds that of other racial/ethnic groups — 28%, compared with 25% for Blacks, 17% for Asian Americans, and 11% for Whites (López & Cohn, 2011) (See Figure 1). One reason for this is Latinos' concentration in lower-paying occupations. Just one in five Latinos (19%), half the proportion of Whites (39%), works in management, science, law, education, the arts and health care fields (Pew Hispanic Center, 2010).

Many of these occupations require a bachelor's degree. Latinos, however, lag behind other groups in initiating postsecondary education at baccalaureate institutions. In 2010, one-fifth of Latino young adults (18–24 years of age), compared with one-fourth (25%) of Whites or Blacks, and over half (51%) of Asian Americans, were enrolled in four-year postsecondary education (Fry & López, 2012). Latinos are far

Figure 1. Percentage of Racial/Ethnic Groups in Poverty Using Supplementary Poverty Measure



Source: Adapted from "Hispanic Poverty Rate Highest in New Supplemental Census Measure," by M.H. López and D. Cohn, D., 2011. Copyright 2011 by the Pew Hispanic Center.

more likely to begin postsecondary education in community colleges. In 2009, 51% of first-time Latino college students were enrolled in community colleges, compared with 43% of all college students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012).

Community colleges are the key to higher education institutions that provide a critical pathway to the baccalaureate. Notably, over one-third (35%) of Latinos who earn bachelor's degrees were once transfer students from two-year colleges, compared with 27% of White, 26% of Black, and 31% of Asian American baccalaureate degree recipients (Cataldi et al., 2011). Yet it is well documented that although many Latino students who begin community college intend to transfer, few do (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Crisp & Núñez, 2011; Gándara, Alvarado, Driscoll, & Orfield, 2012;

Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Therefore, transfer is a key "leakage point in the educational pipeline" (Solórzano et al., 2005, p. 277) for Latinos wishing to complete bachelor's degrees. Given this transfer gap, the purpose of this policy brief is to address how to build the capacity of community colleges to foster Latino student transfer to four-year colleges and universities.

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¹ In this brief, the terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably. Since Hispanic is often used in collecting federal data for race and ethnicity, the term is used in reference to the statistics collected. Additionally, the term Latino includes both females (Latinas) and males (Latinos).

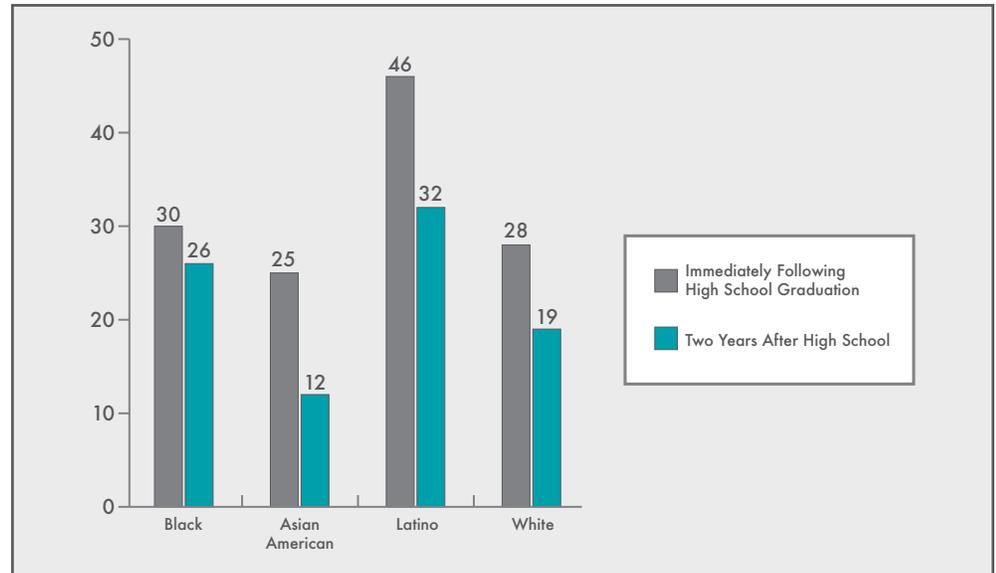
² Supplemental poverty rate is an alternative metric used by the U.S. Census Bureau that includes factors beyond income, such as the local cost of living and the family's receipt of food stamps, housing subsidies and school lunches, to determine poverty status.

Community College Transfer Gap

Many Latino college students begin postsecondary education in community colleges. A U.S. Department of Education study tracking high school graduates from the 2003–2004 academic year found that nearly half (46%) of Latino students, compared with 28%, 30%, and 25% of White, Black, and Asian American students, respectively, enrolled in a community college immediately after completing high school (NCES, 2008) (See Figure 2). That is, these Latino high school graduates were at least one and one half times as likely as others to begin at a community college. Among this same group of students two years later, 32% of Latinos, compared with 26% of Blacks, 19% of Whites, and 12% of Asian Americans, were still enrolled in community colleges (Posselt, Jaquette, Bielby, & Bastedo, 2012, Supplementary Table S8). In California, the state with the largest community college system, seven in ten (69%) Latino students begin their postsecondary education in community colleges (Gándara et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, community college enrollment does not necessarily translate to significant academic outcomes for Latino students. Among a national sample of beginning community college students in 2004, nearly half (48%) of Latino students, compared with two-thirds (66%) of White, half (51%) of Black, and seven in ten (69%) Asian American students either were still pursuing postsecondary education or had earned a postsecondary credential (e.g., certificate, associate degree, or bachelor's degree) within six

Figure 2. Percentage of High School Graduates from Different Racial/Ethnic Groups Enrolled in Community Colleges



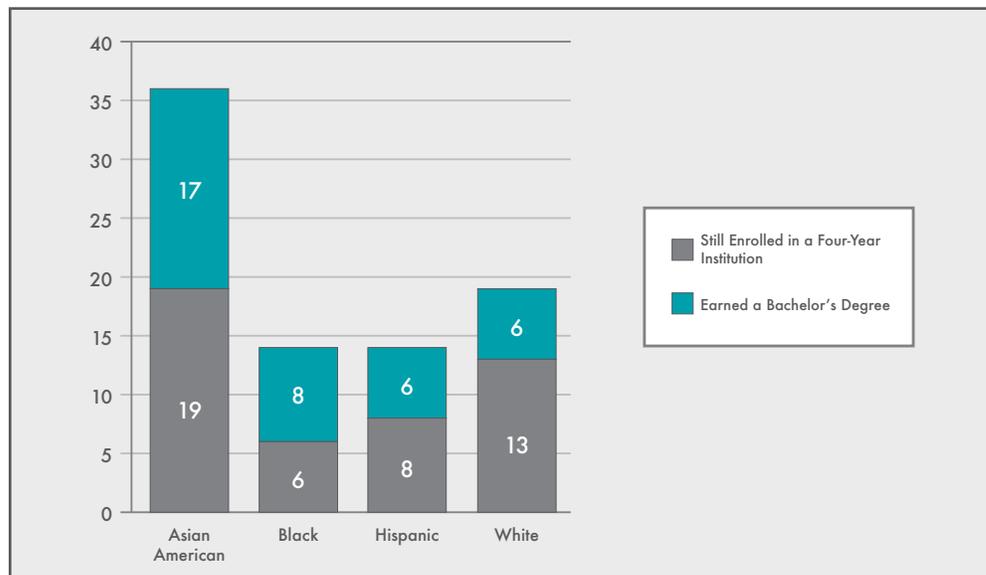
Source: Adapted from "The Condition of Education 2008," by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2008. Copyright 2008 by the National Center for Education Statistics, and "Access without equity: Longitudinal analyses of institutional stratification by race and ethnicity," by J.R. Posselt, O. Jaquette, R. Bielby, & M. Bastedo, 2012, *American Educational Research Journal*, supplementary table S8. Copyright 2012 by the American Educational Research Association.

years (Radford, Berkner, Wheelless, & Sheperd, 2010, p. 10). While half (51%) of these Latino students had initially expressed an intention to transfer (Núñez, Sparks, & Hernández, 2011), a very small number (14%) had earned a bachelor's degree or were still enrolled in a four-year institution within six years (Radford et al., 2010, p. 10) (see Figure 3).

Similarly, in their analysis tracking Latinos' educational pathways from elementary to graduate school, Solórzano and colleagues (2005) found a 10% transfer rate for beginning community college Latino students, and concluded that transfer is one of the most, if not the most, critical leakage points in the educational pipeline for Latino students. In another study of Latino high school graduates who began postsecondary education at a community college, just 7% had attained a bachelor's degree, compared with 44% of those who began at a four-year institution, within eight years of beginning college (Arbona & Nora, 2007). Even controlling for students'

baccalaureate intentions, other socio-demographic characteristics, academic preparation, college experiences and institutional characteristics, Crisp and Núñez (2011) found that Latino and Black first-time beginning community college students still transferred at lower rates than White students. They found that these students were more likely than White students to be channeled into vocational programs, versus the academic programs that would prepare them to transfer, and that participating in vocational programs had a negative effect on transfer. In sum, these low transfer patterns have significantly contributed to Latinos' relatively low postsecondary educational attainment rates (Arbona & Nora, 2007; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009).

Figure 3. Percentage of Students Who Began Community College in 2004 and Had Completed or Were Still Enrolled in a Bachelor's Degree Program in 2009



Source: Adapted from "Persistence and Attainment of 2003–4 Beginning Postsecondary Students: After 6 Years (NCES 2011-151)," by A.W. Radford, L. Berkner, B. Wheelless, and B. Shepherd 2010, p. 10. Copyright 2010 by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Barriers to Transfer

Latino community college students face several academic, financial, social and cultural barriers to transfer. These are discussed in greater detail in other sources (e.g., Nora & Crisp, 2009; Núñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vázquez, in press), and we discuss them briefly here.

Academic Barriers. These include:

- Academic under-preparation for college level work (Oakes et al., 2006)
- Possibility of delayed enrollment in college-level courses when developmental education is necessary to compensate for that under-preparation (Gándara et al., 2012; Razfar & Simon, 2011)
- Limited capacity to become engaged in their studies.

The last academic barrier, in particular, is shaped by financial, social and cultural factors.

Financial Challenges. Four in ten (39%) Latino community college students come from low-income backgrounds (Núñez et al., 2011). Consequently, many Latino students must work to finance their educations, live at home, and/or take care of siblings, parents, or extended family at home. These responsibilities can pull students away from devoting time to their studies, a process known as "environmental pull" (Nora & Crisp, 2009). Latino community college students experience more environmental pull characteristics than members of other racial/ethnic groups (Núñez et al., 2011). They are more likely than others to work during college to finance their education, often using funds to support their families as well (Dowd & Malcom, 2012; Malcom, Dowd, & Yu, 2010).

Social and Cultural Challenges. The social and cultural challenges Latino students face include:

- Building relationships with community college faculty and staff

- Accessing critical information to navigate college
- Finding the community college to be an affirming and welcoming environment for students with similar backgrounds.

The majority (68%) of Latino community college students are first-generation college students, and one-third (33%) are first-generation immigrants (Núñez et al., 2011). These students may have limited knowledge about the process of choosing academic coursework to applying to transfer, or may have difficulties finding institutional personnel whom they can trust and who can guide them in these areas (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Hagedorn, 2010). Furthermore, they can find the community college to be an alienating environment when the organizational culture is not responsive to Latino concerns (Jaffe, 2007; Millward, Starkey, & Starkey, 2007).

Framework to Address Transfer

To build a pathway to the baccalaureate, it is important that a framework be established to address transfer. This framework must include:

- Academic capital – college preparation
- Financial capital – economic resources
- Cultural capital – information about how to navigate the higher education system
- Social capital – supportive relationships with college personnel (Núñez, 2009; Núñez, in press; Núñez et al., in press).

Furthermore, this framework must also take into account Latino cultural orientations and related assets, or “community cultural wealth” (Yosso, 2005) of the following types:

- Aspirational – high hopes and dreams for the future; ability to see possibilities
- Linguistic – intellectual and social skills attained through use of more than one language
- Familial – knowledge created through sense of community and family history
- Social – information gained through peer and social networks
- Navigational – ability to navigate racially/ethnically hostile campus experiences
- Resistant – ability to resist subordination and to challenge inequalities.

The Role of Faculty and Staff

Faculty, administrators and other staff can serve as “institutional agents” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2001) to offer Latino students guidance, encouragement and information to navigate the community college system and progress toward a four-year degree. When institutional agents offer academic and interpersonal “validation” (Rendón, 1994; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011) — that is, when they take the initiative to understand students’ backgrounds, develop students’ skills and encourage students in their educational progress — Latino community college students are more likely to become academically engaged in their studies

and to strengthen their intent to persist and transfer (Barnett, 2011a, 2011b).

The quality of faculty-student interactions can support Latino students toward advancing their educational goals (Cejda, Casparis, Rhodes, & Seal-Nyman, 2008; Cejda & Hoover, 2010–11). Informed and caring guidance from “transfer agents” or “transfer champions” can keep Latino community college students on the transfer path (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Dowd et al., 2006). Sometimes community college faculty take the initiative for handling these responsibilities. As one community

“A well placed ‘I know you are having a difficult time right now. If there is anything I can do, just let me know’ — without any judgment implied — gives [Latino students] the confidence they need to come to me for assistance, and the dynamic shifts. Students choose the faculty member with whom they feel most comfortable, or the one who is available”

college writing instructor in a Hispanic-Serving Institution³ (HSI) described, “I have become an informal counselor, advising students on required classes and what majors they may pursue and informing them of financial aid opportunities. Nothing in graduate school prepares us for these multiple roles, and not all teachers are willing to take them on” (Millward et al., 2007, p. 38). Another community college instructor focused on Latino community college student success said, “A well placed ‘I know you are having a difficult time right now. If there is anything I can

do, just let me know’ — without any judgment implied — gives [Latino students] the confidence they need to come to me for assistance, and the dynamic shifts. Students choose the faculty member with whom they feel most comfortable, or the one who is available” (Millward et al., 2007, p. 53).

In reaching out to Latino students, it is important for faculty and student affairs professionals to cultivate self-reflection to explore their own backgrounds, prejudices and assumptions when assessing Latino students’ capabilities. Equally important is understanding more about the needs of the specific Latino students they are serving (Kirklighter, Cárdenas, & Murphy, 2007; Núñez, Murakami, & Cuero, 2010; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). This kind of awareness can enhance institutional faculty and staff capabilities to develop more supportive environments that are culturally responsive to Latino community college students.

Institutional Practices that Promote Transfer

Support to transfer, however, cannot be left solely to the serendipitous interactions between individuals and institutional agents. Promising programs that promote transfer are discussed below, although we caution that rigorous evaluations of college access and success programs have typically been limited (e.g., Crisp & Taggart, 2013; Gándara, 2001).

³ Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) are defined as two- or four-year, accredited, degree-granting, not-for-profit colleges and universities that enroll at least 25% or more full-time equivalent Hispanic undergraduates (Santiago, 2006, 2007).

Bridge Programs. Bridge programs typically engage incoming community college students in academic classes, brief review sessions, or orientations just prior to college, so that students can be better prepared for college-level work when they begin formal studies. These programs can sharpen students' academic skills, help socialize students toward becoming college students, and inform them about how to seek academic support once they begin college (Barnett et al., 2012; Flores et al., 2003; Tierney, Bailey, Constantine, Finkelstein, & Hurd, 2009). In addition to building math, reading and/or writing competencies, participants in bridge programs have the opportunity to connect with institutional agents before they enter college. Typically, students increase their social and academic capital, reduce or eliminate the need to take developmental coursework, decrease tuition and time costs, and will more likely pass gatekeeper courses and continue their collegiate studies (Bragg, Baker, & Puryear, 2010).

The Santa Fe Comprehensive Minority Science Engineering Math program at Santa Fe Community College is an example of a bridge program that addresses academic, financial, social and cultural barriers. It also encourages students to draw on the community cultural wealth of the college's Hispanic community. In addition to offering a program of coursework designed to prepare students academically for college, it funds students' tuition and supplementary materials. The program also links students with faculty mentors and with mentors from a Hispanic organization on campus. Once students complete the bridge program and begin college, they receive tutorial help in their first year and are placed in work-study positions in the math

department (Kezar, 2003–4).

Learning Communities. Community college learning communities enroll students together in two or more courses (Visher, Schneider, Wathington, Collado, 2010, p. iii), and these show promise in supporting Latino students' academic skill development. For example, the Transitional Bilingual Learning Community assists Latino Linguistic Minority (LM) students in a full-time college credit program at Truman College in California. Here, a cohort of Latino LM students is recruited to take coursework to learn academic English over the course of two semesters. Using the learning communities model, instructors involve the students' families, along with area high schools and community-based organizations, to create a support network for immigrant Latino students to aid in their transition from high school to college (Excelencia, 2012b, p. 12). In addition to receiving financial and academic support services, students earn college credit for courses that are taught in English and Spanish. Program participants are seven times more likely to transfer, be retained, and earn an associate degree at higher rates than similar non-participants (Excelencia, 2012b). By restructuring the delivery of instruction and support programming in these ways, this program serves as an example of one that honors the students' linguistic background, educational values and academic goals. Smith (2010) found that participation in curricular learning communities for LM students was related to self-reported increases in learning gains, and that such participation was related to increased feelings of institutional support — affirming the power of validation

for these students in their academic skill development.

Research Programs. Programs that engage community college students in research will not only develop Latino students' academic skills, but also acquaint them with a sense of the education they might receive at a four-year institution. The Santa Ana Community College Summer Research Scholars Program is a partnership between the community college, a local California State University campus, and a University of California campus. Students take coursework to develop academic skills necessary to transfer to a four-year institution and work on research projects with faculty at all three institutions, including opportunities to publish research. Program participants develop high postsecondary aspirations and transfer at relatively high rates (Oseguera, Locks, & Vega, 2009).

P–20 Collaborations. P–20 collaborations can be geared toward promoting college enrollment or college transfer. Federal and state entities can also be involved in such initiatives through financial support (Núñez & Oliva, 2009). With respect to enrollment, building such collaborations can involve administering college placement tests in 11th grade to help students and institutions identify and address students' needs to prepare for college level academic work. These collaboratives can also focus on aligning the academic curriculum between K–12 and postsecondary institutions as well as standardized tests that measure academic skills for course placement and capacity to transfer (Kirst & Venezia, 2004). Community college outreach to local high schools can also raise awareness of community colleges as transfer

pathways. In fact, Gándara and her colleagues (2012) found that California community colleges that transferred high proportions of Latinos to four-year institutions tended to be engaged in local high school outreach efforts, and that sometimes these outreach efforts were the only college counseling that Latino students received.

A second type of P-20 collaboration facilitates transfer from a community college to a four-year institution. One example is the Early College High School (ECHS) Initiative, which partners high schools with local community colleges to prepare students to enter four-year institutions. To decrease time to degree, students can simultaneously earn a high school diploma and an associate's degree. Several ECHSs primarily serve Latino students. For example, the El Paso Community College partners with local school districts to provide students with an opportunity to earn an associate degree while enrolled in high school. This initiative has allowed students who may not have had an opportunity to earn a college degree in an "accelerated environment" (Excelencia, 2012a). After graduating from high school and community college, these students can immediately enroll in a four-year institution.

Recognizing that "students do not experience college as a single institution, but as an ecosystem of higher education institutions" (Shugart, 2012 December), the Valencia College DirectConnect program brings together four local community college campuses and the University of Central Florida to offer its community college students the opportunity to take classes at more than one campus and to access academic resources

necessary to transfer. The program promotes regional articulation agreements, facilitates earning course credit for community college classes, and guarantees admission to a selective metropolitan research university. Program participants have gone on to constitute one-third (35%) of the Latino students at UCF (Excelencia, 2012b).

New Methods for Delivering

Developmental Education. Crisp and Nora (2010) found that just over half (52%) of beginning Latino community college students in a national sample were enrolled in at least one developmental course. Nora and Crisp (2012) found that over half (57%) of these students in developmental courses were enrolled in a math developmental course compared with one in four (25%) who were enrolled in English and one in six (16%) who were enrolled in a reading developmental education class.

To increase Latino students' transfer rates, community colleges need to offer students a way to decrease their time to degree (Gándara et al., 2012; Jenkins & Cho, 2012). One way to do this is to place students who are just below the institutional cut-off score and in need of developmental courses in credit-bearing courses that would require developmental labs as part of the course. For example, a student needing to build reading skills could enroll in a history course that would offer a developmental reading lab as part of the course. The student would make time toward the degree by earning college-level credit for the course, while gaining the skills to succeed in college coursework.

Another way to decrease time spent in developmental courses would be to provide opportunities for students

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to take short-term developmental courses. For example, offering eight-week developmental courses or combining reading and writing developmental courses would cut developmental course time in half (Bragg et al., 2010). The student could feel a sense of accomplishment and confidence in successfully mastering content in a shorter period (Bragg et al., 2010; Jenkins & Cho, 2012).

Culturally Relevant Support

Programs. Programs that affirm and respond to Latino students' cultural backgrounds show much promise in facilitating transfer. Gándara and her colleagues (2012) found that California community colleges that transferred high proportions of Latinos did not necessarily always have strong transfer counseling functions, nor were these institutions necessarily those that were well known for transferring high proportions of students from all racial/ethnic groups. However, these community colleges did tend to offer strong culturally relevant programs to serve Latino students.

An exemplar of successful culturally relevant programming for Latinos in community colleges is the Puente program, which has served both

high school and community college students in California and recently expanded to Texas. Puente has been offered in over 60 California community colleges. Its mission is to increase underrepresented minority students' enrollment in four-year institutions, completion of degrees, and capacity to serve as community leaders.

The program's co-coordinators include the English instructor, counselor and community mentor. In their first year, a cohort of about 30 Puente community college students take a developmental writing course during the first semester, designed to encourage students to explore their personal voices through reading Latino literature and assignments and to connect their experiences to those in the literature. They next take a regular writing course in the second semester (Jaffe, 2007). In a more specific example of how Puente fosters culturally relevant programming, Jaffe (2007), a former Puente instructor, describes how she developed groups of four to five students — called *familias* — in her courses, to share their assignments in smaller, safer groups. Here, she applies the Latino cultural value of familism (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2001) to the process of collaborative learning, which itself has been shown to contribute to positive learning outcomes for community college students of color (Opp, 2002). In this process, Latino students in the classroom build trust in one another, and experience the critical validation that they need from their instructor, peers and the literature that they read (Rendón, 2002).

From 1996–2001, Puente students across the state completed their pre-freshman composition

(developmental) courses at 80%, compared to 56% for a similar group of non-participant students (Jaffe, 2007, p. 171). At one institution, 87% of Puente participants completed basic developmental writing in the first semester and their subsequent freshman composition writing courses (Jaffe, 2007, p. 171). Puente participants have been found to transfer at twice the rate of non-participants (Laden, 2000).

Transforming Organizational Culture. Building an organizational culture that addresses all students in transferring to college — what some have called a “transfer culture” (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Pérez & Ceja, 2010) — can embed support for all Latino students in the process. With respect to representation of Hispanic students on campus, Laden and colleagues (2008) and Hagedorn and colleagues (2007) each found that community college HSIs tended to transfer Latinos at higher rates than those that were not HSIs, and speculated that in part this could be due to culturally relevant programming and curricula. Miller and García (2004) affirm the importance of increasing representation of Latino faculty who can relate to Latino students' needs, serve as role models for these students and promote their success. Millward et al. (2007) and Jaffe (2007) assert that all community college instructors must get to know their Latino students and their cultural backgrounds as a way of fostering trust and positive relationships. Institutions can offer opportunities for professional development for instructors from all backgrounds to familiarize themselves and dispel negative or racist assumptions about these students' abilities (Jaffe, 2007; Núñez et al., in press).

As an example, Valencia College in Florida (honored as the first winner of the Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence in 2011) has been showing promising results for its students by deliberately aligning its student support services with academic programs to offer more holistic support, especially for Latino students who juggle work, family and college responsibilities. This is a key step in fostering a “relational culture” that is so critical to Latino student success (Martínez & Fernández, 2004). Institutional personnel can also track and disaggregate data on Latino-student transfer and use it to inform institutional practices to promote the transfer function (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012).

Transfer and Role of States

As the primary funders of community colleges, states play a critical role in supporting Latino students' transfer possibilities. Initiatives at the state level do not typically tend to address Latino students, but they can help build capacity for community colleges to serve Latino students. States are also responsible for making transfer and articulation policies as clear as possible to Latino students. For Latino students who speak English as a second language, interpreting these policies can be particularly challenging (Bunch & Endris, 2012), so offering advising and attending to language to make these policies more interpretable is critical. State policy efforts may include the following:

Increased Funding Directed at Community Colleges. There are large disparities in the funding and resources that community colleges receive in comparison to four-year institutions. For example, Martínez-Wenzl and Márquez (2012) note that

in 2007, California community college campuses, on average, spent \$5,591 per student. This compared to \$11,289 per student for the California State University and \$21,778 per student for the University of California campuses. In fact, the amount that community colleges spent per student averaged even less than the amount that high schools spent. Increased state funding also helps keep the tuition of community colleges lower, making it easier for Latino students to finance their community college education and possibly decrease the chance that students will have to work extensively, maximizing possibilities for fuller engagement (Mullin, 2012).

Informed Use of Performance Funding. The use of performance funding in higher education has been increasing (Hamilton, 2011). Typically, evaluation of institutional performance has only recognized outputs of the institution (e.g., degree completion rates, transfer rates and related outcomes). Yet the characteristics of the incoming students that these institutions serve also affect the outputs of the community colleges (Astin & Antonio, 2012). As an example, community colleges that serve more affluent students who do not need to work as many (if any) hours to fund their education will likely be more engaged and thus, transfer. As open access institutions, community colleges serve all students. The metrics that states use to measure institutional “success” may be less applicable to community colleges and HSIs, many of which serve less affluent student populations.

When institutional performance takes into account metrics like the resources an institution has, student characteristics, and the extent to which a community college is serving the

local population, HSIs appear to make much stronger contributions (Vega & Martínez, 2012). State policymakers should keep this in mind to develop performance funding formulas that are more equitable for community colleges and for community colleges that serve high proportions of Latino students. In addition, states can hold themselves accountable by tracking how policies affect different racial and ethnic groups and how these groups fare with respect to transfer (Chase, Dowd, Pazich, & Bensimon, 2012).

Role of Federal Government

The federal government plays a special role in promoting Latino student transfer through its capacity to offer Latino students 1) various forms of financial aid, 2) supplementary funding to community colleges that enroll high proportions of Latino students to directly fund college outreach programs, and 3) grant opportunities for higher education institutions to partner with K–12 institutions to prepare students for college. Although Title V funding for HSIs is the only federal program that directly and solely targets support of Latino students, other programs that are funded by the federal government contribute to raising awareness about college and academic preparation for college among underrepresented and low-income students, a population that includes many Latino students. In fact, many of the programs discussed thus far at the institutional level have been partially or fully funded by federal grants.

Financial Support for Latino Students. Unfortunately, cuts in federal programs, like Title V, Pell grants, and TRIO, can result in “diminished access, reduced support, and delayed [degree] completion for Latinos (Akers Chacón,

2012, p. 8).” There have been consistent threats to cut the size of Pell grants, and the purchasing power of Pell grants has not matched the increase in tuition costs over time (Education Trust, 2011; St. John, 2003). Because many Latino students in community colleges are low income, it is imperative that the federal government continue to fund Pell grants at a rate that will support Latino students to engage more fully with their studies. Pell grants can also enable Latino students to overcome environmental pull factors (Bean, 1990; Nora, 2004), such as family and employment responsibilities, that can make it more difficult for students to focus on their academic responsibilities.

Most Latino community college students must work to finance their education, but working increased hours has negative effects on transfer and persistence (Crisp & Nora, 2010). Full-time and/or off-campus employment can draw students away from campus and make it difficult for them to engage in community college campus activities. Work study is another federally funded form of financial aid that can facilitate employment for Latino students on campus.

Funding of Community College HSIs. HSIs enroll a large proportion of Latino community college students. About four in ten (39%) Latino community college students attend these institutions (Núñez et al., 2011). Yet, these institutions receive less funding per student, on average, than do other kinds of institutions (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2012). The federal government has implemented Title V funding for HSIs to support these institutions in serving Latinos. HSIs can use their Title V funding in many ways, but this funding at the very

least addresses some of the shortfalls that many community college HSIs face. Because of declining public support for higher education, which compromises HSIs' capacity-building efforts, the federal government should maintain and increase Title V funding for community college HSIs.

Funding of Outreach Programs.

The federal government funds critical programs that support low-income and underrepresented students' access to and success in college. Federally funded TRIO programs include Upward Bound and Student Support Services. Upward Bound seeks to prepare students academically for college, and Student Support Services is an academic support program offered in many colleges and universities across the country. One large-scale evaluation of Student Support Services found that, for underrepresented and low-income students, participation is associated with positive outcomes (Chaney, Muraskin, Cahalan, & Goodwin, 1998).

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) represents another federal investment. GEAR UP grants offer incentives for the development of programs to prepare K–12 students for college through academic skill development and the cultivation of “college literacy” — knowledge about how to apply and gain access to college. GEAR UP grants have also funded partnerships between universities and K–12 schools. One GEAR UP grant funded a partnership between UCLA faculty and local K–12 faculty. Workshops were held for Latino middle school families to learn about the U.S. higher education system and to provide professional development for counselors to build capacity to serve Latino students

and families (Fann, McClafferty Jarsky, & McDonough, 2009; Jarsky, McDonough, & Núñez, 2009).

A UCLA Latina graduate student from the local community conducted workshops in Spanish, as it was important for families to be able to identify with her as a potential role model. Workshops were held in the evenings, and families were welcome to bring along extended family members, including small children. Pizza was served so that families could listen to the information during their dinnertime. These programs may be said to offer “anticipatory socialization” (Attinasi, 1989) for families to better understand what college might be like in anticipation of their children attending college. In general, participation in GEAR UP programs has been found to enhance college preparation academic outcomes for Latino students (Cabrera et al., 2006).

Conclusion

To create a pathway to the baccalaureate, early and sustained interventions such as bridge programs, learning communities and research programs are needed, as are P–20 collaborations, new methods for delivering developmental education and culturally relevant programming. Overall, these initiatives, coupled with faculty and staff involvement in promoting transfer, can foster a community college transfer culture.

Community colleges, however, are not solely responsible for promoting transfer. This is a collective responsibility that also requires state and federal stakeholders to work together to achieve the goal of having significantly more Latinos transfer and complete four-year college degrees. Now is the time for all stakeholders

to invest in community colleges, the very institutions that are most positioned to support the success of the fastest-growing youth population in the nation.

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About PERSPECTIVAS

PERSPECTIVAS is produced in partnership with the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE), Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Center for Research and Policy in Education, The University of Texas at San Antonio. Its purpose is to provide a venue for policy formulation, to highlight best practices and to disseminate cutting-edge research to improve access, retention and graduation of Latina/o students in higher education. The vision of PERSPECTIVAS is to be recognized by the P-20 education community as the premier publication addressing research and policy related to Latina/o student success and solutions to improve access, persistence, retention and college completion.

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