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College Completion for Latino/a Students: Institutional and System Approaches

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Betsy O. Barefoot
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Editors' Notes

Latino/a Student Success: A National Agenda

In 2009, President Obama's "College Completion Agenda" set a national goal for the United States to be the world leader in college degree attainment among 25–34-year-olds by 2020 (White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2009). This agenda has attracted supporters from organizations such as the College Board, the American Council on Education (ACE), the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and the National Governors Association (NGA). In addition, organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, and the Ford Foundation have provided funding for initiatives designed to meet this goal (Russell, 2011).

In 2010, the College Board Advocacy & Policy Center, in collaboration with Excelencia in Education and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), completed the *College Completion Agenda: State Policy Guide—Latino Edition*, which has become the catapult for a national effort for the federal government and key national organizations to improve college completion rates among Latino/as. It is estimated that Latino/as will have to earn 5.5 million degrees by 2020 in order for the United States to regain the top world ranking for college degree attainment as outlined by President Obama (Santiago & Callan, 2010). Success will hinge on the success of Latino/a students and the institutions that serve them.

Growth of a Population

Latino/as are the fastest growing demographic in the United States. They represent 17% of the U.S. population, having increased by 50% from 2000 to 2012. This is the largest growth of all population groups except Asian

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Americans. By 2060 Latino/as are projected to represent 31% of the total U.S. population (Santiago, Calderón Galdeano, & Taylor, 2015).

This growth implies a shift in the demographic makeup of the U.S. labor force. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (Toossi, 2012), Latino/as will constitute almost 20% of the U.S. labor force by 2020, with 65% of all jobs requiring some form of postsecondary education or training. With a projected 55 million job openings by 2020, should the current completion rate remain the same, the United States will be short about 5 million workers who have the postsecondary education necessary to perform those jobs (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

Despite some recent gains in postsecondary enrollment, the educational pipeline still continues to hemorrhage Latino/as. Although Latino/as account for 24% of the nation's elementary and secondary school enrollment, they represent only 19% and 11% of the nation's community college and 4-year institution enrollments, respectively (Excelencia in Education, 2015; Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2015; Snyder & Dillow, 2012). And, most Latino/as attend Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs), which account for 12.1% of all nonprofit colleges/universities in the United States. HSIs enroll 20% of all students, but nearly two-thirds (58.9%) of all Latino/a students attend HSIs exclusively, up significantly in the last several years (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2015; Santiago, 2006).

Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Hispanic-serving institutions are defined as "accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25% or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment" (Santiago, 2006, p. 5). By their very definition, HSIs were developed as a response to large concentrations of Latino/a students in institutions of higher education (IHEs) and not as institutional mandates to *serve* Latino/a students. As such, Hispanic-serving institutions have historically been "characterized by their enrollment ratios rather than by their institutional mission" (Santiago, 2006, p. 5).

It was not until the early 1980s that institutional leaders began to raise national awareness about growing Latino/a enrollments on their campuses. The first mention of "Hispanic institutions" occurred in 1983 during Congressional hearings that focused on Latino/a access to higher education. In these hearings it was noted that (a) Latino/as lacked access and were not successful in completion and (b) Latino/as attended institutions with limited financial support, which hampered the ability to improve their success. In response, Congressman Paul Simon (D-IL) introduced legislation to provide support to institutions that served large numbers of Latino/a students at "Hispanic institutions." Meanwhile, a group of institutional leaders and other interested parties founded the Hispanic Association of Colleges and

Universities (HACU) to raise recognition of and investment in those institutions and others with student enrollments that were at least 25% Hispanic. At HACU's inaugural meeting in 1986, members coined the phrase "Hispanic-serving institution." Despite this growing attention, it was not until 1992 that federal legislation officially recognized HSIs through Title III of the Higher Education Act. It would take 3 more years for federal funding to be allocated. Thus, in 1995, 37 of the 189 existing HSIs received $12 million in federal appropriations under Title V's Developing HSIs Program. Funding has continued over the years; as recently as 2013, 151 of 370 HSIs received approximately $95 million in program support (Santiago, 2006; Villarreal & Santiago, 2012). However, two issues are important to note. First, the federal designation and financial support differ significantly for HSIs versus minority-serving institutions (MSIs), historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), or tribal colleges and universities (TCUs). Title V funding is not mandated nor guaranteed for all HSIs. Rather, HSIs must meet stringent criteria as outlined by the federal government to qualify *to apply for* competitive grants "because it was not based on a compensatory rationale, but instead a demographic increase and shift" (Gasman, Nguyen, & Conrad, 2014, p. 9). Second, although the most recent appropriation of $95 million may seem like a significant increase from the original $12 million, Title V funds have been substantially cut in recent years. This, coupled with the increasing number of HSIs, means fewer dollars are available to increased numbers of institutions and students (Maldonaldo, 2015). To date, the number of HSIs has increased to 409, up more than 30 institutions in just 1 year (Santiago, 2015). Nearly one half (190) are 2-year institutions, and another one quarter (81) represent public 4-year institutions. Overall, these institutions enroll more than 2.9 million Latino/as in the United States and Puerto Rico (Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, 2015).

Volume Overview

Research about ways institutions are working to best serve Latino/a students is limited. Yet, national and institutional leaders must have an understanding of what works to ensure effective policy for Latino/a student success. The purpose of this volume is to fill the gap about Latino/a student success by exploring institutional- or system-level approaches. This volume explores how institutions are working to meet the demands of the growing population of Latino/a students. Chapter 1 is a case study of the Higher Education Administration & Leadership (HEAL) program at Adams State University, which focuses on "Preparing the Next Generation of Leaders at the Nation's Hispanic-Serving Institutions." Freeman provides important insights for institutions interested in creating leadership programs or pathways for professionals at HSIs. Chapter 2 examines organizational change through a group of emerging HSIs and their governance, policy, and

leadership. Martinez highlights the challenges and opportunities for emerging HSIs and lessons learned from one specific state, Nevada. In Chapter 3, Kiyama, Museus, and Vega highlight the factors that hinder or contribute to the success of Latino/a students at predominantly White institutions. The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Model is used as a framework to create environments in which all students can thrive in college. Chapter 4 focuses on the institutionalization of support for undocumented students across states. Gildersleeve and Vigil highlight promising practices for states and institutions.

Chapter 5 offers a mixed-methods study of personal and programmatic factors that affected persistence of Latina graduate engineering students at an HSI. Aguirre-Covarrubias, Arellano, and Espinoza provide findings and recommendations useful to HSIs and other colleges and universities interested in expanding success of Latina STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) students. Chapter 6 examines Latino male ethnic subgroups and their college enrollment and degree completion patterns. Ponjuan, Palomin, and Calise offer recommendations to improve their educational achievement. González, in Chapter 7, discusses ways in which leadership in community colleges can increase Latino/a student success through effective strategies.

Chapter 8 shifts the focus to the role of financial aid and HSIs. Venegas synthesizes literature related to postsecondary institutions with large Hispanic populations and their financial aid practices. She offers a framework for guiding institutions interested in aligning their financial aid practices with Latino student success. In Chapter 9, Natividad examines the importance of culturally relevant imagery and representation and identity development curriculum for college students. He calls for higher education institutions to embrace cultural strengths as an asset rather than a deficit. In Chapter 10, Saladino and Martinez offer a synthesis of recommendations to aid academics and practitioners as they develop policy and practice to support Latino/a students.

As a collective, the chapters in this volume encompass topics such as Latino/a undergraduate student success, graduate student success, community colleges, 4-year institutions, financial aid, and undocumented students. Through original research, literature reviews, and case studies, this volume highlights best practices and successful initiatives and outcomes for Latino/a students. We draw attention to what works, and specifically, how institutions can best serve Latino/as from matriculation to graduation given their unique needs. As such, institutions of higher education can truly become Hispanic *serving*.

Melissa L. Freeman
Magdalena Martinez
Editors

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This chapter is a case study of the Higher Education Administration and Leadership (HEAL) program at Adams State University. HEAL focuses on preparing the next generation of leaders at the nation's Hispanic-serving institutions.

HEALing Higher Education: An Innovative Approach to Preparing HSI Leaders

Melissa L. Freeman

"Why is the leadership at this Hispanic-serving institution all White males?" (A. Salazar, Adams State University Board of Trustees member, personal communication, 2008). Trustee Salazar articulated a specific example of what many had predicted would occur in higher education without a strategic and deliberate leadership pipeline plan: a Latino/a higher education leadership crisis. The number of Latino/a students enrolled in the nation's colleges and universities is increasing rapidly, but the number of students who are rising to leadership positions is not keeping pace. As shown in Table 1.1, 24% of all students in the nation's elementary and secondary schools are Latinos/as, yet Latino/as represent only 19% of 2-year college students and 11% of 4-year college students. Equally troubling is that Latinos represent only 5% of institutional administrators and less than 4% of faculty.

This mismatch between the backgrounds of the students and their educational leaders can be corrected only by increasing the number of Latino/as in leadership positions. As Betts, Urias, Chavez, and Betts (2009) describe the situation,

> To increase diversity in higher education administration, institutions must begin by recruiting increased numbers of minorities to work within colleges and universities . . . It is through increasing diversity in the leadership pipeline and through professional development that diversity will become more reflective on all levels of administration; ultimately becoming even more reflective within senior administration and the presidency. (p. 5)

Too few Latino/a students are entering graduate school and earning the credentials necessary to assume leadership positions in U.S. colleges and

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