



NEWS RELEASE

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Texas Institutions Along Border Lead State, Nation In Latino Enrollment and Degree Completion

Thirty Percent of Degrees and Certificates Earned by Latinos in Texas Awarded by Community Colleges and Universities on U.S./Mexico Border

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 14) – Eight higher education institutions along the U.S.- Mexico border in Texas lead the nation in enrolling and awarding degrees to Latino students, a new report finds. Released today by *Excelencia* in Education, the report notes that while these institutions are among the best in the nation overall, their success with Latino students has not been recognized.

The report, *Accelerating Latino Student Success at Texas Border Institutions: Possibilities and Challenges*, provides data on the success of these institutions, identifies some of the strategies behind their success, and offers recommendations on how other institutions in Texas and nationwide can increase college access and success for Latino students. The report profiles four public universities (The University of Texas at Brownsville, The University of Texas at El Paso, The University of Texas-Pan American, Texas A&M International University) and four community colleges (Texas Southmost College, El Paso County Community College District, South Texas College, Laredo Community College).

According to the report, the eight border institutions enroll ten percent of all students at Texas' public institutions, but more than 30 percent of the state's Latino students. From 2000 to 2005, enrollment of Latino students jumped 35 percent at border institutions, compared with 22 percent statewide. Similarly, the border institutions award nine percent of certificates and degrees from public universities in the state, but more than 30 percent of the certificates and degrees awarded to Latino students. From 2000 to 2005, certificates and degrees awarded to Latino students increased 49 percent at border institutions, compared with 31 percent statewide.

"We believe that every state has a border to cross when it comes to educating the Latino population," remarked Sarita E. Brown, president of *Excelencia* in Education, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. "Our look at these eight institutions shows both what is working in making college a reality for Latino students and what must be done to improve our efforts on this critical issue."

The study is part of the **Accelerating Latino Student Success (ALASS)** initiative supported by TG, a Texas-based nonprofit corporation that administers the Federal Family Education Loan Program.

"Neither Texas nor the United States can meet its human capital needs without increasing the number of Latino students who get to and through college," said Sue McMillin, president and CEO of TG. "This report is an essential first step in understanding how we are doing, what works, and how we can do better moving forward."

The eight institutions profiled in the report have developed a number of strategies designed to narrow enrollment and graduation gaps between Latino students and other groups, such as collaborating with high schools to improve college readiness, creating “early warning” systems to identify and assist students at risk of dropping out of college, and offering grants that encourage on-time graduation. These colleges and universities also emphasize affordability for students and families, working to keep tuition low despite having limited state funding.

The report also summarizes the progress Texas has made toward meeting the goals of *Closing the Gaps*, a plan launched in 2000 that outlines goals for college participation and success by 2015. Currently, enrollment and completion rates for Latino students statewide fall short of the targets set out in the plan. The eight institutions participating in the ALASS study have outlined aggressive goals for helping to meet these targets, but the report points out that similar efforts are needed throughout the state.

Recommendations:

By observing the performance and practices of the eight border institutions, *Excelencia* in Education makes several recommendations for putting Texas on a path to meet its *Closing the Gaps* targets:

- **Create a statewide plan to accelerate Latino participation and success.** The state should follow the lead of border institutions by developing focused strategy for enrolling and graduating more Latino students.
- **Increase support to border institutions.** Increasing funding support for rapidly growing institutions with limited resources will help the state meet its education and workforce preparation goals.
- **Replicate or expand institutional practices that are working for Latino students.** By using the border institutions as models of what works to enroll and graduate Latino students, other public institutions can apply the same strategies in serving their Latino populations to their approaches to improving participation and success.
- **Expand need-based financial aid** to students who see a large value-added to their skills and abilities through higher education. Providing aid to these students will increase the economic competitiveness of the state.
- **Engage other regions of the state.** The state needs to ramp up its efforts to boost Latino enrollment and success beyond the border region, particularly in urban areas.

Rep. Pete P. Gallego, chair of the Mexican American Legislative Caucus in the Texas House of Representatives, praised the report, stating, “Making the dream of college a reality for Latino students is not just a border issue—it is a Texas issue. I thank *Excelencia* in Education for raising awareness about where we stand on this critical priority.”

The report will be available on *Excelencia* in Education’s Web site (www.EdExcelencia.org) on Tuesday, October 14.

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Excelencia in Education aims to accelerate higher education success for Latino students by providing data-driven analysis of the educational status of Latino students, and by promoting education policies and institutional practices that support their academic achievement. A 501(c)(3) organization, *Excelencia* is building a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers adding value to their individual efforts with the momentum to address the U.S. economy’s need for a highly educated workforce. For more information, visit the organization’s Web site, www.EdExcelencia.org.