

NEWS RELEASE



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Citing Cost & Location, Half of All Latino College Students Attend “Hispanic-Serving Institutions”

But Few High-Achieving Students Realize They Attend an HSI

AUSTIN, TEXAS – August 17, 2007 – About half of all Latino undergraduates in 2003-04 chose to enroll in the 6 percent of institutions of higher education known as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).

However, most of these students don't realize they have enrolled at a Hispanic serving college and few Latinos attending HSIs base their enrollment decisions on campus classification, according to new research from the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit *Excelencia* in Education.

In fact, by emphasizing college costs, proximity, and accessibility when selecting a college or university, Latino students have been responsible for creating the 236 HSIs in the United States, which, by definition, enroll at least 25 percent undergraduate Hispanic full-time students. More information about the definition and characteristics of HSIs are included in *Inventing Hispanic Serving Institutions: The Basics*, which is available at www.edexcelencia.org/hsi.

The study, *Choosing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): A Closer Look at Latino Students' College Choices*, investigates choices made by high-achieving Latino college students to better understand why so many of them are located at such a small number of institutions. The research was conducted with support from the Ford Foundation and will be released on the opening day of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Texas Statewide Policy Institute on Higher Education Access and Success, which convenes over 40 elected officials from throughout Texas.

According to the study, the classification of a campus as an HSI has no influence on enrollment decisions made by Latino students. In practice, it is not the institution that makes itself a primary provider of higher education to Latino students, but Latino students themselves who create HSIs by focusing on other factors in making enrollment decisions.

Latino students that have attended HSIs have been drawn to their open admissions policies and accessible locations in communities with large Latino populations. In fact, cost, proximity, and an accessible campus were among the top reasons cited by Latino students who enrolled at HSIs.

Meanwhile, Latino students who did not attend HSIs were more likely to be motivated by financial aid, institutional prestige and academic programs in making their enrollment decisions.

“There are more than 3,000 higher education institutions in the U.S., and all of them say they aspire to create a more diverse student body. While the high-achieving students that took part in our research could have gone anywhere, they largely chose HSIs,” said Sarita Brown president, *Excelencia* in Education. “Latino students are sending a clear message on what they value in a college. If mainstream colleges and universities truly want to be more diverse, they should take note.”

Latinos constitute the fastest-growing segment of the United State’s population and will make up one-fifth of America’s workforce by 2025. Yet today, only 12 percent of Latinos ages 25 and over have earned a bachelor’s degree, compared with over 30 percent of other adults in the country. And while new data from the U.S. Department of Labor reveal that two-thirds of all jobs will be filled by Latinos over the next 15 years, only 1 percent of these jobs will be at the managerial level.

In order for colleges and universities to better serve the growing Latino student population, they should take several steps to satisfy the criteria Latino students value most when choosing a college, according to the report.

To capture Latino student perspectives on college and college choices, *Excelencia* conducted focus groups and interviews with 103 Latino students across the country. From those discussions, it became evident that there are immediate steps colleges and universities can take to improve the recruitment of Latino students, including:

- Enlisting the support of current Latino college students by making them available to high school students as information resources;
- Engaging entire families in the process by developing and disseminating information to students and parents that explain what students will be doing in college; and
- Providing reliable and quality information by increasing the numbers of quality high school guidance counselors so that more than the “top 5 percent” of students get solid college guidance.

“In their enrollment decisions, Latino students are providing a blueprint for colleges and universities to follow to attract more Latino students,” said Rafael Anchia, Texas legislator and Board Chairman for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund. “It is up to institutions to create campuses that have more clearly defined financial aid policies and that are more accessible to the Latino community in general.”

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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, including university and community-based professionals and policymakers, adding value to their individual efforts with the means and 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.