



NEWS RELEASE

June 15, 2005

CONTACT: Matt Maurer (202) 955-9450 ext. 322, mmaurer@commworksllc.com or
Lani Poblete (202) 955-9450 ext. 319, lpoblete@commworksllc.com

***Excelencia* in Education Launches Two Initiatives To Advance Policies & Practices Strengthening Latino Achievement in Higher Education**

WASHINGTON – With support from two of the nation’s leading foundations, *Excelencia* in Education, Inc. has launched two new initiatives in its ongoing work to better understand the choices Latino students make in higher education and the leadership practices that will help them succeed in postsecondary education.

The initiatives, made possible by support from the Lumina Foundation for Education and the Ford Foundation, will continue *Excelencia*’s work to close the gap between Latinos – the nation’s largest and fastest-growing minority group – and other racial groups in higher education attainment.

“We are grateful and encouraged by the generous action of the Lumina and Ford foundations to support our ongoing work to strengthen Latino achievement in higher education,” says Sarita Brown, president and founder of *Excelencia*. “Their commitment will help put critical information in the hands of campus decisionmakers and policymakers so they can better understand and act to improve Latino success.”

The new initiatives build upon *Latino Student Success at Hispanic Serving Institutions*, an earlier effort led in part by *Excelencia* with support from the U.S. Department of Education to examine what it means for a college to be “Hispanic serving” and how an institution facilitates Latino student success. The project included twelve different Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), all of which are participating in one or both of *Excelencia*’s new initiatives. Collectively, the projects aim to identify effective policies and practices to accelerate achievement for Latino students at HSIs and at all of the nation’s more than 3,000 institutions of higher education, and in particular those with rapidly increasing enrollments of Latino students.

Supported by a \$230,000 grant from the Lumina Foundation, *Latino Student Success: Case Studies in Institutional Leadership* will examine the impact of higher education leadership on practices that improve Latino achievement at HSIs. The case studies will also provide a method for comparing campus performance with other institutions educating large numbers of Latino students. Case studies will be produced of twelve Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), including six public baccalaureate and six corresponding community colleges in California, New York and Texas – three states with large and growing Latino populations.

The six pairs of case study campuses include California State University-Dominguez Hills and El Camino Community College; California State University-Los Angeles and East Los Angeles

College; the University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College; the University of Texas, Pan American and South Texas College; CUNY-Lehman College and Borough of Manhattan Community College; and CUNY-New York College of Technology and LaGuardia Community College.

The case studies and a report are expected to be completed and published by July 2006.

Latino Choices in Higher Education

A separate \$75,000 grant from the Ford Foundation will support a concurrent initiative, in which *Excelencia* will study the factors that influence Latino students' choice of colleges and the impact of their decisions on their academic achievement. The study follows the release of recent reports indicating that Latino students who decide to attend selective institutions are more likely to graduate than Latino students enrolling in non-selective institutions. However, almost half of Latino students enrolled in higher education today are enrolled at two and four-year HSIs that are largely non-selective.

To complete the study, *Excelencia* will conduct interviews and focus groups with Latino students at six HSIs to determine why well-prepared Latinos elect to attend HSIs when they could be attending more selective institutions, and how they assess their educational experiences at the institutions they have chosen.

Focus groups will be conducted at the following six baccalaureate-granting HSIs: California State University Dominguez Hills, California State University Los Angeles, CUNY-Lehman College, CUNY-New York College of Technology, the University of Texas at El Paso, and the University of Texas, Pan American.

Findings from the study are expected to be published by December 2005.

#

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.