



CAMPUS NEWS

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Cal Poly Pomona Receives Award for Commitment to Latino Student Success



Students solve a problem in computer science class.

Cal Poly Pomona's Science Educational Enhancement Services (SEES) received the award for the top 2009 "Example of Excelencia" at the baccalaureate level for its work increasing the retention and graduation rate of Latino students pursuing degrees in the sciences and mathematics. Excelencia in Education recently announced.

Examples of Excelencia is a national initiative that identifies and recognizes programs that are proven to accelerate Latino student success at the associate, baccalaureate and graduate levels and shares this information with educators and policymakers. Winning programs receive \$5,000 and are profiled in a publication released by Excelencia in Education.

SEES provides opportunities for academic support, career networking and community outreach through advising, mentoring, academic excellence workshops, and study and computer facilities. Students who start as freshmen in SEES have a retention rate 15 percent higher than underrepresented students not in SEES and a similarly improved graduation rate. Since 1992, SEES has graduated more than 500 students.

"The underlying philosophy of our program is summed in the 3 C's -- content, communication, and community -- all of which SEES students learn and experience through our mentoring, academic excellence workshops and research apprentice programs," says Barbara Burke, SEES director and chemistry professor at Cal Poly Pomona. "The SEES program provides a mode for the success of students traditionally underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and math fields. I'm proud to be a part of SEES, especially in my role of providing additional advising, mentoring, and helping students identify opportunities to develop themselves not only as professionals but also as leaders in the community when they graduate."

More than 65 percent of students served by SEES are Latino. From 2006 to 2007, less than two percent of bachelor's degrees earned by Latinos were in math and statistics or physical sciences.

"Colleges have a responsibility to help Latino students succeed," said Sarita Brown, president of Excelencia in Education, a nonprofit that promotes policies and practices that support higher educational achievement for Latino students. "California State Polytechnic University's Science Educational Enhancement Services is a program that we hope other colleges and universities around the country will be looking to as a model to adapt and replicate on their own campuses."

The selection committee considered the following factors in choosing award winner: (1) a record of achievement in graduating Latino students, (2) the magnitude of the need for the program services, (3) the rationale for implementing the program to address the identified need, (4) the application and execution of the program, and (5) the qualitative or quantitative evidence of the impact of the program.

According to the US Census Bureau, Latino young adults are less likely to earn an associate's degree or higher than other young adults. In 2008, 8 percent of Latinos 18 to 24 years had earned a degree, compared with 10 percent of other young adults.

14 percent of all young adults. Latino adults 25 or older were less likely to have earned an associate's degree or higher than other adults. The data shows that 19 percent of Latinos earn a degree, compared with 29 percent of blacks, 39 percent of whites and 59 percent of Asians. Meanwhile, census projections estimate that Latinos will constitute 22 percent of the nation's college-age population by 2020.

In conjunction with the awards, Excelencia in Education released "What Works for Latino Students in Higher Education: 2009 Examples of Excelencia Compendium," a publication that serves as a source summarizing the activities and results of the 2009 Examples of Excelencia programs and strategies that may be adapted for use at other institutions.

The Examples of Excelencia compendium may be found on Excelencia in Education's website at www.edexcelencia.org/.