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Colleges Must Promote Latino Graduation, Education Policy Experts Say

*Increasing the Latino College Completion Rate is Key
To Achieving the Nation's Educational Goals*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A new report released today examines the current state of Latinos in higher education and suggests what needs to change to successfully produce an educated workforce that meets the country's growing demands.

"Taking Stock: Higher Education and Latinos," authored by *Excelencia* in Education with support from the Lumina Foundation for Education and Jobs for the Future, analyzes the current state of Latinos in higher education and synthesizes the views of elected officials, service providers and Latino students.

In a briefing and panel discussion at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, panelists including Esther Aguilera, President & CEO of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute; Joseph Mais, Legislative Assistant to Congressman Raul M. Grijalva; Travis Reindl, State Policy & Campaigns Director for CommunicationWorks; Bertha Guerrero, CHCI Public Policy Fellow to Congressman Grijalva; and Andrés Olivo, CHCI Public Policy Fellow to Congressman Jose Serrano discussed the report findings, and specifically how they relate to President Obama's national college completion goals for the next decade.

"President Obama's degree-completion goals are unattainable without improving Latino success," said Deborah Santiago, author of the report and Vice President for Policy and Research for *Excelencia* in Education, stating a view echoed by many of the panelists. "We are not a population on the margin – we're a significant part of this country and the country's future depends on the ability of our educational system to accept this reality."

The report highlights critical policy considerations affecting Latino students in the current higher education context and suggests steps necessary to accelerate student success for the booming Latino college-going population.

"The majority of Latino graduates are a product of completion by chance, not completion by design" said Santiago, speaking of the need for colleges to play a more intentional role in helping Latino students to succeed. "Often, students are told they are the ones who have to change, when in fact the colleges themselves need to adapt as well."

Panelists discussed the importance of replicating and expanding current college and university programs that are proven to accelerate Latino success and graduate Latino students. Such programs already exist across the country and *Excelencia* in Education has an online database which catalogs innovative and successful programs to serve as a resource for educators and policymakers.

Sarita Brown, President of *Excelencia* in Education, talked about the need for the educational policy discussion to shift from being a discussion about "them" to a discussion about "us". All the panelists agreed that an inclusive policy landscape which recognizes Latino student success as inextricable from the educational success of the entire country is the most effective way to create positive change.

"Maintaining the status quo won't work; this can no longer be just an academic discussion," said Brown. "It is time for educators and policymakers to connect the dots and to make Latino success a top priority."

The report was released in cooperation with, and input from, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) and National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO).

Excelencia in Education is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization whose mission is to accelerate Latino student success in higher education.

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