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Excelencia in Education to honor South Mountain Community College, [Woodbury University](#) and University of Texas

HOUSTON.—Three programs at institutions of higher education—in California, Arizona, and Texas—have been selected as “Examples of *Excelencia*” (examples of excellence) in a national initiative to identify and honor programs and departments boosting Latino college enrollment, performance and graduation.

The winning programs will be announced tonight in Houston by *Excelencia* in Education, the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that administers the initiative and works to accelerate higher educational success for Latino students. Sallie Mae is a signature sponsor of this year’s Examples of *Excelencia* program.

The 2008 Examples of *Excelencia* are:

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The Bilingual [Nursing](#) Fellows Program at South Mountain Community College in Phoenix, Ariz.;

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The Bachelor of Architecture Program at Woodbury University in Burbank, Calif.; and

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The Intellectual Entrepreneurship Pre-Graduate School Internship Program in the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin, Texas.

“These programs are true examples of excellence and will provide a model for others to follow,” said Sarita Brown, president and founder of *Excelencia* in Education. “They equip students with the skills they need to succeed in an increasingly demanding workplace and offer institutions and policymakers powerful ideas and strategies to tap this generation of Latino college-going students.”

Hispanic Americans are still less likely to attend college than their white or black counterparts. U.S. Department of Education statistics show that Hispanics are one-third as likely as whites and about half as likely as blacks to earn a bachelor's degree.

A new study from Sallie Mae and Gallup shows that Hispanic college students and parents believe in the value of a higher education. For example, 86 percent of Hispanic students strongly believe that college is an investment in their future, and 54 percent of parents strongly agreed with the same statement. However, many Hispanic families are not adequately planning for college prior to the end of high school. More than two-thirds of Hispanic parents did not receive any financial aid information while their child was in [K-12](#) and more than half (56 percent) of the young adults who were not attending college indicated that they had not received any financial aid information in K-12, according to a report from the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute and The Sallie Mae Fund.

Examples of *Excelencia* is one part of the overall effort by Excelencia in Education and other groups to support and engage campus leaders and policymakers in accelerating higher educational success of the U.S. diverse Latino populations and thus grow this country's human capital.

"These programs have worked diligently to create strategies to improve higher educational achievement for Latino students," said Henry Cisneros, executive chairman of CityView and an Excelencia honorary board member. "It is particularly important to identify and expand such programs as the Latino proportion of the U.S. population grows. Today's Latino college students will be America's future workforce and leadership."

At the associate level, the Bilingual Nursing Fellows Program (BNFP) at South Mountain Community College recognized the nationwide need for bilingual nurses and developed an innovative [curriculum](#) and system of support services to guide students through the [nursing program](#) with the ability to practice their profession in English and Spanish. BNFP uses a cohort model for its classes, closely monitors student progress, and coaches students in areas that need improvement. Latinos comprise 97 percent of the participating students and 90 percent of graduates work in hospitals whose patients are majority Latino.

At the baccalaureate level, Bachelor of Architecture Program at Woodbury University provides a global academic experience for its students, more than 40 percent of whom are Latino. By integrating international study programs in Europe, Asia and Latin America, one of the program's main focuses is embracing the cultural and academic diversity of its students. First-year retention rates for Latinos in the program surpass the university average by almost 5 percent, and 90 percent of Latino students graduate within five years.

The Intellectual Entrepreneurship Pre-Graduate School Internship Program at The University of Texas at Austin offers undergraduate students a unique internship experience that encourages graduate study and career development that complement their personal passions and commitments to community. The program aims to increase diversity in [graduate education](#) by bringing underrepresented minorities and first-generation college students into the graduate school pipeline. Since 2003, the program has seen a dramatic increase in interns. Latino students make up the largest group of interns in the program, more than half of whom subsequently enroll in graduate school.

“Sallie Mae congratulates these outstanding institutions for their leadership in developing innovative programs that engage the talents of this country’s fastest-growing population group,” said Maria Frias, senior vice president of Sallie Mae’s south region. “Through sponsorship of this *Excelencia* in Education initiative and other programs, Sallie Mae is committed to ensuring Latino students can achieve their dreams of a higher education.”

Sallie Mae’s philanthropic arm, The Sallie Mae Fund, sponsors the “First in My Family Scholarship Program” in partnership with the Hispanic College Fund. Last school year, through scholarships ranging from \$500 to \$5,000, the program helped more than 150 Hispanic-American students—the first in their families to attend college—continue their education.

This fall, *Excelencia* in Education will release the 2008 edition of *What Works for Latino Students: Examples of Excelencia Compendium*. The publication will describe in detail how the 2008 recognized programs achieve positive results and will suggest ways their strategies may be adapted for use in other communities. For more information, please visit www.EdExcelencia.org.