

Creating a List of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)

In 2009-10, just over half of all Latino undergraduate students were enrolled in about 10 percent of higher education institutions in the United States. This concentration of Latinos' enrollment in higher education was first recognized by educators and policy makers in the 1980s and contributed to the invention of a new construct of institutions known as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). These institutions were first recognized and defined in federal law in 1994 under the Higher Education Act as follows:

Hispanic-Serving Institutions are defined in federal law as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment.¹

During the past 20 years, policymakers and institutional leaders have come to accept the HSI classification as (socially and academically) meaningful as well as a viable funding vehicle to improve the quality of education at institutions enrolling large concentrations of Latino students. While federal law defines HSIs, the federal government does not designate institutions as HSIs. Further, there is no government agency charged with certifying an official list of HSIs. As a result, the field has responded by creating multiple lists of HSIs developed for different purposes using definitions that vary from federal law. These multiple lists complicate efforts to establish a common understanding of HSIs, their strengths and needs by researchers, policymakers, advocates and students.

The purpose of this issue brief is to provide a common definition and methodology for identifying HSIs that will result in better analysis and more accuracy. Using a common definition based on an established methodology will more accurately represent this group of institutions. As the Latino population continues to grow, so will the number of Latino college-bound students. The number and size of HSIs will also continue to grow and can play a critical role in enhancing Latino students' access to higher education throughout the United States.

This brief also articulates general agreement between organizations to use a single, clear definition of HSIs. For example, *Excelencia* in Education (*Excelencia*) and The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) use the same methodology for developing a list of HSIs to ensure consistency. *Excelencia* in Education is an independent not-for-profit organization that has conducted research and worked with HSIs since the organization's inception. Further, *Excelencia's* leadership has conducted research and worked with HSIs since the institutions were first recognized in federal law. HACU is the membership organization established in the 1980s that represents HSIs.

¹ Summary of Title V of the Higher Education Act, as amended in 2008. To be eligible for the "Developing HSIs Program," the law further requires that an HSI have a high enrollment of needy students and low educational and general expenditures, which is not available for analysis in the IPEDS dataset.

Background: HSIs first received federal funding in 1995 through the U.S. Department of Education to support improved capacity and academic quality at the institutions. At that time, it was estimated about 135 institutions met the criteria of the HSI definition. In recent analysis conducted by *Excelencia* in Education, 293 institutions met the basic definition of an HSI in federal law in 2009-10. As the number and attention to these institutions continues to grow, it is important to understand how HSIs are identified.

Definition: The 2009-10 HSI list was created by applying the criteria for HSIs identified in Title V of the Higher Education Opportunity Act. As presented earlier, Hispanic-Serving Institutions are defined in federal law as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment.

Data source: The main source of data *Excelencia* in Education uses to develop a list of HSIs is data from the National Center for Education Statistics' Institutional Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) housed at the U.S. Department of Education. These data are self-reported by every institution of higher education participating in Title IV (federal student financial aid programs) and are publicly released with a one year lag required for data collection. Publicly released IPEDS data can be accessed at <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter>.

Methodology: The process for calculating a list of HSIs using IPEDS requires creating a custom data file using the latest year of institutional characteristics and enrollment data publicly released for 2 and 4-year public and non-profit, degree-granting, Title IV participating institutions. Puerto Rico should be included in this dataset (not only mainland U.S.) since they are eligible to receive Title V funding as defined by the Higher Education Act. Undergraduate fall enrollment data should include both full-time students, as well as part-time students by race/ethnicity variables. Once a custom file with these data has been created, undergraduate full time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment should be calculated for all institutions by race/ethnicity. According to IPEDS, the FTE of the institution's part-time enrollment is estimated and then added to the full-time enrollment of the institution to calculate the total FTE. The FTE of part-time enrollment is estimated by multiplying the part-time enrollment by factors that vary by control and level of institution and level of student. The following multipliers were provided by the IPEDS dataset to create FTEs from part-time undergraduate enrollment.

Sector	Multiplier
Public 4-year institutions	.403543
Not-for-profit, 4-year institutions	.392857
Public 2-year institutions	.335737
All other sectors	.397058

Once these FTEs are created, the total undergraduate Hispanic FTE is divided by the total undergraduate FTE to calculate the percentage undergraduate FTE that is Hispanic. To determine whether an institution meets the enrollment criteria of an HSI,

data should then be sorted by sector and by percentage undergraduate FTE Hispanic. As a final step, all institutions with a minimum 25.0 percent undergraduate FTE Hispanic are included in the HSI list.

Conclusion

Excelencia in Education has created lists of HSIs since its inception and will continue to conduct analysis to better understand the strengths and needs of these institutions and their impact on college access, retention, and completion for Latino and other underserved students.

Visit <http://edexcelencia.org/research/hsi/hsi-briefs> for more information on HSIs, including the following issue briefs:

Latino Student Success at Hispanic Serving Institutions: Findings from a Demonstration Project (2004) – this brief describes the findings and recommendations with six baccalaureate-granting HSIs in California, New York and Texas to define student success and the role of HSIs.

Inventing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): The Basics (2006) - This brief serves as a primer on the history behind the invention of HSIs, their identification and characteristics.

Choosing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): A Closer Look at Latino Students' College Choices (2007) - This brief examines perspectives of Latino students at HSIs and their college choices.

Modeling Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Campus Practices That Work for Latino Students (2008) - This report shares practices at 12 top-ranked HSIs working to increase Latino student success.

Accelerating Latino Student Success at Texas Border Institutions (ALASS): Possibilities and Challenges (2008) - The brief examines enrollment and graduation trends at eight Texas institutions, highlights promising strategies, and offers policy recommendations for improving Latino success rates.

Leading in a Changing America: Presidential Perspectives from Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) (2009) - This report portrays perspectives and leadership approaches to address the changing higher education landscape.

Emerging Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs): Serving Latino Students (2010) – This brief explores critical mass theory and examines efforts by emerging HSIs to serve Latino students.

Reality Check: Hispanic-Serving Institutions on the Texas Border Strategizing Financial Aid (2011) – This brief examines the use of financial aid practices and programs at HSIs as a tools for retaining Latino students.

Excelencia in Education is a not-for profit organization based in Washington DC with a mission to accelerate Latino student success in higher education. *Excelencia* links research, policy and practice and is building a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers focused on education policies and institutional practices that support Latino academic achievement.