

STUDENT SUPPORT EXAMPLE:

COLLEGE ACCESS LATINX INITIATIVE (CALI)



Institution:

Portland Community
College

Location:

Portland, OR

Year Started:

2022

**Program Point
of Contact:**

Efraín Rivas-Flores,
efrain.rivasflores@pcc.edu

PURPOSE

The College Access Latinx Initiative (CALI) at Portland Community College (PCC) advances Latino student success by removing systemic barriers and creating culturally responsive pathways from access through completion and leadership. CALI primarily serves Latino, first-generation, and mixed-status students that continue to have limited access to comprehensive and culturally relevant support needed for success in higher education.

CALI aims to achieve 100% first-year retention, increase persistence rates beyond institutional and state benchmarks, improve credit completion and GPA outcomes, and sustain high graduation rates (92%). As PCC works toward becoming a Hispanic-Serving Institution, CALI is contributing to this effort by helping the college strengthen its ability to intentionally serve Latino students and advance their success. The practices it implements create a seamless, culturally responsive pathway that directly supports improved persistence and academic success and creates a sense of belonging.

WHAT STUDENTS SAID ABOUT THIS YEAR'S EXAMPLE

"Before CALI, I didn't think college was for someone like me. Now I feel confident navigating my classes, asking for help, and planning my future." CALI participant

"CALI helped me find my path, and now I help others see what's possible." - Peer mentor and former CALI participant



PRACTICES

CALI operates as a cohort-based program within a broader ecosystem of support that includes the Unity Resource Center, La Bienvenida, and other services. Together, these efforts align access, transition, persistence, and completion to create a seamless pathway for students.

Grounded in an integrated, student-centered approach, CALI begins supporting students before they enter college. Practices like La Bienvenida serve as an entry point for students beginning in high school, where hands-on support for applications and financial aid is provided, followed by on-campus experiences for students and their families where the program builds connection and readiness and helps demystify college systems and pathways.

Belonging and cultural responsiveness are also fundamental to CALI's approach. The program intentionally creates an environment that affirms students' identities while providing the relationships and support needed to navigate higher education. A strategic peer-mentoring model extends this support by bringing former participants back as mentors. In addition to strengthening belonging for current students, the model develops mentors' leadership skills and creates a sustained cycle of support that contributes to retention, persistence, and completion.

IMPACT

With 100% of participants identifying as Latino, CALI demonstrates how an intentional, culturally responsive approach can advance Latino student success within the complex landscape of community college.

Retention and Persistence: CALI has achieved 100% first-year retention since 2022–23, compared to 53% for Latino students outside the program. Persistence increased from 73% to 83%, exceeding institutional (56%) and state/national averages (60–62%).

Academic Achievement and Completion: Since 2022–23, CALI has served 122 Latino students. Across three years, CALI students achieved a 78% credit completion rate compared to 69% among Latino non-program participants (outperforming peers by nine percentage points). CALI maintains an average graduation rate of 92%

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