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Excelencia in Education Releases National Analysis Demonstrating that America's Future Benefits from Latino College Completion

*Seal of Excelencia Certified Institutions are Leading the Way by
Intentionally Closing Gaps*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 21, 2026) — *Excelencia* in Education released a national analysis today that shows degree attainment gaps between Latino and all adults persist, despite a decade of progress. Accelerating Latino college completion, while increasing completion for all, is needed to close gaps and is essential to America's future. Closing gaps is possible. Colleges and universities that have earned the Seal of *Excelencia* are closing gaps by becoming places where Latino, and all, students thrive.

Latino College Completion: United States 2026 reveals that about 30% of Latino adults have earned an associate degree or higher, compared to about 50% of all adults. This gap persists even though the proportion of Latinos with an associate degree or higher grew by eight percentage points in the last 10 years.

Latinos are representative of the post-traditional student majority in college today. They are more likely to be younger, lower-income, first-generation college-goers, work more than 30 hours per week while enrolled, and navigate affordability challenges. The young, fast-growing Latino population also plays a vital role in our civic leadership and economy. For example, in 2023, Latino GDP reached \$4.1 trillion — accounting for nearly one-third of U.S. GDP growth. Latinos are also projected to account for over 90% of new workers by 2031. With 75% of jobs expected to require postsecondary education or training in the coming decades, colleges and universities that change their efforts to more intentionally serve this post-traditional population are pivotal to closing the completion gap and serving all students better.

"Latinos are already strengthening our economy and our communities," said Deborah Santiago, *Excelencia* in Education Co-founder and CEO. "The imperative now is to accelerate Latino college completion, while all students increase, by investing in higher education institutions, strategies, and policies proven to ensure more Latinos earn degrees and support their success beyond graduation."

The analysis points to an immediate, actionable opportunity to accelerate Latino college completion, while all continue to increase, to close gaps. For example, there is a large gap in the share of students not earning degrees. At two-year institutions, there is a 10 percentage-point gap between Latino and White students "still or no longer enrolled"

(55% vs. 45%). At four-year institutions, there is a 13 percentage-point gap between Latino and White students “still or no longer enrolled” (35% vs. 22%).

Colleges and universities that have earned the Seal of *Excelencia* for continuous improvement in student success are leading the charge to accelerate Latino college completion while serving all students. Seal-certified institutions represent fewer than 1% of institutions nationwide, yet graduate 17% of Latino, and 7% of all, students in the nation. Analysis shows the nation’s top three institutions graduating Latino students prepared for leadership and the workforce are Seal-certified: 1) Florida International University, 2) Miami Dade College, and 3) The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley.

Students with credits who have not completed degrees can be re-engaged through intentional institutional strategies and policy interventions. Seal-certified institutions invest in evidence-based practices accelerating degree completion for Latinos while increasing for all. Some of these practices include guided pathways, transfer support, financial aid counseling, credit recovery, and re-entry initiatives for those who have stopped out. State and federal policy investments that can reinforce institutional supports include continuing competitive federal funding programs for institutional capacity and supporting institutions that educate a significant share of Latino students.

Latino College Completion: United States 2026 represents the most up-to-date information available on Latinos’ enrollment and graduation in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, as well as examples of evidence-based programs improving student success. *Excelencia* releases the analysis with the support and public leadership of 22 Seal-certified institutions.

Access the full analysis: EdExcelencia.org/latino-college-completion

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About *Excelencia* in Education

Excelencia in Education leads a national network of results-oriented educators and policymakers transforming higher education to tap the talents of the Latino community and address the U.S. economy’s needs for a highly educated workforce and engaged civic leaders. With this network, *Excelencia* ensures access to excellence by promoting student achievement, informing educational policies, and advancing evidence-based practices to more intentionally serve Latino, and all, students. For more information, visit: EdExcelencia.org