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21 Colleges and Universities Earn the Seal of *Excelencia* for Ensuring Students Thrive Before and Beyond Graduation

Seal-Certified Institutions Lead the Nation in Degree Completion, Connecting Students to Opportunity and Strengthening Our Communities and Workforce

WASHINGTON, D.C. (October 27, 2026) – *Excelencia* in Education announced today that 21 colleges and universities have earned the Seal of *Excelencia* in 2026 for demonstrating continuous improvement in Latino, and all, student outcomes. These institutions hold themselves accountable for delivering value to students, communities, and the country — reinforcing higher education's role as an engine of social mobility, economic vitality, and workforce development.

Only 55 institutions nationwide have earned the Seal of *Excelencia*. These proven institutions are preparing the talent of today and tomorrow. They produce disproportionate, positive student impact, despite many navigating limited resources. Seal-certified institutions represent less than 2% of colleges and universities, yet enroll 16% and graduate 18% of Latino students — and enroll and graduate 8% of all students.

The Seal is a rigorous, national certification earned through the intentional alignment of data, evidence-based practices, and leadership strategies — all leading to student success. By moving beyond isolated programs to systemic change and mission-driven investment in intentionally serving Latinos — who are representative of today's post-traditional student majority — Seal-certified institutions strengthen their capacity to serve all students.

"Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions present strength of purpose and impact at a moment of great change in higher education," said **Deborah Santiago, *Excelencia* in Education Co-founder and CEO.** "*Excelencia* is proud to work with these leaders that show us how it looks when students succeed because of their institutions — not despite them. Together, we are cultivating talent that will ensure America's future."

In 2026, *Excelencia* works with 144 colleges and universities serving more than 4.2 million students across 28 states, D.C., and Puerto Rico. Among them, institutions pursuing the Seal undertake a voluntary journey to become more student-centered and data-informed. *Excelencia* supports that journey with evidence-based tools, capacity building programming, and a national community of practice, certifying institutions that meet a higher standard for intentionality, excellence, and student outcomes.

“Colleges and universities that earn the Seal of *Excelencia* are ensuring talent meets opportunity,” said **Sarita Brown, *Excelencia* in Education Co-founder and President.** “They have evolved beyond simply enrolling to intentionally serving Latino, and all, students. That starts with knowing who they serve and creating clear pathways for students to earn a degree. Collectively, Seal-certified institutions model the change possible for higher education to expand access to excellence for students to achieve their goals.”

Seal certification is valid for up to three years and spans three progressive levels of recognition: Certified, Recertified, and Intentionally Thriving Institutions (ITIs). ITIs demonstrate strong post-completion outcomes by investing in strategies and practices that prepare and connect Latino, and all, students to the workforce.

The institutions earning Seal certification in 2026 are:

1. Arizona Western College (AZ)
2. California State University, Chico (CA)
3. California State University, Stanislaus (CA)
4. Dominican University (IL)
5. Evergreen Valley College (CA)
6. Governors State University (IL)
7. Harold Washington College, City Colleges of Chicago (IL)
8. Montclair State University (NJ)
9. Salem State University (MA)
10. University of Massachusetts Amherst (MA)

The institutions earning Seal recertification in 2026 are:

1. California State University, Long Beach (CA)
2. California State University, Los Angeles (CA)
3. California State University, Northridge (CA)
4. Metropolitan State University of Denver (CO)
5. Richard J. Daley College, City Colleges of Chicago (IL)
6. St. Edward’s University (TX)
7. Texas Woman's University (TX)

The institutions earning certification as Intentionally Thriving Institutions in 2026 are:

1. California State University, Sacramento (CA)
2. Long Beach City College (CA)
3. The University of Texas, San Antonio (TX)
4. University of Illinois Chicago (IL)

The colleges and universities earning the Seal of *Excelencia* this year model the transformation necessary for higher education to ensure Latino, and all, students thrive — and strengthen our nation’s civic leadership and workforce.

Explore the Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions:
EdExcelencia.org/seal/seal-excelencia-certified-institutions

Quotes from leaders of institutions earning the Seal of *Excelencia* in 2026:

Seal of *Excelencia* Certified

- "Earning the Seal of *Excelencia* is a tremendous honor for Arizona Western College because it recognizes something at the heart of who we are: our commitment not simply to enroll Latino students, but to intentionally serve them and help them thrive. With more than 75 percent of our students identifying as Hispanic or Latino, this recognition reflects the work of our faculty, staff, students, and community partners to expand access, strengthen student success, and create pathways to opportunity. When our students thrive, our families and communities thrive and that is the foundation of everything we do," **said Arizona Western College President Reetika Dhawan.**

- "Earning the Seal of *Excelencia* is a tremendous honor and a reflection of the amazing capabilities of our students and the dedication of our staff and faculty who have worked tirelessly to create an environment where they can succeed," **said Chico State President Steve Perez.** "This recognition inspires us to keep finding new ways to remove barriers, create opportunities, and help more students thrive at Chico State."

- "I'm absolutely thrilled that Stan State has earned the Seal of *Excelencia*. ¡Qué orgullo! This is a historic achievement for our university. It affirms that at Stan State — third in the nation in social mobility and high in academic quality rankings — we truly champion Latine students as well as a diverse portfolio of student groups. Earning the Seal demonstrates our enduring commitment to our majority Latine population. The Seal truly belongs to every member of our Warrior community who works to honor students in ways that are contextually resonant and reflective of the cultural capital and perseverance Guerreros bring to our campus community," **said California State University, Stanislaus President Britt Rios-Ellis.**

- "We are deeply honored to earn the Seal of *Excelencia*, which recognizes Dominican University's longstanding commitment to serving Latine students and ensuring all students thrive. As we celebrate 15 years as a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution, this recognition affirms our intentional efforts to align data, practices and leadership around the lived experiences, needs and aspirations of our students. This work is central to our mission and our belief that a Dominican education can open doors to greater economic and social mobility for our students, their families and their communities. We are proud to stand alongside *Excelencia* as a national leader in advancing equity and excellence for Latine students and all students," **said Dominican University President Glena G. Temple.**

- "Earning the Seal of *Excelencia* is a tremendous honor for Evergreen Valley College. It is evidence that EVC is using data, measuring results, and intentionally improving student outcomes. To be one of only nine community colleges in the nation — and the fourth in California — to earn this distinction demonstrates the impact EVC is making for Latinx and first-generation students,

and the community of San José. In addition, our students regularly transfer to fellow Seal-certified universities — San Jose State, UC Santa Cruz, Cal State East Bay and San Francisco State. This demonstrates a Bay Area commitment to excellence for our students.

EVC's *Excelencia* team worked diligently over the past three years to achieve this recognition, but the Seal represents something even greater: our commitment to ensuring that students receive an exceptional education, the support they need, and a strong foundation to exceed in the future," **said Vinicio J. López, President, Evergreen Valley College.**

- "Earning the Seal of *Excelencia* certification is a meaningful recognition of excellence and a responsibility to keep moving forward. At Governors State University, we are committed to building on the practices that help Latino students thrive and strengthening a university where every student experiences intentional support, a genuine sense of belonging, and the opportunity to succeed," **said David Hermann, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Governors State University.**

- "Harold Washington College is proud to earn the Seal of *Excelencia*. This recognition reflects the hard work and dedication of our staff and faculty, who support our students throughout their academic journeys and beyond. This recognition also reaffirms our commitment to supporting and empowering our Latine community and, in doing so, improving outcomes for all students. We are proud of the opportunities we have created, recognizing there is still more work to be done in service to our students. We remain steadfast in our commitment to finding new ways to improve student success and best serve our college community," **said Daniel López, President, Harold Washington College**

- "Being a truly Hispanic-Serving HSI requires going well beyond enrollment. It means understanding our students' unique perspectives, recognizing their talents and making sure they have the support and opportunities to achieve their goals," **said Montclair State University President Jonathan Koppell.** "Earning the Seal of *Excelencia* signals that Montclair embraces that responsibility and affirms our commitment to keep improving. We are a majority-minority institution with a predominantly Pell-eligible student population that we serve by expanding opportunities and empowering graduates to improve communities and design our country's future."

- "We didn't set out simply to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution. We set out to become an institution that truly serves all students," **said Salem State University President John Keenan.** "That meant listening to our students, understanding the barriers they face and making intentional changes to help them succeed. Earning the Seal of *Excelencia* is national recognition that confirms we're on the right track, but it isn't the finish line. We are proud of what we've accomplished, and we are committed to building on that progress over the next three years and beyond—for our Latino students, for all students and for the communities that depend on their success."

- “UMass Amherst is committed to expanding educational access and serving as a driver of upward social and economic mobility,” **said UMass Amherst Chancellor Javier A. Reyes.** “We are proud that our growing Latino population sees the promise, possibilities, and opportunities of higher education at the commonwealth’s flagship university. This recognition affirms our efforts to ensure access, success and an inclusive campus climate for all students.”

Seal of *Excelencia* Recertified

- “We are honored to be recertified with the Seal of *Excelencia* by *Excelencia* in Education. This recognition reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting the success, belonging, and wellbeing of our Latinx/e students at CSULB.” **said California State University, Long Beach President Loren J. Blanchard.**

- “Serving Latinx students and all students is fundamental to who we are at Cal State LA. The Seal of *Excelencia* recertification celebrates decades of work supporting generations of Latinx and all students whose achievements have strengthened their families and communities. We are proud to carry that legacy forward, expanding access to an education that transforms lives and prepares our graduates to shape the future of Los Angeles and beyond,” **said Berenecea Johnson Eanes, President, Cal State LA**

- “CSUN is incredibly proud to have earned the Seal of *Excelencia* a second time as it affirms for our students and their families that they belong at CSUN and we hold ourselves accountable for their success. I am deeply grateful to the faculty and staff who make that promise real every day,” **said California State University, Northridge President Erika D. Beck.**

- “The Seal of *Excelencia* has real significance to me because it says that we are actually going beyond the numbers. We're talking about who our students are and what they need from us so that they can succeed,” **said Janine Davidson, President of Metropolitan State University of Denver.** “Getting recertified with the Seal signifies how far we've come, but also reminds us of how far we should continue to strive.”

- “As a first-generation Mexican American, community college graduate, and now President of Richard J. Daley College, the recertification of the Seal of *Excelencia* is a profound honor that hits close to home. At our college, the majority of our student body and of our Adult Education population identify as Latine. These figures represent families using education as a pathway to economic mobility,” **said Richard J. Daley College President Isaac Zúñiga.** “The recertification validates our meaningful progress for the past two years and reinforces our commitment to ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed.”

- "Our continued recognition through the Seal of *Excelencia* reflects our ongoing commitment to removing barriers to success and creating meaningful opportunities for all students to learn and shape their journey. Aligning with our Holy Cross values, we believe education should transform lives and prepare students to make a difference in the world. That means building on our legacy as

a Hispanic-Serving Institution and honoring the strengths our students bring to our community while ensuring learners of every background have access to an impactful experience on the Hilltop," **said St. Edward's University Interim President Matthew Shank.**

- "Earning Seal of *Excelencia* recertification affirms our commitment to every student who chooses Texas Woman's and trusts us to support their higher education journey," **said Christopher Johnson, president of TWU's Dallas campus.** "We honor that trust by pairing academic rigor with purposeful support that helps students cultivate grit and develop the knowledge, confidence, and judgment to lead. We take seriously our responsibility to prepare graduates to contribute to their professions and help shape the future of their communities."

Intentionally Thriving Institutions

- "We are preparing record numbers of graduates to leave Sacramento State ready to build lives grounded in independence, health, purpose, joy, and the ability to support their families and communities. Earning the Seal and being recognized as an Intentionally Thriving Institution affirms, on a national stage, that our work across recruitment, enrollment, belonging, graduation, and career success is purposeful, informed by data, and delivering real results," **said California State University, Sacramento President J. Luke Wood.**

- "This is an extraordinary moment for Long Beach City College and the students we serve," **said Mike Muñoz, Superintendent-President of LBCC.** "LBCC is the first California Community College to earn certification as an Intentionally Thriving Institution, the highest level of recognition through the Seal of *Excelencia*, and one of only 12 institutions nationwide to achieve this distinction. It affirms six years of using data to better understand our students and make meaningful changes that improve their success. I'm proud of how far we've come, and this motivates us to keep raising the bar for our students."

- "This Seal of *Excelencia* certification and recognition as an Intentionally Thriving Institution highlights the directed work underway at UT San Antonio to help every student reach their full potential," **said The University of Texas at San Antonio President Taylor Eighmy.** "By investing in proven strategies that support graduation and career attainment, we are creating pathways to success that transform the lives of all students. The success of our students fuels the success of our university and contributes to a stronger, more vibrant future for the communities we serve."

- "At UIC, our commitment to serving Latino students and advancing student success for all ensures that our graduates have the skills to compete globally and lead meaningful lives," **said UIC Chancellor Marie Lynn Miranda.** "Our recognition as an Intentionally Thriving Institution affirms that commitment. We are expanding inclusive talent pipelines that strengthen Chicago's workforce and driving innovation across our region."

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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