

HOW LATINOS PAY FOR COLLEGE: 2025 NATIONAL TRENDS



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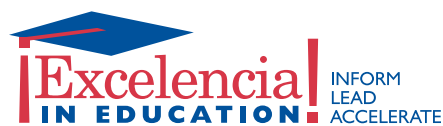
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Launched in 2004 in the nation's capital, *Excelencia* in Education leads a national network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to tap the talents of the Latino community and address the U.S. economy's needs for a

highly educated workforce and engaged civic leaders. With this network, *Excelencia* accelerates Latino student success in higher education by promoting Latino student achievement, informing educational policies with a Latino lens, and advancing evidence-based practices. For more information, visit: EdExcelencia.org.

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Foreword

From congressional deliberations to individual family planning, two topics dominate frequent dialogue and debate related to postsecondary education: 1) paying for college and, 2) the value of earning a postsecondary education. To engage in these dialogues and debate, we need to know the current context of financial aid and how participation influences how students and families pay for college.

Latinos are representative of a post-traditional student profile and changes in policy will be more impactful if made with the strengths and opportunities to serve this profile of students. For example, Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing population in the country with the potential to benefit from current institutional, state, and national policies that increase access to a quality education. Thus, finding ways to pay for college is a critical issue for Latinos, and other post-traditional students, aspiring to earn a quality postsecondary education that prepares them for a competitive workforce and civic leadership.

In 2005 *Excelencia* in Education released *How Latinos Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid*, the first in-depth and national review of Latino students' participation in financial aid amongst all students. Twenty years later, we are revisiting what has changed and what has stayed the same. There has clearly been some progress, but the need to expand access to opportunity remains. In this brief we also expanded our analysis to examine what some institutions are doing to make college more affordable. While there is less focus on this in wider discourse, we found examples of institutions that know who they serve and are proactively finding ways to contain costs and identify new sources of support.

We firmly believe that disaggregating our data and knowing how Latinos are participating in financial aid informs opportunities to compel action that can more intentionally serve other students as well. And understanding how institutions committed to intentionally serving Latino, and all, students are leveraging financial support to recruit, retain, and advance them to degree completion and connect them to the workforce is an opportunity to leverage and scale their innovation.

Excelencia is committed to informing and educating those who make and influence policy in higher education, including government policymakers, higher education leaders, media, researchers, and private sector leaders. We do this by expanding understanding about postsecondary education issues, the condition of Latinos in those issue areas, and the centrality of our community to the national goal of equalizing educational opportunity for all.



Deborah A. Santiago
CEO



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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	7
Profile of Latino Undergraduate Students	9
Latino Undergraduates and Financial Aid	14
Federal Aid	17
Federal Aid by Latino Student Characteristics	20
State Aid	22
State Aid by Latino Student Characteristics	24
Institutional Aid	25
Institutional Aid by Latino Student Characteristics	27
Private Aid	28
Private Aid by Latino Student Characteristics	29
Strategies and Practices to Make College More Affordable for Latino Students: Lessons Learned from Seal-Certified Institutions	30
STRATEGY # 1: Provides institutional aid to students to mitigate the cost of a college education	32
STRATEGY # 2: Facilitates career pathways through paid internships and employment opportunities while students are enrolled	33
STRATEGY # 3: Meets students' basic needs through institutional services (e.g., food pantry) and emergency aid	34
STRATEGY # 4: Offers robust advising support services and workshops to inform how students navigate their educational finances	35
Policy Recommendations and Call to Action	36
Institutional Policy	36
State and Federal Policy	37
Appendix	38

Executive Summary

Latinos make pragmatic choices to pay for college, and the institutions intentionally serving them are making strides to ensure the price of a college degree is affordable. A college education increases the economic and social mobility of students, families, and communities. As the youngest and fastest growing population in the U.S., Latinos are uniquely positioned to be critical drivers of our nation's knowledge economy to meet the evolving needs of our communities and workforce. Yet, the cost of a postsecondary credential remains a critical issue for making a college education accessible for Latino, and all, students. The findings from this brief help inform the opportunities institutions and policymakers at the state and federal levels have to ensure a quality and affordable education.

How Latinos Pay for College

Many Latino students make choices with what they can control as cost-saving measures and rely on various forms of financial aid to make college more affordable including the following:

1. Work 30 hours or more while enrolled in college.
2. Enroll part-time or "swirl" between colleges to take courses needed.
3. Decide to enroll at more affordable public colleges near where they live.
4. Choose to live with their parents or off-campus.
5. Rely on federal financial aid over other sources of aid.
6. Leverage grant aid more often than loans.

How Trendsetting Institutions Make College Affordable

Leading institutions make choices with what they can control to make college more affordable. For example, Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions implement the following strategies and practices:

1. Align institutional aid to provide funds to mitigate students' unexpected financial challenges.
2. Offer paid internships or on-campus employment opportunities so that Latino students can offset the cost of their degree while simultaneously gaining transferable skills.
3. Provide support services to help their students make informed decisions about their college costs.
4. Contain student costs by offering OER (Open Educational Resources) for courses.
5. Advance full tuition scholarships to students with family incomes at or below a specific financial level.
6. Facilitate and simplify access to aid by managing joint admissions and financial aid applications between two-year and four-year college partners.

How Policy can Facilitate Affordability

Intentionally serving Latino, and all, students at scale benefits from knowing and implementing what works to accelerate Latino student success at the state and federal levels based on efforts by policymakers.

STATE POLICY

Several states and systems are leading the way with policy for broader consideration.

1. Invest in guaranteed tuition plans by family income to make college affordable for students with high financial need.
2. Include the entire cost of attendance for state grants and support to calculate financial need.
3. Facilitate access to aid by mandating FAFSA completion in high school graduation requirements.
4. Promote the return on investment of a degree to students and of the institutions where they earn degrees to benefit the broader society.

FEDERAL POLICY

There is a clear federal role to support access to higher education with policy support.

1. Include basic needs in financial aid calculations to reduce students' unmet financial need to pay for college.
2. Prioritize Pell Grants among federal programs to help students gain access and support to choose where to enroll.
3. Revise the Federal Work-Study distribution formula to more strategically support students with high financial need.
4. Incentivize cost containment with a recognition program, and reduce administrative burdens to program participation.



Introduction

Many Latino students believe college provides an opportunity for economic and social mobility to reach the American Dream. Latino students also demonstrate financial need and leverage various cost-saving measures to make college more affordable. Concurrently, select colleges and universities are working to improve their policies and practices to make a quality education more affordable for Latino, and all, students.

Latinos are one of the fastest growing and youngest demographic groups in the U.S and represent a growing majority of post-traditional students. Their increasing representation in colleges and universities provides unique opportunities for social mobility and economic growth.

This brief builds on 20 years of *Excelencia* in Education's research on Latino students and college affordability, as well as lessons learned from institutional leadership and students' experiences. It provides timely information about two components of college affordability that can inform policy and practice:

1. How Latino students are using financial aid to pay for college.
2. How a group of trendsetting institutions are financially supporting Latino, and all, students.

The first section of this brief outlines the current profile of Latino undergraduates and their participation in financial aid programs by source of aid (i.e., federal, state, institutional, and private), and by type of aid (e.g., grants, loans). The second section highlights the strategies and practices that Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions have implemented to financially support Latino, and all, students they enroll.¹ The brief concludes with next steps for institutional, state, and federal policymakers.

Key Findings: Latino Students and Financial Aid

Latino students make pragmatic choices to access college despite a complicated financial aid system. For example, many Latino students mix their enrollment (go part-time and full-time), work at least 30 hours per week while enrolled, accept grants, and are less likely to take out student loans to make college affordable. Further, Latino students are more likely to leverage federal financial aid to pay for college than state or institutional aid.

OVERVIEW

- **More Latinos are applying for financial aid, yet they are less likely to receive aid. Compared to other groups, Latinos receive less average aid.** While 85% of Latino students applied for aid, only 71% received aid. Latinos received the lowest average amount of financial aid from any source compared to other groups.
- **Latino students are more likely to rely on federal financial aid than other sources of aid to pay for college.** More than half of Latino students use federal aid to pay for college, which is greater than their use of state, institutional, or private financial aid programs.
- **Latino students rely more on grants than loans.** Latinos are more likely to receive grant aid than take out loans to pay for college.

¹ *Excelencia* in Education established the Seal of *Excelencia*, a national certification for institutions that strive to go beyond enrollment to intentionally SERVE Latino students: [EdExcelencia.org/seal-excelencia](https://www.excelencia.org/seal-excelencia).

FEDERAL AID

- **Grants:** Latinos and African Americans are more likely to receive the Pell Grant than other racial/ethnic groups—yet Latinos receive similar average award amounts as their peers.
- **Loans:** Latino undergraduates attending private for-profit institutions are more likely to borrow federal loans to finance their education compared to Latinos attending public two-year institutions.

STATE AID

- **Participation:** Almost a third of Latino undergraduates receive state aid, a larger proportion than any other racial/ethnic group.
- **Merit vs. Need:** Latino students are more likely to receive need-based state grants rather than merit-based state grants.

INSTITUTIONAL AID

- **Participation:** Latinos are less likely than any other racial/ethnic group to receive institutional aid, and they receive less institutional aid on average.
- **Merit vs. Need:** Latino students are more likely to receive need-based than merit-based institutional aid.

PRIVATE AID

- **Participation:** Latino and Asian students are the least likely to receive financial aid from private sources than other racial/ethnic groups.
- **Public vs. Private:** Latinos attending private not-for-profit, four-year institutions are the most likely to leverage aid from private sources to finance their education compared to Latinos attending public two-years.

The analysis in this brief is based on the most recent data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) for the 2019-20 academic year and practices shared by Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions. For more information about the data source see Appendix.

Profile of Latino Undergraduate Students

Latinos² are the youngest and fastest growing population in the U.S. They represent 1 in 4 students in K-12 education and 1 in 5 students in postsecondary education.³ By 2030, Latinos' enrollment in postsecondary education is projected to increase by 31%.⁴ Latinos are not a monolith. They come from over 20 countries of origin, and some have been here for generations while others have recently immigrated. Amongst Latino students, nearly half (49%) are of Mexican descent, 12% are of Puerto Rican descent, 10% have mixed Hispanic origin, 3% are of Cuban descent, and 27% are of other Hispanic descent.

Latino students fit a post-traditional student profile⁵: Latino students are more likely to be first-generation college goers⁶ (the first in their family to attend college), enroll less than full-time, work while enrolled in college, and live off-campus. They also demonstrate high financial need.

TRADITIONAL STUDENT PROFILE	POST-TRADITIONAL STUDENT PROFILE
College-ready	May need academic prep or remediation
Enroll in a college or university full-time	Enroll at a community college and/or part-time
Enroll the fall after high school graduation	Delay initial college enrollment while entering the workforce
Live on-campus	Live off-campus with their parents or with their own dependants
Complete a bachelor degree in four years	Take more than four years to complete a degree
Parents have college degree	First in family to enroll in college
White, non-Hispanic	Latino, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander
Do not work while enrolled	Work 30 hours or more a week
Make college choices based on financial aid, academic programs offered, & institutional prestige	Make college choices based on cost of attendance, location, & accessibility

2 For the purposes of this brief, the terms Latino and Hispanic are used interchangeably to describe students whose origins are Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Hispanic/Latino, regardless of race.

3 *Excelencia in Education*. (2023). *Latino College Completion: United States 2023*. *Excelencia in Education*. Washington: D.C.

4 *Excelencia in Education* analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Digest of Education Statistics, [2022], Table 306.30. Fall enrollment of U.S. residents in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by race/ethnicity: Selected years, 1976 through 2031.

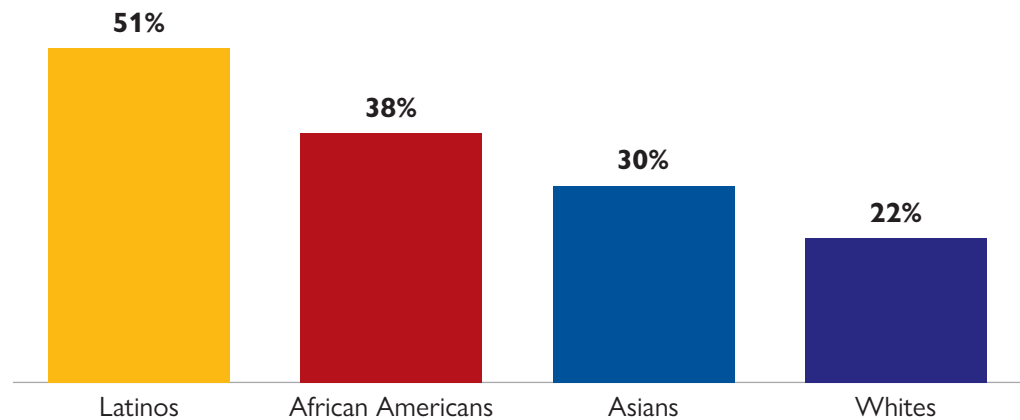
5 *Excelencia in Education* uses the term post-traditional students to signify the majority of students in college today in an asset-based way—students that are first-generation college-goers, that work while enrolled, mix their enrollment, and more.

6 First-generation college students are students with one or both parents or guardians whose highest education level is a high school diploma or equivalent.

Consider the following facts:

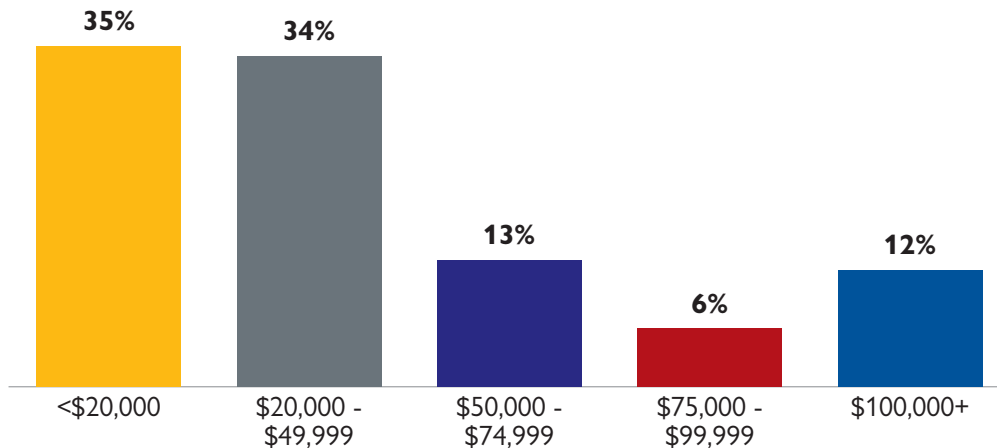
- **Latino students are much more likely to be the first in their family to attend college than other racial/ethnic groups.** The majority of Latino students (51%) are first-generation college students compared to African American (38%), Asian (30%), and White (22%) students (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. First-Generation Status by Race/Ethnicity



- **Latino students are more likely to enroll part-time or mix their enrollment intensity rather than enroll solely full-time.** The majority of Latino students (55%) enrolled either exclusively part-time (28%) or mixed their enrollment (27%). Only about 45% of Latino students enrolled solely full-time.
- **The majority of Latino students worked more than 30 hours a week while enrolled in college.** About 56% of Latino students worked 30 hours or more, 25% worked 20-29 hours, and 19% worked 1 to 19 hours per week.
- **Most Latino students live off-campus and are more likely to do so than other racial/ethnic groups.** The majority (89%) of Latinos either lived off-campus and/or with their parents. Comparatively, 81% of African Americans, 79% of Whites, and 75% of Asians lived off-campus and/or with their parents.
- **Latino students are more likely to come from a low-income household.** About 70% of Latinos come from households earning less than \$50,000 a year—half of which earn less than \$20,000 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Latino Student Household Income



About 70% of Latinos come from household family incomes of less than \$50,000

- **Latino and African American students are more likely to have an expected family contribution (EFC) of zero than other racial/ethnic groups.** About 45% of Latino students and 55% of African American students have an EFC of zero (meaning they are not expected to pay out-of-pocket expenses for their college education, see Appendix). In comparison, 35% of Asians and 26% of Whites have zero EFCs.
- **Latino students are more likely to attend a public institution than any other racial/group.** About 81% of Latino undergraduate students attend a public two-year (40%) or public four-year institution (41%). In comparison, 75% of Whites, and 73% of both African Americans and Asians attended a public institution.
- **Latino students are more likely to attend a community college compared to other racial/ethnic groups.** About 40% of Latinos attended a public two-year institution compared to 36% of African Americans, 31% of Whites, and 24% of Asians.

INCLUDING LATINO STUDENTS IN PUERTO RICO

General discussions of Latinos in higher education often exclude students in Puerto Rico. However, all Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens at birth, and institutions in Puerto Rico are part of higher education in the U.S. In fact, almost a third (29%) of Hispanic college students were enrolled in Puerto Rican institutions in 2021-22.⁷

There are significant differences between the profiles of students attending higher education in Puerto Rico compared to those on the mainland. In 2022-23, the majority of Latinos in Puerto Rico were enrolled in private institutions (72%); the majority of Latino students attended full-time (76%); and almost all students enrolled at institutions in Puerto Rico identify as Latino (over 95%). In comparison, the majority of Latino students on the mainland were enrolled in public institutions (86%); 56% attended full-time; and Latinos were less than a third of total enrollment (22%).

Among Latinos, Puerto Ricans are most likely to receive some form of financial aid, but receive the lowest average financial aid awards. About 80% of Puerto Rican undergraduates received financial aid in 2019-20. In comparison, about 75% of Hispanics of Cuban descent, 73% of Hispanics of multiple Hispanic origins, 70% of Hispanics of Mexican descent, and 69% of Latinos of other Hispanic origin received financial aid. At the same time, Puerto Rican students received the lowest average financial aid award (\$10,327) while Hispanic students from multiple types of Hispanic origin received the highest compared to other groups (\$11,826).

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

What We Know About Latino Students and How They Pay for College

The ability to intentionally serve Latino, and all, students at scale requires knowing what works to accelerate Latino student success. Determining what works for Latino students, in turn, requires understanding who our nation's Latino students are. This section provides a critical understanding of Latino students that informs how they navigate financial aid programs from various sources, including federal, state, institutional, and private, to pay for college. Consider the following as you explore Latinos' participation in financial aid:

ELIGIBILITY FOR FINANCIAL AID

A student's family income is one of several factors that are used to determine a student's EFC and, subsequently, their eligibility for federal student aid. Latino students are more likely to come from a low-income household. For this reason, they have a lower EFC and are more likely to qualify for financial aid to help pay for college.

TYPES OF AID LATINO STUDENTS LEVERAGE

Due to their high financial need, Latino students are likely to qualify for the federal Pell Grant and other need-based grant aid programs. While Latinos may also qualify for loans and work-study to help finance their college education, they are less likely to use these forms of aid. This may be explained by a combination of factors. First, Latino students tend to not view federal loans as forms of financial aid since they have to repay them. Second, Latino students are more likely to enroll in two-year institutions, which are less costly than four-year institutions, live off-campus or with their parents to save on living expenses, "pay-as-they-go" by working while enrolled, and reduce the credit hours they are enrolled in (e.g., enroll part-time). All of these choices illustrate how Latino students make pragmatic decisions to reduce the cost of a college education, which may not require them to supplement their grant aid with loans or work-study. Finally, work-study programs offer employment to students through eligible positions on-campus (see Appendix). However, many of these employment opportunities are capped at 20 hours per week and students have to work those hours throughout the semester to earn that aid—it is not disbursed at the start of each semester. Given that the majority of Latinos work more than 20 hours a week to earn more to pay for college and support their families, this may explain why Latino students are less likely to participate in this program.

SOURCES OF AID LATINO STUDENTS LEVERAGE

Federal Aid. Latino students are more likely to leverage federal aid to help pay for college compared to state, institutional, or private aid sources. This may be because Latinos are more likely to attend public institutions, and to start at public two-year institutions, which have a lower cost of attendance than private institutions (see Appendix). Additionally, Latinos demonstrate high financial need, which often qualifies them for the federal Pell Grant. This source of aid may cover a significant portion of the cost of attendance for Latinos attending public two-year institutions or may be supplemented with other cost-saving measures.

State Aid. Although Latino students predominantly leverage federal aid to pay for college, they are more likely to use state-based aid compared to other racial/ethnic groups. This may be explained by where Latinos are geographically concentrated. Latinos are more likely to reside and pursue a college education in the West and South regions of the U.S., in states like California, Texas, or Florida, and to enroll in public institutions. These states heavily invest in their public institutions. Additionally, many state aid programs, especially in these states, are grant programs



and include financial need as a determining factor for eligibility. For example, California offers the Cal Grant⁸ and Texas offers the TEXAS Grant⁹ to support low-income students in their pursuit of a postsecondary education by fully covering or subsidizing tuition and fees.

Institutional Aid. Latino undergraduates are less likely to use institutional aid to finance their education compared to other racial/ethnic groups. This may be due in part to where Latino students choose to enroll. Latino students are less likely to enroll in private institutions, which tend to have higher endowments and receive revenue from external sources (e.g., alumni donors) compared to public institutions, which allow these institutions to provide more institutional aid for their students. However, Latino students that do attend private institutions and are eligible for institutional grant aid would be more likely to receive need-based scholarships.

Private Aid. Latino undergraduates are less likely to use aid from private sources compared to any other source of aid to help cover the cost of their college education. This is largely explained by where Latinos choose to enroll. Latino students disproportionately enroll in public two-year institutions which have lower costs of attendance. Latino students are also more likely to work while enrolled and engage in other forms of cost-saving efforts to minimize their expenses. For this reason, Latino students may not need to use aid from private sources as much as their other peers, such as Asian and White students, who are more likely to attend institutions with higher costs of attendance (e.g., private four-year institutions). However, Latino students that are enrolled in private institutions may be more likely to leverage private aid, because the Pell Grant may not be enough to cover their college costs at a private institution.

8 California Student Aid Commission, Cal Grant Programs, <https://www.csac.ca.gov/cal-grants>

9 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, TEXAS Grant, <https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/guidelines-manuals/texas-grant-fy-2025-guidelines/>

Latino Undergraduates and Financial Aid

A majority of both Latino and all undergraduate students received some form of financial aid in 2019-20 to help them pay for their education. In this overview, the financial aid data analyzed represent the aid available to Latino students from all sources (e.g., federal, state, institutional) unless explicitly stated otherwise.

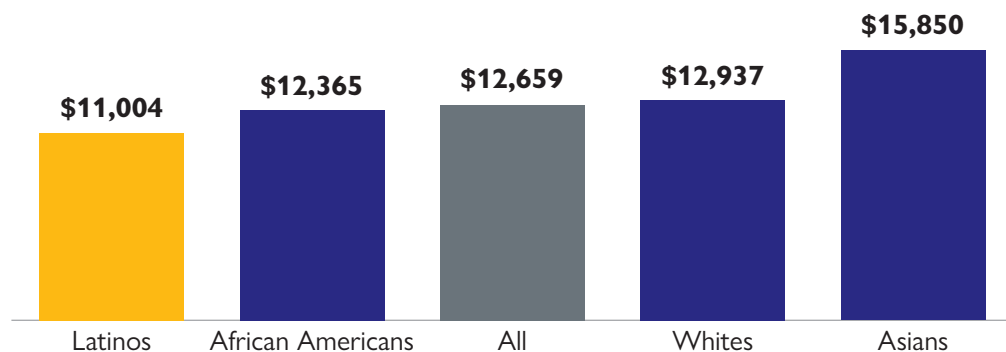
Analysis of Latino participation in financial aid in 2019-20 yielded the following highlights:

The majority of Latino and African American students apply for aid to pay for college. Approximately 85% of Latino students and 92% of African American students applied for some form of financial aid in 2019-20. This is greater than White (81%) and Asian (75%) students.

Latinos and African Americans are more likely to receive financial aid compared to other racial/ethnic groups. About 71% of Latino and 80% of African American undergraduates received financial aid in the 2019-20 academic year compared to White (69%) and Asian students (65%).

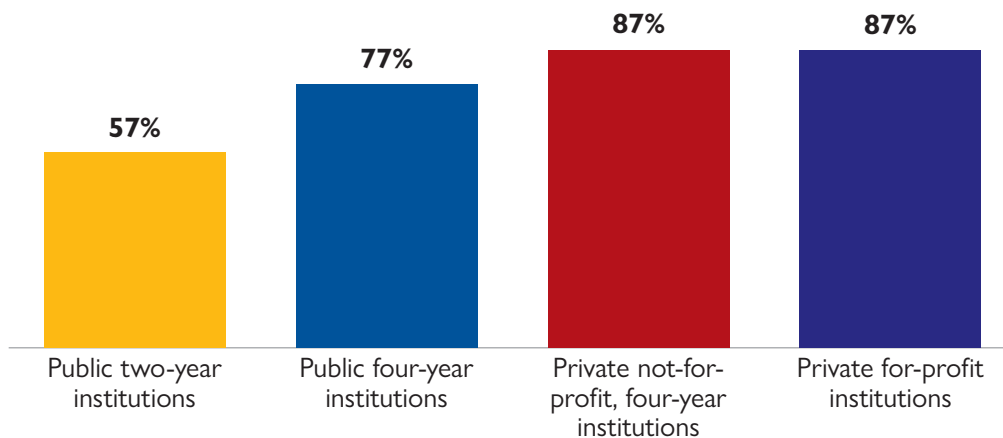
Overall, Latinos receive the lowest average amount of aid compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Average total aid for all students was \$12,659. Asians received the highest average award (\$15,850) while Latinos received the lowest average (\$11,004) amount of aid (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Average Total Aid Received from Any Source by Race/Ethnicity



Latinos at public two-year institutions are less likely to receive financial aid compared to Latinos at private institutions. A smaller proportion of Latinos at public two-year institutions received aid (57%) than Latinos in other sectors, especially private institutions (see Figure 4). Further, Latino undergraduates at public institutions received lower average financial aid awards than at private institutions—ranging from \$4,765 at public two-year institutions to \$24,478 at private not-for-profit, four-year institutions.

Figure 4. Proportion of Latinos that Received Aid from Any Source by Sector, 2019-20

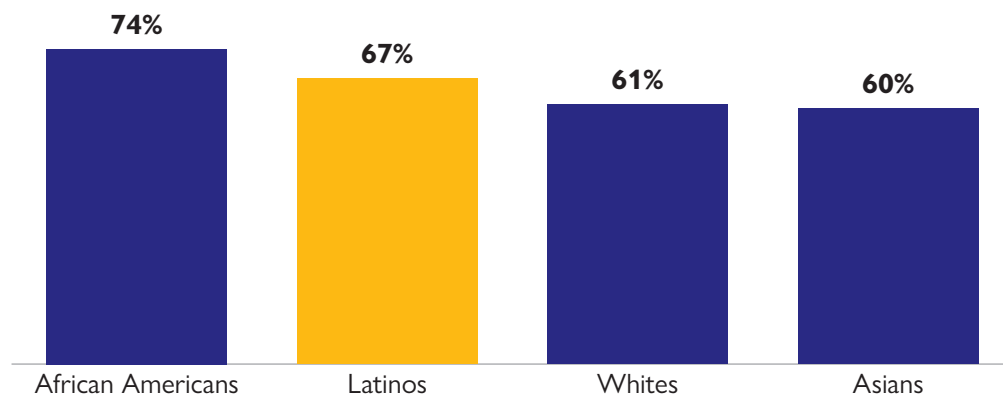


Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates within that sector that received aid from any source in 2019-20. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

Overall, Latinos are more than twice as likely to receive grants than loans to pay for college. More than half of Latinos received grants in 2019-20 (67%) compared to 27% that received loans.

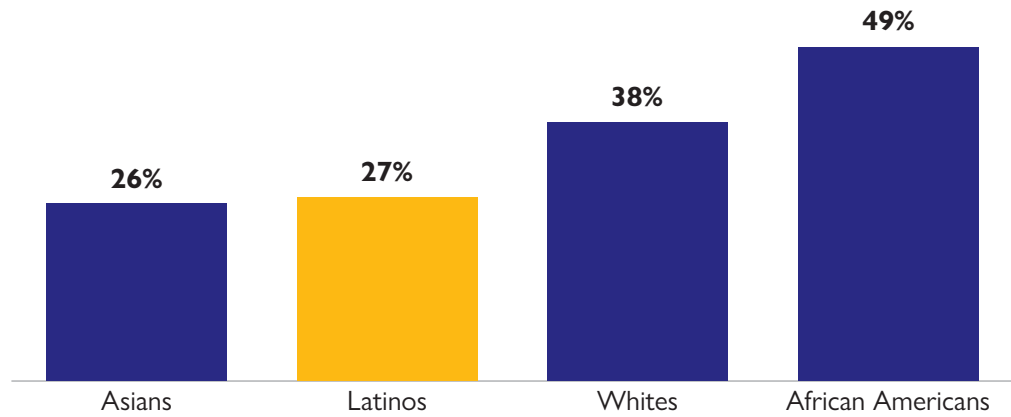
Latinos and African Americans are more likely to receive grants compared to other racial/ethnic groups. In 2019-20, 67% of Latino and 74% of African American students received grant aid compared to 61% of White and 60% of Asian students (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Grants Received from Any Source by Race/Ethnicity



Latinos and Asians are less likely to take out loans compared to other racial/ethnic groups. In 2019-20, only 27% of Latinos and 26% of Asians took out loans to pay for college compared to 38% of Whites and 49% of African Americans (see Figure 6).

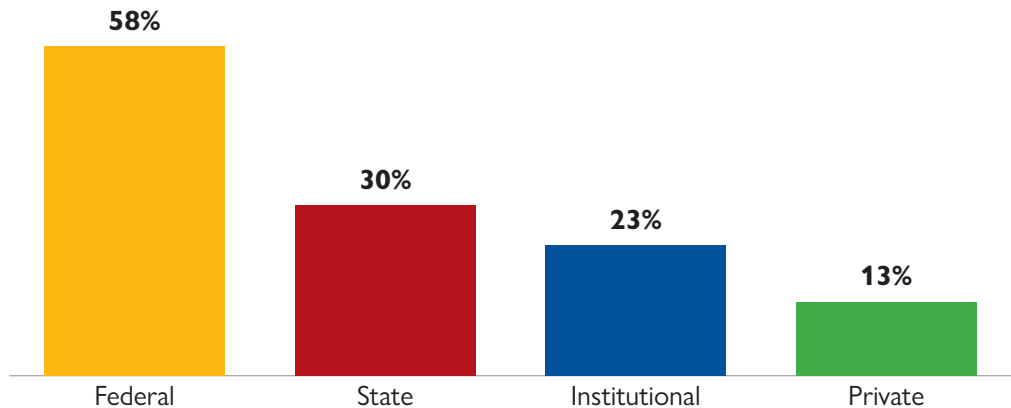
Figure 6. Loans Borrowed from Any Source by Race/Ethnicity



Latinos and African Americans receive lower grant aid, on average, compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Latinos received an average amount of \$8,485 in grant aid in 2019-20 and African American students received \$8,265, both of which were less than that of Asians (\$13,002) and Whites (\$9,348).

Latinos are more likely to receive federal financial aid than aid from other sources (state, institutional, and private). Federal aid includes grants, student loans, and work-study awards (see Appendix). More than half (58%) of Latinos received federal aid compared to state aid (30%), institutional aid (23%), and aid from private sources (13%) (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Latino Student Financial Aid Participation by Source



Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates that received aid from each source compared to those that did not. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

The average federal financial aid award Latino undergraduates receive is substantially higher than state aid, similar to private awards but lower than institutional aid awards. The average federal aid amount for Latinos was \$6,741 compared to the average state aid award of \$3,604, private award of \$6,259, and institutional aid award of \$8,506.

Federal Aid

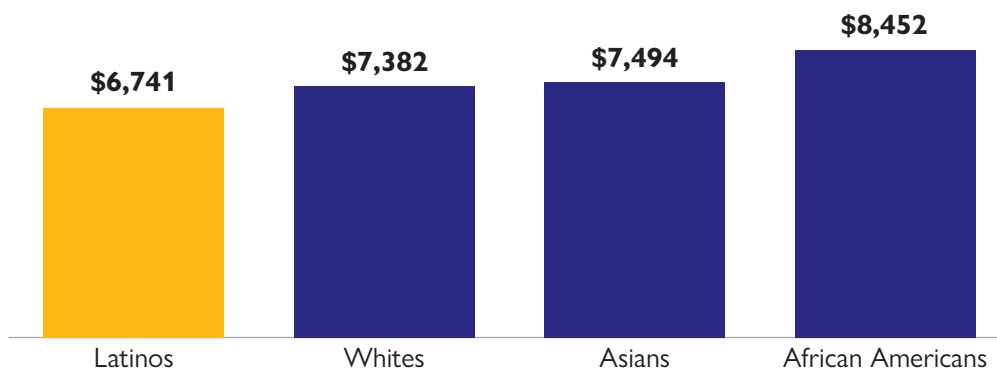
Federal programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education comprise the largest source of aid for college students.¹⁰ These programs include the Pell Grant, federally subsidized and unsubsidized loans, and campus-based programs.¹¹

Consider the following facts on Latinos' participation in federal financial aid programs:

While the majority of Latino undergraduates applied for federal aid, a smaller percentage received aid. Almost 75% of Latino students applied for federal aid but only 58% received federal aid. In comparison, 84% of African Americans applied for and 70% received federal aid; 67% of White students applied for and 51% received federal aid; and 60% of Asian students applied for and 46% received federal financial aid.

The average federal aid Latino students receive is lower compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Latinos received an average of \$6,741 in federal aid compared to \$7,382 for Whites, \$7,494 for Asians, and \$8,452 for African Americans (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Average Federal Award Amount by Race/Ethnicity

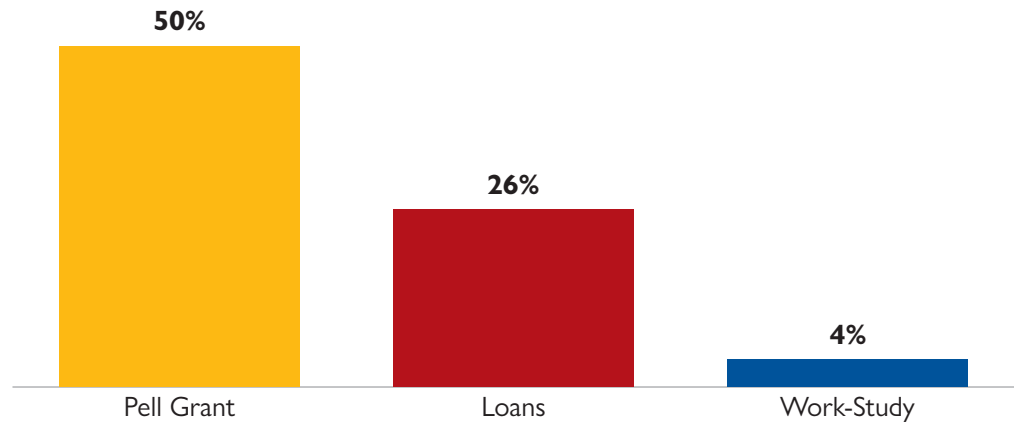


¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA), <https://studentaid.gov/about>

¹¹ Federal aid in this section excludes Veteran's DOD awards (aid awarded by the Department of Defense for Veterans) and Parent PLUS loans (federal student loans that parents of dependent undergraduate students can use to help pay for college). In this section, federal loans include both subsidized and unsubsidized loans.

In general, Latino students are more likely to receive federal grants than federal loans to pay for college. In 2019-20, 50% of Latino undergraduates received the federal Pell Grant and only 26% used federal loans to pay for college (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Latino Student Participation in Federal Aid Programs



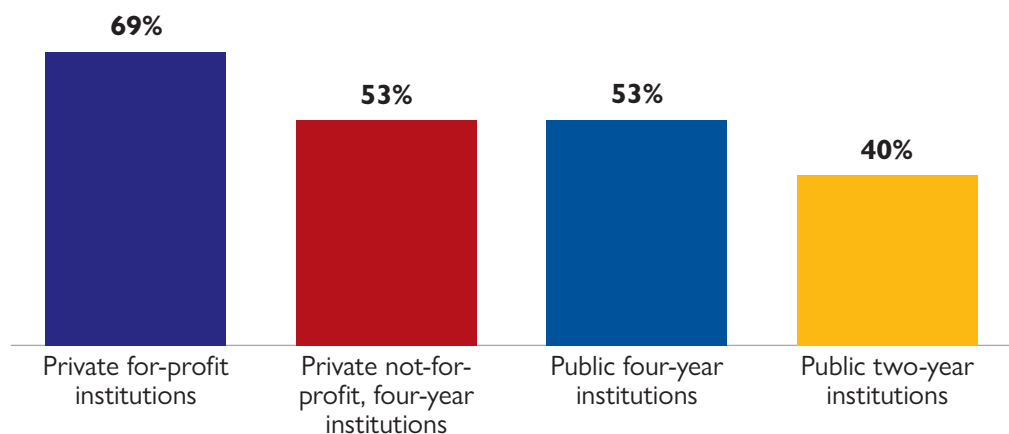
Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates that received each type of aid compared to those that did not. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

Latinos and African Americans are more likely to receive the federal Pell Grant than other racial/ethnic groups. In 2019-20, 50% of Latino and 60% of African American students received the federal Pell Grant compared to 34% of Asian and 32% of White students.

On average, Latino students receive a similar average Pell Grant award compared to other racial/ethnic groups. In 2019-20, Latinos received \$4,246 of the Pell Grant, on average, compared to \$4,722 for Asians, \$4,172 for African Americans, and \$3,925 for Whites.

Latino undergraduates attending private for-profit institutions are more likely to receive a federal Pell Grant compared to Latinos attending public two-year institutions. More than two-thirds (69%) of Latino students attending private for-profit institutions received the federal Pell Grant in 2019-20. In comparison, only 40% of Latinos attending public two-year institutions received the Pell Grant (see Figure 10).¹²

Figure 10. Latino Student Pell Grant Receipt by Sector



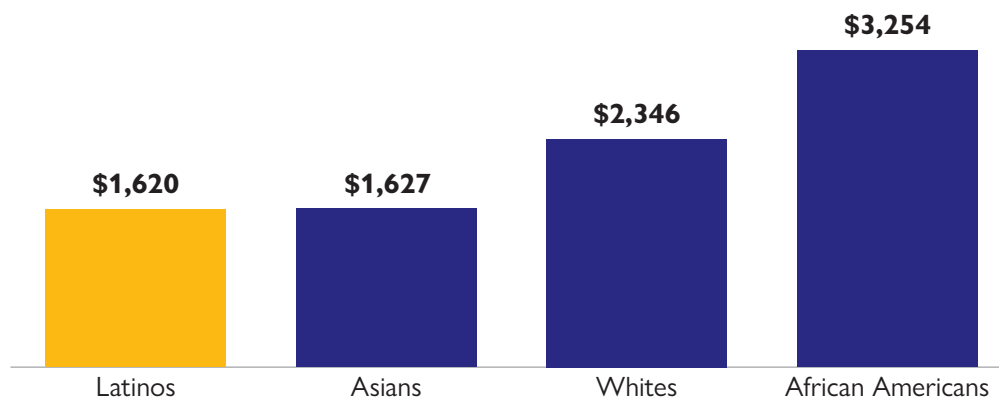
¹² Private for-profit institutions include both two- and four-year for-profit institutions in this analysis.

Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates within that sector that received the Pell Grant in 2019-20. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

Few Latino undergraduates use federal work-study to pay for college. In 2019-20, only 4% of Latino students participated in federal work-study programs. They received an average of \$2,446 in federal work-study, which is similar to Asian (\$2,616), African American (\$2,461), and White (\$2,382) students.

Latinos and Asians are less likely to borrow federal loans, and they borrow less than other racial/ethnic groups to pay for college. A quarter of Latino students (26%) and Asian students (25%) borrowed federal loans in 2019-20. On average, Latinos borrowed \$1,620 and Asian students borrowed \$1,627. In comparison, 36% of White students took out an average of \$2,346 in loans and 48% of African American students took out an average of \$3,254 in loans (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Average Federal Loan Amounts by Race/Ethnicity



Latinos attending for-profit institutions are more likely to take out loans to pay for college compared to Latinos attending other institutions. In 2019-20, nearly 60% of Latino students attending for-profit institutions took federal loans. In comparison, 51% of Latinos attending private not-for-profit, four-year institutions, 29% of those attending public four-year institutions, and only 5% of those attending public two-year institutions took federal loans to pay for college.

Federal Aid by Latino Student Characteristics

FIRST-GENERATION STATUS. Latino first-generation college students were more likely to receive federal financial aid than those that are not the first in their family to attend college. First-generation Latino students were also more likely to receive the federal Pell Grant and less likely to take out federal loans than non first-generation Latino college students.

- **Federal Financial Aid Participation.** In 2019-20, 59% of Latino first-generation college students received some form of federal financial aid compared to 57% of Latinos who are not considered first-generation college students.
- **Pell Grants.** Over half of first-generation Latino college students (54%) received a federal Pell Grant in 2019-20 compared to 45% of non first-generation Latino students.
- **Loans.** Less than one-fourth (22%) of first-generation Latino college students took out federal loans compared to 30% of non first-generation Latino students.

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY. Latino students that were enrolled exclusively part-time were less likely to receive federal aid, overall, and less likely to receive federal grants or take out federal loans compared to Latinos that enrolled exclusively full-time or mixed their enrollment (between full-time and part-time).

- **Federal Financial Aid Participation.** Latino students enrolled exclusively part-time were less likely to receive federal aid (39%) compared to those enrolled exclusively full-time (66%) or that mixed their enrollment (between full-time and part-time) (63%).
- **Pell Grants.** In 2019-20, Latino students that either attended college full-time or mixed their enrollment intensity (between full-time and part time) were more likely to receive the federal Pell Grant (55% each) than Latinos that attended college exclusively part-time (36%).
- **Loans.** Latino students enrolled part-time were much less likely to take out federal loans (12%) to pay for college compared to those that were enrolled exclusively full-time (35%) or mixed their enrollment (between full-time and part-time) (25%).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS. Latino students that worked 30 hours or more per week while enrolled in college were less likely to receive federal financial aid than their Latino counterparts that worked fewer hours per week. Specifically, these students were less likely to receive the federal Pell Grant and take out federal loans.

- **Federal Financial Aid Participation.** Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week (68%) or between 20 to 29 hours a week (62%) were more likely to receive federal aid in 2019-20 than those who worked 30 hours or more per week (48%).
- **Pell Grants.** In 2019-20, less than half of Latino students that worked 30 hours or more per week received the federal Pell Grant. This was lower than Latino students that worked less than 30 hours: 55% of Latino students that worked less than 20 hours and 53% of Latino students that worked between 20 and 29 hours received the Pell Grant during this academic year.
- **Loans.** Less than one-fourth of Latinos that worked 30 hours or more per week took out federal loans (23%) compared to Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week (32%) or between 20-29 hours per week (28%).

RESIDENCE WHILE ENROLLED. Latino students that lived on-campus while enrolled were more likely to receive federal aid than those that lived off-campus or with their family. Specifically, Latinos that lived on-campus were more likely to take out federal loans and receive the federal Pell Grant.

- **Federal Financial Aid Participation.** In 2019-20, Latino students that lived on-campus were much more likely to receive federal financial aid (77%) compared to Latino students that lived with their parents (55%) or those that lived off-campus (54%).
- **Pell Grants.** Latino students that lived on-campus while enrolled were more likely to receive the federal Pell Grant (58%) compared to Latino students that lived with their parents (49%) or off-campus (46%).
- **Loans.** In 2019-20, Latino students that lived with their parents were less likely to take out federal loans (16%) than Latinos that lived on-campus (55%) and those that lived off-campus (25%).

FAMILY INCOME LEVEL. In 2019-20, Latino students from households with a lower family income were much more likely to receive federal aid, including the Pell Grant compared to those from a household with a higher family income. However, students from lower income families were only slightly less likely to take out federal student loans compared to those from the highest income brackets.

- **Federal Financial Aid Participation.** In 2019-20, over two-thirds of Latino students with a family income of \$20,000 or less (68%) received some form of federal aid. This was almost double the proportion of Latinos with a family income above \$75,000 (33%) that received federal financial aid.
- **Pell Grants.** About two-thirds of Latinos with a family income of \$20,000 or less received the federal Pell Grant (66%) in 2019-20. In comparison, only 5% of Latino students with a family income above \$75,000 received the Pell Grant.
- **Loans.** In 2019-20, slightly less than a third of Latinos with a family income greater than \$75,000 took out federal loans (30%). In comparison, about one-fourth of Latinos with a family income less than \$20,000 (25%) or between \$20,000 and \$50,000 (24%) took out federal loans.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC). In 2019-20, Latino students with low EFCs were more likely to receive federal financial aid, overall, and the Pell Grant, compared to Latinos with higher EFCs. However, Latinos with low EFCs were just as likely to take out federal loans as those with higher EFCs.

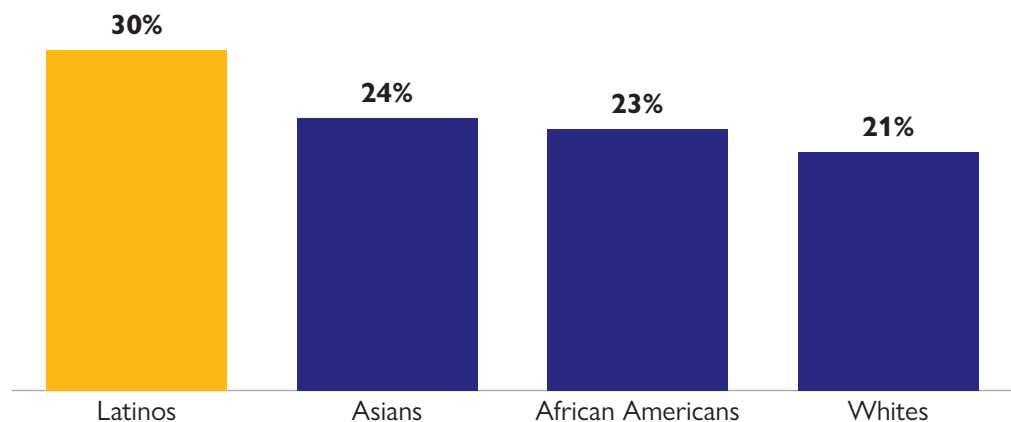
- **Federal Financial Aid Participation.** In 2019-20, Latinos with an EFC of zero or less than \$5,000 were more likely to receive federal aid (69%) than Latinos with higher EFCs. In comparison, 28% of Latino students with an EFC above \$20,000 and 26% of those with an EFC between \$10,001 and \$20,000 received federal aid.
- **Pell Grants.** Over two-thirds of Latino students with an EFC of zero or less than \$5,000 (68%) received federal aid in 2019-20 compared to only 9% of those with an EFC between \$5,001 and \$10,000.
- **Loans.** In 2019-20, about one-fourth of Latinos with an EFC of zero or less than \$5,000 (25%) took out federal loans. This was similar to Latino students with an EFC of over \$20,001 (27%) and those with an EFC between \$10,001 and \$20,000 (26%).

State Aid

State aid encompasses the financial aid students receive in the form of state grants, state loans, state sponsored work-study, job training grants, and/or Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds in 2019-20. In this section we only focus on state grants because Latinos' participation in state loans and state sponsored work-study is less than 1%. Latino students specifically are less likely to receive state aid than federal aid, but are more likely to receive state aid than institutional aid. Compared to other racial/ethnic groups, Latinos are also more likely to receive state aid and a higher award amount.

Consider the following facts on Latinos' participation in state financial aid programs: Almost a third (30%) of Latino undergraduates receive state aid to pay for college, a larger proportion than any other racial/ethnic group. In comparison, 24% of Asian, 23% of African American, and 21% of White students received state financial aid in 2019-20 (see Figure 12).

Figure 12. State Aid Receipt by Race/Ethnicity



The average state aid Latino and Asian students receive is higher than that of other racial/ethnic groups. Latinos received an average of \$3,604 in state aid and Asians received \$4,784. In comparison, Whites received \$3,406 and African Americans received \$3,390 in state aid.

Latino students are more likely to receive state grants than any other form of state aid to finance their education. In 2019-20, about 29% of Latinos received state grants. In comparison, less than 1% receive state loans, work-study, or vocational training aid.

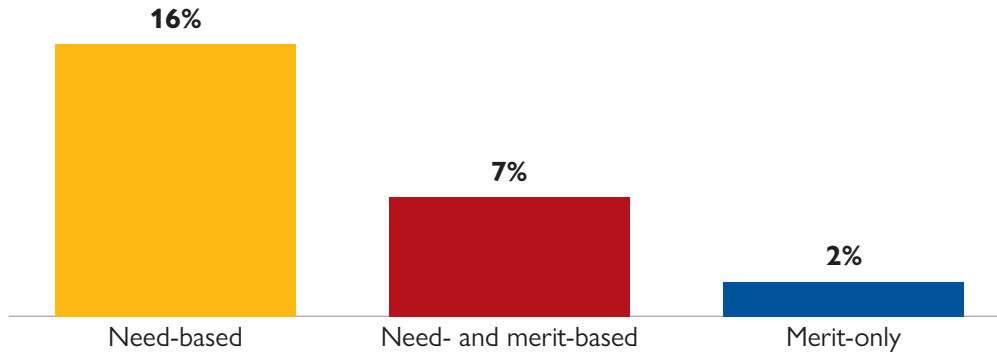
Latino students are more likely to receive state grants than any other racial group. As mentioned above, about 29% of Latino students received state grants to finance their education in 2019-20 compared to 24% of Asian students, 22% of African American students, and 20% of White students.

Latino and Asian students receive larger state grant aid awards, on average, compared to other racial groups. In 2019-20, Latinos received an average of \$3,550 in state grants and Asians received \$4,736 compared to \$3,325 for African Americans and \$3,302 for Whites.

Latinos attending public four-year institutions are more likely to receive state grants than those attending private four-year and public two-year institutions. Over one-third (36%) of Latinos attending public four-year institutions received a state grant in 2019-20, compared to 30% of Latinos attending public two-year institutions, 21% of Latinos attending private four-year institutions, and only 7% of Latinos attending private for-profit institutions.

Latino students are more likely to receive need-based state grants rather than merit-based state grants or a mix of merit- and need-based state grants. Approximately 16% of Latino students received state grants in 2019-20 based on need-only. This is compared to 7% of Latinos that received state grants based on both need and merit and only 2% of Latinos that received merit-only state grants (see Figure 13).

Figure 13. Latino Student State Grant Participation by Type of Grant



Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates that received state grants by the type of grant received compared to those that did not. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

Latinos and Asians also receive higher amounts of state need-based only grants compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Latino students received an average award amount of \$2,958 for state need-based only grants and Asians received \$3,875 in 2019-20. This was higher than the average award amount for African American (\$2,699) and White (\$2,676) students.

State Aid by Latino Student Characteristics

FIRST-GENERATION STATUS. Latino first-generation college students were more likely to receive state grants than Latino students who are not first in their family to attend college. About a third (34%) of Latino first-generation students received state grants in 2019-20. In comparison, 25% of Latino students that were not first-generation received state grants in the same academic year.

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY. Latino students that mixed their enrollment (between part-time and full-time) were more likely to receive state grants compared to Latino students that enrolled either exclusively full-time or part-time. In 2019-20, a little over a third (35%) of Latino students that mixed their enrollment intensity (between full-time and part-time) received state grants. This was greater than that of Latinos that enrolled exclusively full-time (32%) or part-time (19%).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS. Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week were more likely to receive state grants compared to Latino students working more hours per week. About 39% of Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week in 2019-20 received state grants. In comparison, about 34% of Latinos that worked between 20 and 30 hours per week and 22% of Latinos that worked 30 hours or more received state grants during the same academic year.

RESIDENCE WHILE ENROLLED. Latino students that lived on-campus while enrolled were more likely to receive state grants than their Latino peers that lived off-campus or with family. In 2019-20, about 38% of Latinos that lived on-campus received state grants, which is greater than that of Latinos that lived with their parents (33%) or off-campus (25%).

FAMILY INCOME LEVEL. In 2019-20, Latino students from households with lower incomes were more likely to receive state grants than their Latino peers from households with higher incomes. About a third of Latinos with a family income of \$20,000 or less (32%) received state grants in 2019-20. This was greater than the proportion of Latinos with a family income greater than \$75,000 (16%) that received state grants.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC). Latino students with low EFCs were more likely to receive state grants compared to Latinos with higher EFCs. In 2019-20, Latinos with an EFC of zero or less than \$5,000 were more likely to receive state grants (35%) than Latinos with higher EFCs. In comparison, 14% of Latino students with an EFC between \$10,001 and \$20,000 and 9% of those with an EFC above \$20,001 received state grants.

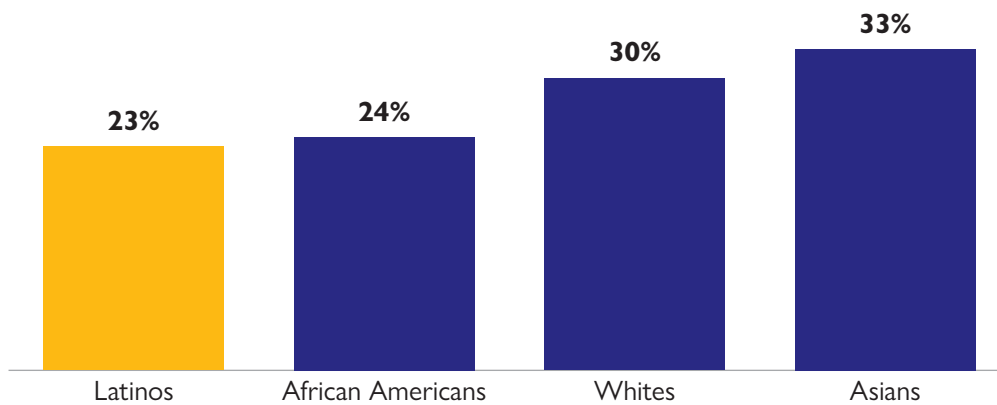
Institutional Aid

Institutional aid includes institutional grants and fellowships, institutional loans, and institution-sponsored work-study aid students received in 2019-20. In this section we only focus on institutional grants because Latinos' participation in institutional loans and work-study is less than 1%. Latino students are least likely to receive this type of aid compared to federal and state financial aid.

Consider the following facts on Latinos' participation in institutional financial aid programs:

Latinos are less likely than any other racial/ethnic group to receive institutional aid to help pay for college. Only 23% of Latinos received institutional aid in 2019-20, compared to 24% of African Americans, 30% of Whites, and 33% of Asians (see Figure 14).

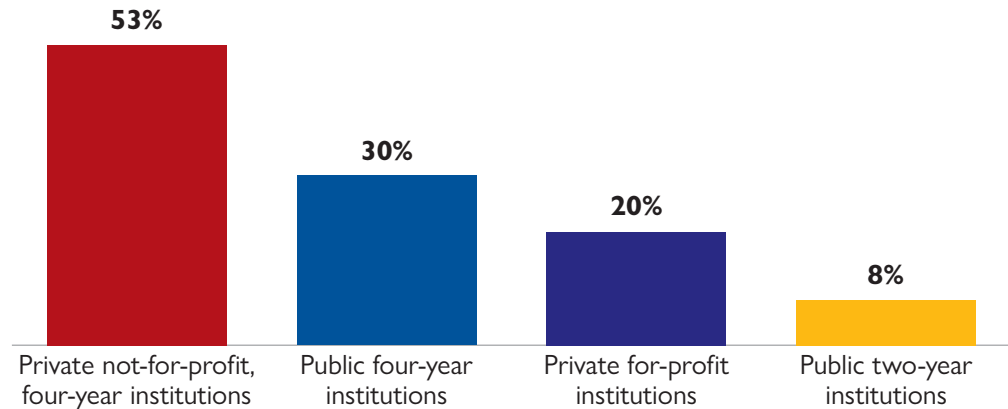
Figure 14. Institutional Aid Receipt by Race/Ethnicity



On average, Latinos receive lower amounts of institutional aid compared to any other racial/ethnic group. In 2019-20, Latino students received an average of \$8,506 in institutional aid compared to Asian (\$12,924), White (\$9,982), and African American students (\$8,761).

Latinos attending private not-for-profit, four-year institutions are more likely to receive institutional aid compared to Latinos attending public two-year institutions. Over half of Latino students (53%) attending private not-for-profit, four-year institutions received institutional aid in 2019-20 compared to only 8% of those attending public two-year institutions (see Figure 15).

Figure 15. Latino Student Receipt of Institutional Aid by Sector



Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates within that sector that received institutional aid in 2019-20. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

Latinos are more likely to receive institutional grants than other types of institutional aid to finance their education. Almost one-fourth of Latinos receive institutional grant aid (23%) in 2019-20. In comparison, less than 2% of Latinos received institutional tuition waivers and less than 1% of Latinos received institutional loans or work-study.

Latinos are more likely to receive need-based¹³ institutional grants compared to those that are merit-only. Of Latinos that received institutional grants, over half received need-based grants. In comparison, only 37% of Latinos received merit-based grants.

¹³ Note: need-based institutional grants include grants that have both a need-based and merit-based component.

Institutional Aid by Latino Student Characteristics

FIRST-GENERATION STATUS. Latino students who were first-generation college goers were less likely than their Latino peers who were not first-generation to receive institutional grants. In 2019-20, about 21% of Latinos that were first-generation college students received institutional grants, which was less than that of Latino students that were not first-generation students (25%).

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY. Latino students that enrolled exclusively full-time were more likely to receive institutional grants than their Latino peers that mixed their enrollment or enrolled exclusively part-time. Nearly a third (32%) of Latino students that enrolled in college exclusively full-time in 2019-20 received institutional grants. In comparison, 22% of those that mixed their enrollment (between full-time and part-time) and only 9% of those that enrolled exclusively part-time received institutional aid.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS. Latino students that worked fewer hours per week were more likely than their Latino peers who worked more hours per week to receive institutional grants. About 37% of Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week in 2019-20 received institutional grants compared to 26% of those that worked 20-30 hours per week and 17% of those that worked 30 hours or more per week.

RESIDENCE WHILE ENROLLED. Latino students that lived on-campus were much more likely to receive institutional grants compared to Latino students that did not live on-campus. In 2019-20, nearly 63% of Latino students that lived on-campus while enrolled received institutional grants. This was greater than Latinos that lived off-campus (19%) or with their parents (17%).

FAMILY INCOME LEVEL. Latino students from the highest family incomes were more likely to receive institutional grants than those from lower family incomes. In 2019-20, over one-fourth (27%) of Latino students with a family income of \$100,001 or more received institutional grants. This was higher than that of Latinos with family incomes of less than \$50,000 (22%).

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC). Latino students with a higher EFC were more likely to receive institutional grants than their Latino peers with lower EFCs and EFCs of zero. In 2019-20, over one-fourth (26%) of Latino students with an EFC of \$20,000 or more received institutional grants. In comparison, 23% of Latinos with an EFC of zero or less than \$5,000 received institutional grants.

Private Aid

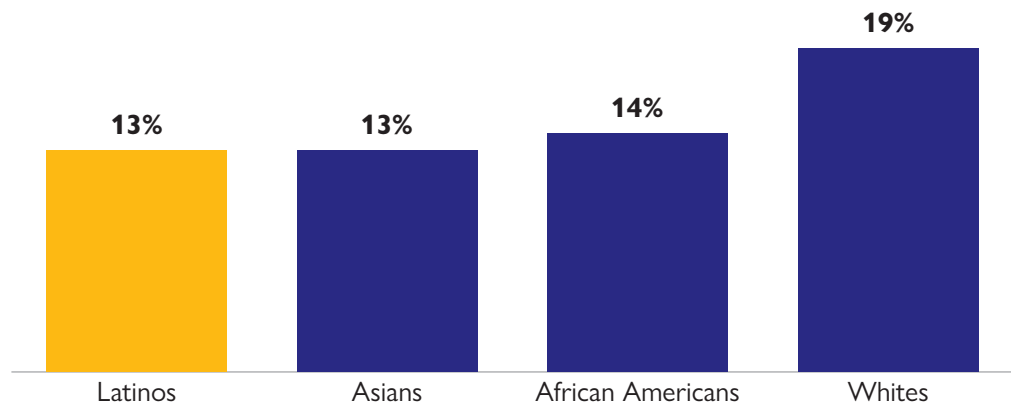
Private aid includes grants from private sources and private loans. These private loans are from commercial lenders (e.g. Lending Tree, Ascent, and others).

Latino students are less likely to receive aid from private sources compared to their peers. Amongst Latino students, they are more likely to receive aid in the form of grants from private sources rather than take out private loans.

Consider the following facts on Latinos' participation in financial aid programs from private sources:

Latino and Asian students are less likely to receive financial aid from private sources compared to other racial groups to help finance their education. In 2019-20, 13% of Latinos and 13% of Asians received aid in the form of grants or loans from private sources. In comparison, 14% of African Americans and 19% of Whites received aid from private sources (see Figure 16).

Figure 16. Private Aid Receipt by Race/Ethnicity

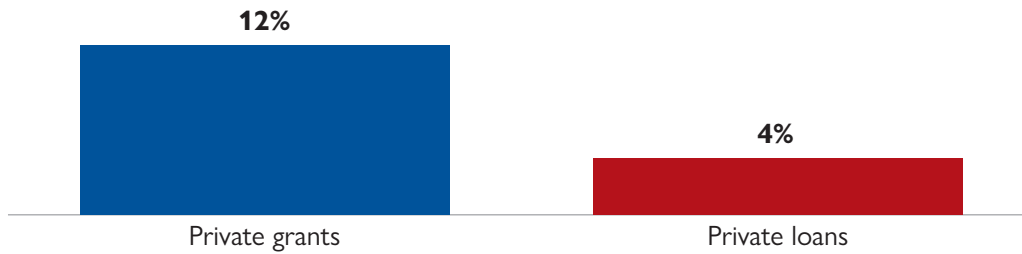


On average, Latinos and African Americans receive the lowest amount of aid from private sources compared to other racial/ethnic groups. In 2019-20, Latinos received \$6,259 in aid from private sources and African Americans received \$5,520, compared to \$8,950 for Asians and \$6,745 for Whites.

Latinos are more likely to receive grants from private sources than take out loans from private sources to pay for college. In 2019-20, 12% of Latinos received grant aid from private sources (including employers) compared to 4% of Latinos that took out private loans (see Figure 17).

Latinos attending private not-for-profit, four-year institutions are more likely to leverage aid from private sources to finance their education compared to Latinos attending public two-year institutions. In 2019-20, about a quarter (24%) of Latinos attending private not-for-profit, four-year institutions received aid from private sources (private grants and/or loans). In comparison, 6% of Latinos enrolled at public two-year institutions received aid from private sources.

Figure 17. Latino Student Receipt of Private Aid by Type of Aid



Note: Each bar represents the percentage of Latino undergraduates that received private aid by the type of aid received compared to those that did not. This means percentages will not add up to 100%.

Private Aid by Latino Student Characteristics

FIRST-GENERATION STATUS. Latino students that were not first in their families to go to college were more likely to receive private aid (11%) than first-generation Latino students (14%) in 2019-20. Only 8% of first-generation Latino college students received private grants compared to 9% of Latinos that were not first-generation college students.

ENROLLMENT INTENSITY. Latino students enrolled exclusively full-time were more likely to receive private aid (16%) compared to their Latino peers that mixed their enrollment (between full-time and part-time) (13%) or enrolled exclusively part-time (6%) in 2019-20. About 11% of Latino students enrolled exclusively full-time received private grants compared to 9% of those that mixed their enrollment and only 4% of those that were enrolled exclusively part-time.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS. Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week were more likely (19%) than their Latino peers who worked between 20 to 29 per week (13%) and those that worked 30 hours or more (10%) to receive private aid in 2019-20. About 15% of Latino students that worked less than 20 hours per week received private grants compared to 9% of those that worked between 20 to 30 hours per week and 7% of those that worked more than 30 hours per week.

RESIDENCE WHILE ENROLLED. Latino students that lived on-campus were much more likely to receive private aid (29%) compared to 11% of Latinos that lived off-campus and 9% of those that lived with their parents while enrolled in 2019-20. More than one-fifth (22%) of Latino students that lived on-campus while enrolled received private grants which was higher than that of Latinos that lived off-campus (7%) or with their parents (7%).

FAMILY INCOME LEVEL. Latino students with higher family income were more likely to receive private aid than their Latino peers from lower income families. About 16% of Latino students with family incomes above \$75,000 received private aid compared to Latino students with family incomes between \$20,001 to \$50,000 (13%) or below 20,000 (10%) in 2019-20. Also, Latinos with higher incomes (\$75,000 and above) were more likely to receive private grants (10%) than those with a lower family income. About 7% of Latinos with a family income of \$20,000 or less received private aid.

EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC). Latinos with a higher EFC were slightly more likely than those with a lower EFC to receive private aid. In 2019-20, about 17% of Latinos with an EFC of \$20,001 or higher received private aid which is only slightly higher than that of Latinos with the lowest EFCs (13% of Latinos with an EFC of \$5,000 or lower and 11% of Latinos with an EFC of zero). About 11% of Latinos with an EFC of \$20,000 or above received private grants. This was slightly higher than Latino students with an EFC of \$5,000 or less (9%) and Latinos with an EFC of zero (8%).

Strategies and Practices to Make College More Affordable for Latino Students: Lessons Learned from Seal-Certified Institutions

Excelencia in Education developed the Seal of *Excelencia*—a national certification for institutions intentionally serving Latino students—in 2018 after more than 20 years of listening and learning from institutional leaders committed to Latino student success. This certification was also a commitment by *Excelencia* leadership to raise the standards and expectations of institutions that were cataloged as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) because of demography and geography rather than intentionality or impact in serving Latino, and all, students. The Seal of *Excelencia* framework requires five years of data and at least three evidence-based practices in six key areas: 1) enrollment, 2) retention, 3) transfer, 4) financial aid, 5) faculty/staff representation, and 6) completion.

Excelencia analyzed the strategies and evidence-based practices of Seal-certified institutions to identify concrete examples of how institutions leverage their resources to increase access to a college education and financially support Latino students throughout their pathway to a degree.

To complement the data shared above on how Latinos pay for college, we discuss in this section four key strategies that were prevalent across Seal-certified institutions and highlight select institutional practices that exemplify each strategy. This analysis serves as an example for institutions seeking to transform the way they support Latino, and all, students and offer an affordable education. This analysis is not meant to be exhaustive but rather indicative of what institutions that are committed to intentionally serving Latino, and all, students can do to financially support their students to and through college.

Overview of Key Findings: Trendsetting Institutions

Analysis of the certification application of the 46 Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions highlighted the following four key strategies across this group:

Strategy # 1: Provide institutional aid to students to mitigate the cost of a college education, such as:

- Provide targeted financial support to students that left their institution due to life circumstances to support completion of their degree.
- Expand scholarship opportunities to include transfer, DACA, and low-income students who are disproportionately Latino.

Strategy # 2: Facilitate career pathways through paid internships and employment opportunities while students are enrolled, such as:

- Increase the number of high-quality job opportunities available to students on-campus.
- Offer paid opportunities for students to receive research experience as an undergraduate student.
- Standardize institutional policies and procedures surrounding employment on-campus and increase the minimum wage of on-campus employment.

Strategy # 3: Meet students' basic needs through institutional services (e.g., food pantry) and emergency aid, such as:

- Offer emergency funding to students that experience unexpected life events.
- Address housing insecurity by providing stipends to students experiencing difficulties affording housing.
- Establish a food pantry or meal service for students without access to regular meals.

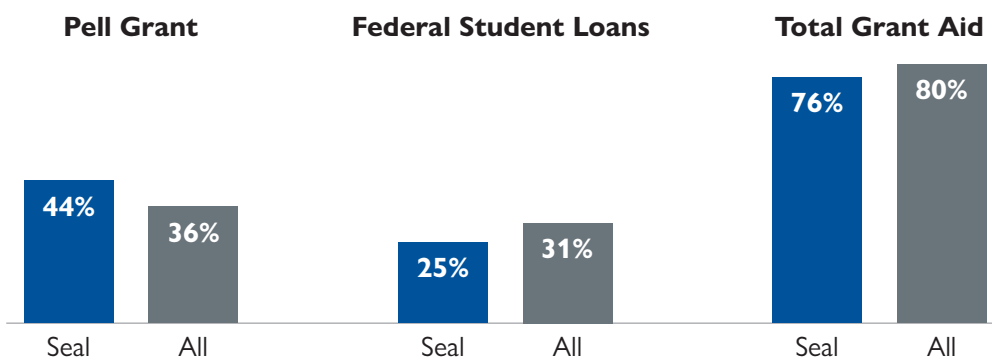
Strategy # 4: Offer robust advising support services and workshops to inform how students navigate their educational finances, such as:

- Hire bilingual financial aid administrators to help students and their families navigate students' college expenses and aid options.
- Offer workshops aimed toward improving students' understanding of ways to pay for college, money management, and responsible financial planning.

Overview of the Impact of Seal of *Excelencia* Certified Institutions

As of October 2024, there are 46 Seal of *Excelencia* certified colleges and universities.¹⁴ These institutions represent less than 1% of institutions in the country, yet they enroll 17% and graduate 19% of Latinos nationwide. Among Seal-certified institutions, undergraduates are more likely to receive Pell Grants and less likely to receive federal student loans or total grant aid than their peers nationally. About 44% of students received Pell Grants compared to 36% nationally, 25% received federal student loans compared to 31% nationally, and 76% received total grant aid compared to 80% nationally (see Figure 18).

Figure 18. Student Participation in Federal Aid at Seal of *Excelencia* Certified Institutions Compared to All Institutions, 2022-23

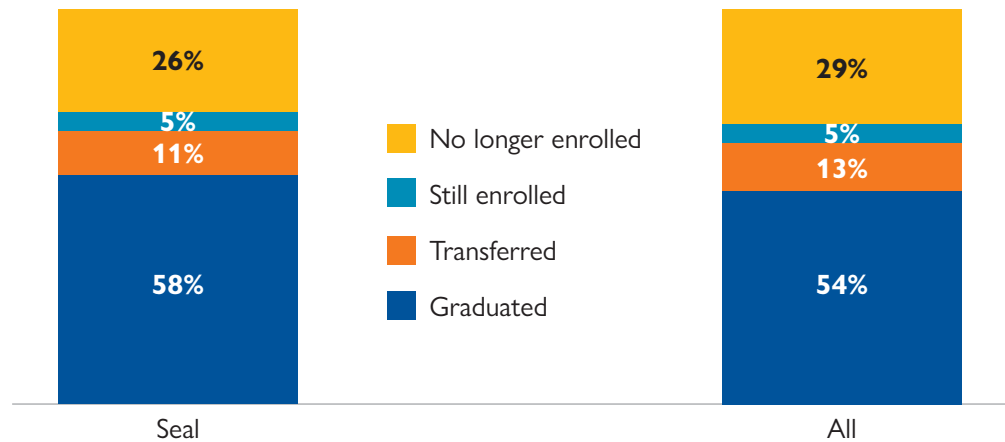


Source: *Excelencia* in Education analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2022 Student Financial Aid and Institutional Characteristics Surveys

¹⁴ Each year in the fall, *Excelencia* in Education announces a new cohort of Seal certified institutions publicly: www.EdExcelencia.org/seal-excelencia.

In terms of degree outcomes, among Seal-certified institutions, Latinos have higher graduation rates (58%) than Latinos nationally (54%), and are less likely to no longer be enrolled (26% vs. 29%) (see Figure 19).

Figure 19. Degree Outcomes of Latino students at Seal of Excelencia Certified Institutions Compared to All Institutions, 2022-23



Note: Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

Source: *Excelencia in Education* analysis of U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 2022 Fall Enrollment, Institutional Characteristics, and Graduation Rates Surveys.

STRATEGY # 1: PROVIDE INSTITUTIONAL AID TO STUDENTS TO MITIGATE THE COST OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

The cost of a college education is rising, making it critical for institutions to reflect on their role in subsidizing these costs for Latino, and all, students. As previously mentioned, nearly 70% of Latino students come from households with an income of \$50,000 or less and nearly half have an EFC of zero. Yet, Latino students are less likely to receive institutional aid compared to any other racial/ethnic group. The practices illustrated below by four Seal-certified institutions demonstrate how they are intentionally pooling their resources to offer institutional aid and employ cost-containment measures (e.g., tuition discounts, or leveraging Open Education Resources) to support Latino, and all, students.

Grand Valley State University (MI): Offers a scholarship program with an emphasis on students whose parents were or currently are migrant farm workers. This scholarship fund is a community-wide effort in which they have raised nearly \$300,000 in the last three years to be able to provide these funds.

Miami Dade College (FL): Established the American Dream Scholars Program that provides scholarship funds to cover the remaining cost of tuition and fees not covered by financial aid, which includes grants, the Florida Prepaid College Plan, and other scholarships. Miami Dade also created the Last Mile Scholarship, which offers financial resources to students who left the institution with 13 or fewer credits remaining for their first associate degree. The scholarship supports Miami Dade College students in good academic and financial standing who could not continue their education due to various life barriers to promote student completion and success.

University of Texas at Austin (TX): Developed in 2018, the Texas Advance Commitment (TAC) offers assured financial aid for eligible in-state students for all four years of their undergraduate education. This program was further expanded in 2019 to include new freshman and transfer students. Under the TAC expansion, tuition will be completely covered for students with a family adjusted gross income of up to \$65,000 (the majority of Pell-eligible students) and assured need-based aid will be awarded to eligible students with a family adjusted gross income of between \$65,001 to \$125,000.

University of Texas at El Paso (TX): Provides funding through the UTEP Promise/Miners Success Grant, which are awarded to students with high financial need. UTEP guarantees these students that all tuition and fees will be covered through a combination of federal, state, and institutional funds.

STRATEGY # 2: FACILITATE CAREER PATHWAYS THROUGH PAID INTERNSHIPS AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES WHILE STUDENTS ARE ENROLLED

One strategy Latino students employ to offset the cost of a college degree is to work while enrolled. Recall, over half of Latino students work 30 hours or more per week while taking classes. Leveraging what they know about Latino students, the Seal-certified institutions highlighted below are setting paid employment and experiential learning opportunities as a priority on their campus. These opportunities both provide students with a necessary form of income and allow them to explore potential career paths and gain valuable research experience as a student.

University of Illinois Chicago (IL): Offers a two-year program that provides students with annual financial assistance for two years to work with experienced researchers, earn course credits, and gain hands-on experience in life sciences, chemistry, and other related fields. Students also receive funding to be able to travel and present their research at conferences, gaining invaluable experience in their fields.

University of Texas at Arlington (TX): Prioritizes on-campus employment by (1) standardizing their policy and procedures surrounding employment, (2) implementing standard titling and pay grade, increasing the minimum wage of students, (3) developing partnerships with colleges/schools and key stakeholders, (4) providing accurate and timely financial aid information, and (5) growing student employment with off-campus work-study partners.

California State University-Long Beach (CA): Offers the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) as a way for first- and second-year students to engage in a year-long opportunity to enhance their research skills. Students are employed during both semesters and are provided much-needed financial support while gaining valuable experience. A unique component of the UROP program is that students can apply their Federal Work-Study to these research positions.

STRATEGY # 3: MEET STUDENTS' BASIC NEEDS THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL SERVICES (E.G., FOOD PANTRY) AND EMERGENCY AID

In recent years, postsecondary institutions and their students have encountered a multitude of challenges (e.g., pandemic, natural disasters) that have impacted the ability for students to pursue a college degree. This is particularly true for Latino students. For example, over a third of Latinos experience marginal to high levels of food insecurity (39%). Recognizing the unexpected challenges students may encounter, the Seal-certified institutions highlighted below have established or improved their institutional resources to support students' basic needs through emergency aid, food pantries, among others.

Metropolitan State University of Denver (CO): Created the Student Emergency Retention Fund to support students who are experiencing unanticipated and/or catastrophic life events that may otherwise cause the student to stop or pause their educational goals. This emergency stipend is made available to students once an academic year.

Phoenix College (AZ): Supports students' growing basic needs insecurity by expanding their campus' food pantry and clothing closet for students. The college also launched the Single Stop program which connects students to public benefits, health insurance, and emergency funds. Phoenix College also provides financial assistance to support students experiencing housing insecurity, paying a full year's rent for students that demonstrate the financial need. In 2020, Phoenix college launched a device loan program to provide students with various technological devices to support their learning, distributing 800 devices to eligible students via a Loan2Own program.

Florida International University (FL): Established an Emergency Aid Response Team to support students facing emergencies with basic needs such as (1) housing, living, and moving expenses, (2) medical and dental emergencies, (3) transportation costs, (4) family emergencies, and (5) safety-related concerns. The creation of the Emergency Aid Response Team provides a single point of contact for students to seek support for all emergency related needs. This team is composed of staff from a variety of different offices across campus to offer services to students that are comprehensive and meet their needs.

California State University-Los Angeles (CA): Started the Basic Needs Initiative (BNI), which has increased access to food and housing resources to support students in addition to their food pantry and emergency housing options. CSU Los Angeles started "Eddie Eats," a restaurant meal program that provides additional support to students to purchase food on-campus. The campus also created a new off-campus housing subsidy program that provides one-time funding of up to \$1,000 to help off-set the costs of security deposits or rent.

STRATEGY # 4: OFFER ROBUST ADVISING SUPPORT SERVICES AND WORKSHOPS TO INFORM HOW STUDENTS NAVIGATE THEIR EDUCATIONAL FINANCES

Financial aid is a critical resource for supporting students interested in obtaining a postsecondary education. At the same time, it can be difficult for students to access these resources and navigate their options when it comes to paying for college. This is especially true for first-generation college students in which Latino students are disproportionately represented. The Seal-certified institutions below recognize that intentional advising practices and workshops are key to helping students make informed decisions about their finances.

San Diego State University (CA): San Diego State's Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (OFAS) provides intensive financial support, advising, and counseling that is tailored to students in the EOP programs. These students are assigned a financial aid counselor.

Wilbur Wright College (IL): Wilbur Wright College's Office of Financial Aid has established a caseload management model to foster an intentional relationship between students and an assigned advisor. Through training and professional development opportunities, the financial aid staff are trained to provide a bi-cultural approach to advising. This office provides target student support to aid students in completing their FAFSA applications.

University of Texas at San Antonio (TX): Established financial literacy programs to help counsel students about the financial resources available to them and how to maximize these resources to make college more affordable. As part of this program, there is a full-time position on UTSA's financial aid team that is dedicated to educating students on responsible borrowing. Additionally, through a partnership with an outside organization, Cafe College, UTSA provides financial aid presentations and workshops to help high school seniors complete the FAFSA application.

University of Central Florida (FL): Created the 'Centsible Knights' financial literacy program to help their students with ways to pay for college, money management, life skills, and more. The program partners with on-campus stakeholders and community organizations to provide students with comprehensive guidance on financial wellness, student success, and post-graduation guidance.

Policy Recommendations and Call to Action

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

This brief leverages nationally representative data on Latino students' financial participation and institutional practices for making college more affordable to illustrate the importance of understanding the profile of Latino students in order to intentionally serve them. The institutions highlighted in this brief represent a select group of trendsetters that make up the Seal of *Excelencia* certified institutions that strive to go beyond enrollment to intentionally serve Latino students. The strategies and practices highlighted help inform what other institutions can do to increase access to a college education and financially support Latino, and all, students:

1. Align institutional aid to provide funds to mitigate students' unexpected financial challenges.
2. Offer paid internships or on-campus employment opportunities so that Latino students can offset the cost of their degree while simultaneously gaining transferable skills.
3. Provide support services to help their students make informed decisions about their college costs.
4. Contain student costs by offering OER (Open Educational Resources) for courses.
5. Advance full tuition scholarships to students with family incomes at or below a specific financial level.
6. Facilitate and simplify access to aid by managing joint admissions and financial aid applications between two-year and four-year college partners.

The strategies and practices employed by this group of institutions demonstrate how other institutions can intentionally leverage their policies and resources toward making college more affordable and helping their Latino students make informed choices about paying for their college degree.

STATE AND FEDERAL POLICY

Excelencia believes that good policy is informed by good practice, such as those demonstrated by the Seal-certified institutions highlighted above. The ability to intentionally serve Latino students at scale requires knowing what works to accelerate Latino student success and garnering investment at the state and federal levels.

STATE POLICY

1. Invest in guaranteed tuition plans by family income to make college affordable for students with high financial need.
2. Include the entire cost of attendance for state grants and support to calculate financial need.
3. Facilitate access to aid by mandating FAFSA completion in high school graduation requirements.
4. Promote the return on investment of a degree to students and of the institutions where they earn degrees to benefit the broader society.

FEDERAL POLICY

1. Include basic needs in financial aid calculations to reduce students' unmet financial need to pay for college.
2. Prioritize Pell Grants among federal programs to help students gain access and support to choose where to enroll.
3. Revise the Federal Work-Study distribution formula to more strategically support students with high financial need.
4. Incentivize cost containment with a recognition program, and reduce administrative burdens to program participation.

For more detailed analysis on these recommendations, please visit: EdExcelencia.org/research/publications/Excelencia-policy-agenda to read our latest Policy Agenda.

Appendix

TERMS

Cost of attendance includes the amount of tuition and fees; food and housing; books, course materials, supplies, and equipment; and other expenses (laundry, transportation, entertainment) that a full-time, first-time degree/certificate-seeking student can expect to pay to go to college for an academic year.¹⁵ Understanding the cost of attendance is critical to understanding the financial choices and offerings available to students. In 2019-20, the national average total cost of attendance for students varied significantly depending on the sector of the institution and whether a student lived on-campus or off-campus (Table 1). Of importance in this analysis, the cost of attendance is only reported for full-time, first-time students, which has implications for how Latino students and other post-traditional students are represented within these costs as they are more likely to enroll part-time or mix their enrollment rather than attend solely full-time.

Table 1. Cost of Attendance for Students by Residential Status in 2019-20 (based on in-state tuition)¹⁶

Sector	On-campus	Off-campus living with family ¹⁷	Off-campus not living with family
Public 2-year	\$18,262 ¹⁸	\$11,172	\$22,325
Public 4-year	\$29,296	\$17,157	\$29,408
Private not-for-profit, 4-year	\$62,280	\$49,416	\$62,106
Private for-profit, 4-year	\$38,853	\$27,312	\$37,023

15 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

16 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Ed Statistics 2023, Table 330.40

17 Note: The cost of attendance estimate for “off-campus living with parents” assumes that students living with their parents do not pay rent.

18 Note: This estimate pertains to a select few community colleges as most do not offer on-campus housing.

Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is a measure of how much the student and their family can be expected to contribute to the cost of the student's education for a given award year. It impacts a student's eligibility for certain types of federal student aid.¹⁹

Work-Study is a federal student aid program that provides part-time employment while the student is enrolled in college to help pay their education expenses. The student must seek out and apply for work-study jobs at their institution. The student will be paid directly for the hours worked and the amount they earn cannot exceed the total amount awarded by the institution for the award year.²⁰

DATA SOURCE

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education uses the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS) to collect comprehensive data on financial aid, such as information on demographic characteristics of students, enrollment patterns, student need, and how students pay for college. NPSAS provides information on students who have already accessed higher education and are enrolled in a college or university. The study is based on a nationally representative sample, and data are collected on institutions and students using institutional records, government databases, and telephone interviews. These parameters of NPSAS provide a wealth of data for analysis on how Latinos participate and pay for college at a national level. Unless otherwise stated, NPSAS:20 is the main source of the data in this analysis.



¹⁹ Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid, Federal Student Aid Handbook

²⁰ Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Federal Student Aid, Glossary, studentaid.gov/help-center/answers/article/federal-work-study



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