

## Who is *Excelencia in Education*?

*Excelencia in Education*, founded in 2004, accelerates Latino student success in higher education to address the U.S. economy's need for a highly educated workforce and civic leadership by:

- Providing data-driven analysis on issues in higher education with a Latino lens;
- Promoting education policies and institutional practices that support Latinos' academic achievement and that of other post-traditional students; and,
- Organizing a network of institutions and professionals with the common cause of Latino student success.

Policy must keep up with our country's changing demographics to serve students. At *Excelencia*, our current policy priorities are the following: **affordability, institutional capacity, retention and transfer, and workforce preparation**. The current state of Latinos' educational attainment and their success are predicated on these issues.

Following is a profile of Latino students today, our guiding principles for policymaking, and recommendations to meet Latino student needs, increase degree attainment, and close equity gaps.

## What is the current profile of Latino students?

*Excelencia's* analysis of federal data shows that Latinos are more likely to

- enroll at public institutions (69%),
- attend at mixed enrollment intensity—switching between part- and full-time (24%),
- begin their bachelor's degree at a two-year institution (51%),
- be first-generation students (44%),
- come from low-income families (71% have an income less than \$63,000),
- receive federal aid (56%) compared to state (29%) and institutional (19%) aid,
- work (62%) and work 30 or more hours while pursuing their studies (51%),
- receive larger Federal Work-Study grants (\$2,444 compared to \$2,340 students overall),
- take remedial courses (47% compared to 40% students overall),
- attend a Hispanic-Serving Institution (65% of all Latino students), and
- be overrepresented in the workforce (66% of Latinos participate in the labor force) but in lower skilled jobs (22% of Latinos are in the highest paying occupations).

## Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles frame an approach to reassess current federal policies using a Latino lens.

- Efficiency in serving traditional students today can limit effectiveness in serving a majority of students tomorrow.
- Increase educational and economic opportunity for all students, prioritizing access and success for low-income and underrepresented students.
- Transparency of information requires strategic outreach and engagement for maximum effectiveness.
- Institutions that have a concentration of Latinos can transform to better serve the needs of the students they enroll.
- However a student starts, they need support along their pathway to and through college completion.

## Recommendations

### Affordability

- Simplify the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- Simplify student loan repayment.
- Increase and protect the Pell Grant.
- Revisit the campus-based aid allocation formula to reflect the demographic distribution of needy students across the country.
- Increase Federal Work-Study funding to allow for greater student participation.
- Ensure financial aid programs allow part-time student participation.
- Distribute financial aid based on need, not merit.

### Retention and transfer

- Update federal data policy to better reflect Latino students' pathways.
- Simplify the transfer process by requiring institutions to accept credits and implement common course numbering across institutions.
- Incentivize effective data sharing to identify potential Latino transfer students, track their persistence across institutions, and document the impact of initiatives on students' transfer to completion.
- Encourage and promote reverse transfer policies.
- Provide alternative models of remediation.

### Institutional capacity

- Consolidate the number of allowable activities in Title V grants to strengthen services.
- Focus on the post-traditional student profile.
- Link financial support to degree attainment.
- Support and expand funding for Title III and Title V programs.

### Workforce preparation

- Use federal policy to promote participation in experiential learning opportunities including internship.
- Capitalize on Latinos' already high workforce participation to help them find paying jobs that provide an applied experience.
- Recognize the institutions that are graduating Latino students.
- Encourage engagement between employers and institutions to provide opportunities while and after students are in school.

For more information, please contact Janette Martinez at [jmartinez@edexcelencia.org](mailto:jmartinez@edexcelencia.org).