

## Improving Latino College Completion: Promising Policy and Practice

Ventura College, Guthrie Hall

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Joseph Aguerrebere - A Big Picture Look at the Data

Good morning, Assemblymember Das Williams, and thank you for the opportunity to share some data about Latino college completion in California. The data I am sharing is drawn from public sources and compiled by Excelencia in Education, a national nonprofit organization based in Washington DC, dedicated to accelerating higher education success for Latino students in this country.

There is a handout in your meeting materials that provides information from Excelencia. I am privileged to serve as a board member living in California.

Here are some facts to keep in mind:

1. California has the largest Latino population in the U.S. and the largest Latino student population. Therefore our success with Latino students has the potential to serve as model for the rest of the country.
2. Latinos make up about half of the K-12 population in California with projections showing a continued increase. This pipeline indicator underscores the need to begin early with an engaging curriculum and sufficient academic and emotional support to meet the higher education requirements and provides critical information to parents and students that will chart a clear pathway to attend and succeed in college.
3. Thirty-eight percent of the state population was Latino as of the 2010 US Census and projections show a continued increase. Given the size, the success of Latino educational attainment is critical for an improved state economy.
4. Latinos tend to be younger than other groups in the state, with a median age of 27, compared with 38 for white, non-Hispanics. This underscores the need to address this significant population at an earlier stage in life.
5. Sixteen percent of Latino adults (ages 25-64) had earned an associate degree or higher, compared with thirty-nine percent of all adults in the state. This compares with 17% of Latinos in Texas, and 31% in Florida. The national figures for 2011 show about 21% of Latino adults had Associate of Arts degrees or higher compared with 30% of black adults, 44% of whites, and 57% of Asians. These numbers indicate that Latinos have a lower college attainment rate in California when compared with Texas and Florida who are 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally in the size of the Latino population.
6. Forty percent of all college enrolled Latinos are first in their family to go to college. The implications of this statistic indicate that colleges and universities should not assume that their

students or their parents know how to navigate the higher education system successfully. School districts, community partners, and higher education institutions can do much more to provide a supportive structure to ensure the success of their students.

7. The number of Latinos who earned an undergraduate degree in California increased about 12% between 2006-2008, while all other groups increased about 7%. California had the largest increase in degrees conferred to Latinos over 3 years among the top 10 states enrolling Latinos. These numbers are likely the result of an increase in the overall enrollment numbers of Latinos rather than an increase in rates of completion. The goal should be that increasing enrollment numbers are accompanied with an increase in college completion rates.
8. Across the California higher education system, Latinos are more likely to be enrolled in a community college. Unfortunately, Latinos who begin their college education in a community college are less likely to earn a bachelor's degree compared with Latino students who begin at a four year institution. There are many reasons for this which are beyond the scope of my remarks.

So where are the key leverage points to improve the Latino college completion rates? Given the data that I shared, the following areas deserve our attention and focus:

1. Given that Latinos make up about one half of the K-12 student population, better academic preparation and support must begin at the K-12 level. This means school districts, and higher education institutions need to work together with students and their families to understand the importance of a college education and all of the steps necessary to succeed. Parents and students need simplified and timely information regarding admissions requirements and financial aid options.
2. Each sector of higher education -- community colleges, the California state university system, and the University of California system, along with private colleges should provide better coordination that provides a clearly articulated and supported pathway through each level of higher education.

Benchmark indicators at each transition stage should provide useful information to chart progress and make adjustments as necessary.

Ultimately, if the United States is to regain the top ranking in the world for college degree attainment, California, as the largest state with the largest numbers, will need to close the equity gap in college completion, increase the number of degrees conferred, particularly among Latinos, and scale up programs and initiatives that work for Latinos and other students. Thank you for your time and interest in this important topic which is critical to the future of California.