

# The College Completion Agenda

Research and  
Context Brief

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**Latino Edition**

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### **Acknowledgments**

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Adriana Flores-Ragade  
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Today we face a crisis across the education landscape. The proportion of American adults with postsecondary credentials is not keeping pace with other industrialized nations. Improving postsecondary success, most urgently for low-income and minority students, is critical to our nation's economic strength and social health.

The need to fully invest in the academic success of Hispanic students has never been greater. Latino youth represent the largest minority group in K–12 schools and are the fastest growing segment of students in many states; in the recent census, Latinos account for more than 39 percent of all growth in the number of children under the age of 17. To meet our nation's goals we must improve the academic achievement and college attainment of Latino students.

Latino college completion and success begins with preschool and continues as students navigate the various stages of the educational system. Therefore, raising college completion rates among Latinos requires a coordinated effort that engages all segments of the education

continuum. The Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education, formed by the College Board, was created to study the educational pipeline as a single continuum and identify solutions to increase the number of students who graduate from college and are prepared to succeed in the 21st century. The commission established 10 interdependent recommendations to reach its goal of ensuring that at least 55 percent of Americans hold a postsecondary degree by 2025. This report looks at the research and provides context for how the 10 recommendations outlined by the commission relate to the Latino community. This brief is tailored to address the needs of Latino students. This Latino edition specifically identifies efforts that will strengthen the education pipeline to better prepare Latinos at every stage of the P–20 continuum, to raise college completion rates, to contribute to community wealth, and to enhance the potential of Latinos to contribute to our domestic and global economies.

The international competitiveness of the United States will largely depend on the academic success of Latino students due to the fact that the Latino community has experienced unprecedented demographic growth in the United States in the past five decades, yet Latinos have experienced limited educational attainment over the past 40 years.<sup>1</sup> According to the recent Census Bureau statistics, Latinos now represent one in six residents in the United States, a growth that is a result of both high birth rates and immigration patterns. In the past decade alone, over half of the nation's growth is attributed to the increase in the number of Latinos in this country.

1. Gándara, P. & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino Education Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

# Social Context for Latino Academic Integration & Achievement

Latino youth now represent the largest minority group in K–12 schools in the United States and the fastest growing segment of students in states beyond the Southwest. In addition, Latinos account for more than 39 percent of all growth among children under age 17 in the past 10 years. Latinos are a youthful, largely bilingual population; in 2007, over 89 percent of Latino children under age 18 were born in the United States.<sup>2</sup> And while multiple generations of Latinos reside in the United States and Latino children are largely American born, the majority of Latino students in the K–12 system (52 percent in 2006) have at least one parent who is an immigrant.

Low parental education levels for Latino children lead to a distinct disadvantage as Latino students navigate school. In 2008, 39 percent of Latino students had mothers with less than a high school education, compared to five percent of white students. And only 11 percent of Latino mothers had a bachelor's degree compared to 36 percent of whites and 51 percent of Asian Americans (Figure B). However, Latinos hold very high aspirations for their children. Over 94 percent of respondents to the 2007 Latino National Survey wanted their children to earn a degree.<sup>3</sup> However, parental aspirations for graduate school for their children diminish the longer Latinos live in the United States; 39.9 percent of fourth-generation respondents wanted their children to earn a graduate or professional degree compared to 58.8 percent of first-generation parents. These data convey the immigrants' optimism that Suarez-Orozco and colleagues (2008) discuss as guiding educational aspirations among first-generation students and their families.<sup>4</sup>

The data show that Latino parents possess limited awareness of the postsecondary options available for their children; while Latino parents want their children to attend college, they lack the knowledge and resources to make it a reality. There is a need for a greater effort to inform and educate parents about the processes and practices that lead to college preparation, enrollment and success.<sup>5</sup>

2. Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010. *The Condition of Education 2010*. U.S. Department of Education, NCES.

3. Fraga, L., Garcia, J., Segura, G., Jones-Correa, M., Hero, R., Martinez-Ebers-V., 2010, *Latinos Lives in America*. Temple University Press.

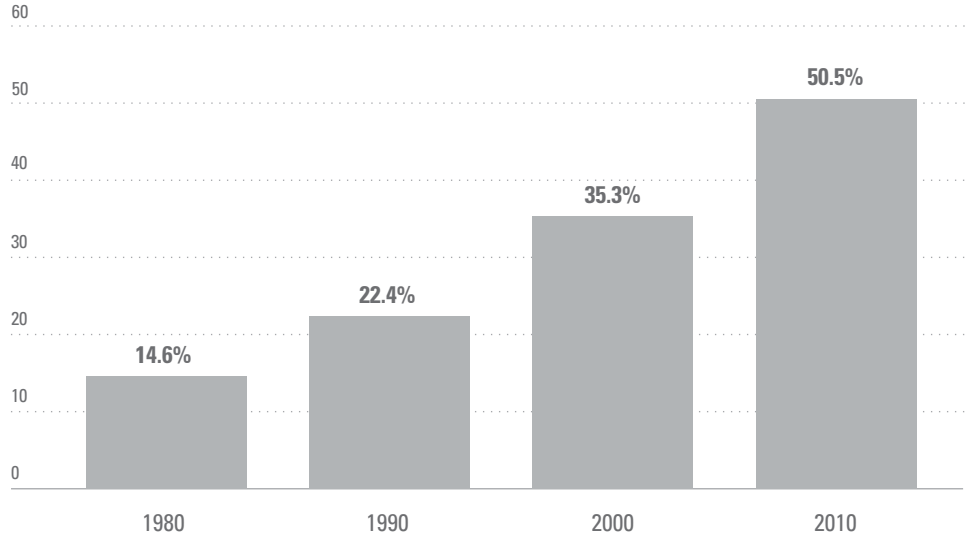
4. Suarez-Orozco, M. Suarez-Orozco, C. & Todorova, I., 2008, *Learning in a New Land: Immigrant Students in American Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; See also Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1995). Optimism and achievement: The educational performance of immigrant youth. *Social Science Quarterly*, 76(1), 1–19.

5. Gándara & Contreras, 2009; Contreras, F. (2011). *Achieving Equity for Latino Students*. New York: Teachers College Press.

**A**

**U.S. Hispanic Population, 1980–2010**

Source: Pew Hispanic Center

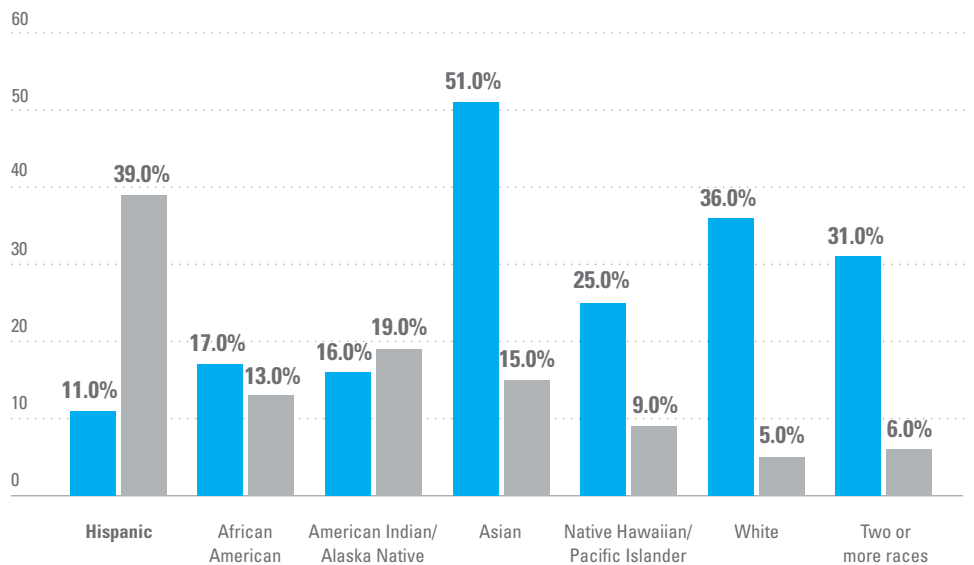


**B**

**Percentage of Children Ages 6 to 18 Whose Mother Attained a Level of Education Less Than High School Completion, and Percentage Whose Mother Attained At Least a Bachelor's Degree, 2008**

Source: Aud, Fox & KewalRamani (2010). Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Groups. NCES Report Number 2010015.

- Mother with at least a bachelor's degree
- Mother with less than high school completion



Low parental education levels create challenges for Latino youth in school; these are closely intertwined with poverty and low-income status. Limited economic resources make it more likely that Latino youth will attend high poverty schools, leading to lower academic achievement.<sup>6</sup> In 2007-08, 42 percent of Latino elementary-age children attended schools in which more than 75 percent of the students were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program.<sup>7</sup> Children living in single-parent households are also more likely to live in poverty, and Latina single mothers represent the fastest growing segment of the population for birth rates — twice the national average.<sup>8</sup> This has held true even as statistics show that teens from other ethnic groups have declining birth rates.<sup>9</sup>

### The Need for a Latino College Completion Agenda

Despite this demographic transformation across many states, Latinos have witnessed modest educational progress since the 1970's, with a limited proportion of Latinos completing their two-year and four-year degrees.<sup>10</sup> This will have increasing economic consequences as Latinos make up an increasing percentage of the population. Limited educational attainment stifles both economic opportunity and social mobility, and could lead to the creation of a permanent Latino underclass, with serious implications for the rest of the nation.<sup>11</sup>

Select policy efforts and programs are largely responsible for the modest increases in the number of Latinos accessing higher education and earning postsecondary degrees. These include the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Higher Education Act of 1965, the Pell Grant program, the TRIO programs, and the GI Bill. Many Latino students who have earned their college degrees have benefitted from these public policy efforts and federal programs to raise educational attainment.

## Reading the Document

This brief is a companion to *The College Completion Agenda 2011 Progress Report: Latino Edition*. *The College Completion Agenda 2011 Progress Report: Latino Edition* uses a collection of indicators to measure the nation's progress toward the goal of ensuring that 55 percent of Latino 25- to 34-year-olds obtain an associate degree or higher by the year 2025, as outlined by the 10 recommendations. The Latino edition of the *College Completion Agenda 2011*

6. Rumberger, R. 2007. Parsing the Data on Student Achievement in High Poverty Schools. *North Carolina Law Review*, Vol. 85. pp. 1293–1314.
7. NCES, 2010, The Condition of Education, Table A-25-1.
8. Ventura, S.J., Abma, J.A., Mosher, W.D., and Henshaw, S.K. (2008). Estimated Pregnancy Rates by Outcome for the United States, 1990-2004. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 56(15).
9. Ventura, S.J., Abma, J.A., Mosher, W.D., and Henshaw, S.K. (2008). Estimated Pregnancy Rates by Outcome for the United States, 1990-2004. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 56(15).
10. Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Contreras, 2011; Telles & Martinez, 2008. *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation and Race*. Russell Sage Foundation.
11. Contreras, F. & Gándara, P. (December 2009). Transitioning Latino Students to College: Altering the Path of a Rapidly Expanding Underclass. Publication of the College Board, College Board Connection; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Haskings, R., & Tienda, M. (2011). *The Future of Immigrant Children*. The Future of Children. Princeton University.

*Progress Report* illustrates the degree to which the nation is moving toward — or away from — the goal of increasing Latino college completion.

*The College Completion Agenda State Policy Guide: Latino Edition* was produced in collaboration with *Excelencia* in Education and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) to provide a practical policy guide to help state legislators pursue each of the commission's recommendations. The Latino edition of the *College Completion Agenda State Policy Guide* offers a road map for legislators toward increasing the number of Latinos who attain a postsecondary degree by the year 2025. In this document, each chapter provides an analysis of the research for the Latino community related to the 10 recommendations outlined in The College Completion Agenda. Each chapter gives an overview of the recommendation and provides detailed context and considerations specific to the Latino community.

## Ten Recommendations for College Completion

The Commission on Access, Admissions and Success in Higher Education was formed by the College Board to study the educational pipeline as a single continuum and identify solutions to increase the number of students who graduate from college. The commission put forth a 10-part agenda aimed at strengthening the educational pipeline throughout a student's trajectory, from preschool and adult education to college completion.

**One.** Provide a program of voluntary preschool education, universally available to children from low-income families

**Two.** Improve middle and high school college counseling

**Three.** Implement the best research-based dropout prevention programs

**Four.** Align the K–12 education system with international standards and college admission expectations

**Five.** Improve teacher quality and focus on recruitment and retention

**Six.** Clarify and simplify the admission process

**Seven.** Provide more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent

**Eight.** Keep college affordable

**Nine.** Dramatically increase college completion rates

**Ten.** Provide postsecondary opportunities as an essential element of the adult education program

# Uno

**WE RECOMMEND** that states provide a program of voluntary high-quality, preschool education universally available to 3- and 4-year old children from families at or below 200 percent of the poverty line.

Access to quality preschool for Latino children is a pressing educational equity issue, and countless studies have documented the benefits of preschool on student achievement. Access to quality early childhood education prepares children for academic success as they enter the formal education system; however, in 2007, Latinos had the lowest participation rates in center-based early childhood care (Figure 1). Results from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS) have consistently shown that the performance of Latinos lags behind that of their peers, a direct reflection of limited access to quality preschool programs.<sup>12</sup> Latino preschool enrollments have declined from 2005 to 2009 compared to that of their peers, despite the fact that Latino students represent a sizable — in some states the greatest — proportion of 4-year-olds entering kindergarten.<sup>13</sup>

### Address Access to Quality Preschool

While there have been concerted efforts to broaden access to preschool, Latino students are less likely than their white peers to attend preschool.<sup>14</sup> In addition, an examination of children of immigrant and nonimmigrant parents in 615 California preschools found greater disparities in school quality for children of immigrant parents, as measured by adequacy of classroom space, quality of materials, and instructional supports.<sup>15</sup> This is in part due to the limited knowledge and awareness among Spanish-speaking immigrant parents about the pre-K opportunities that exist. Latino children in particular, the students most

12. Crosnoe R., (2006) *Mexican Roots American Schools*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Contreras, 2011; Garcia & Gonzales, 2006.

13. Karoly, L., & Gonzalez, G., (2011). Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families *The Future of Children*. Princeton University.

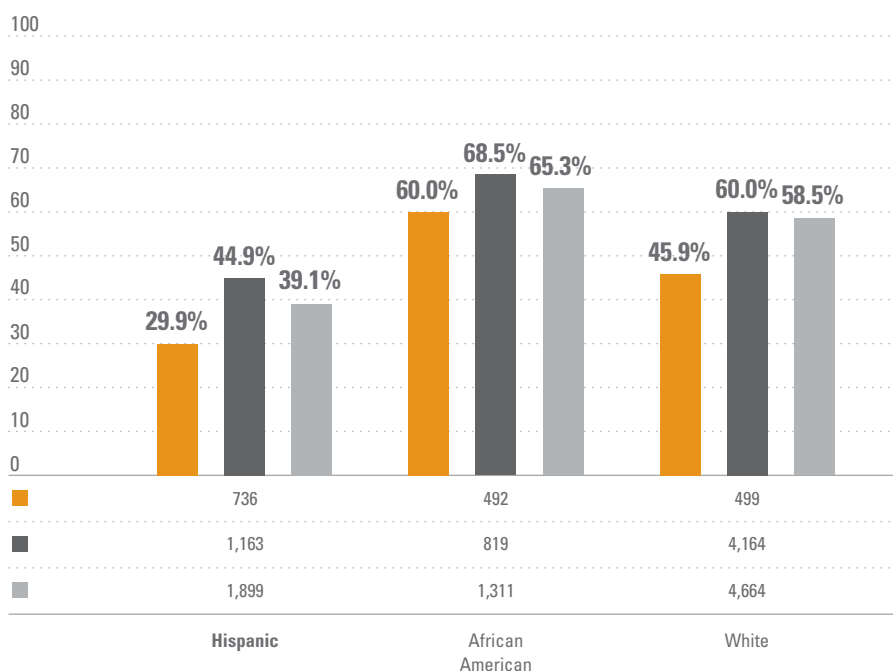
14. Fuller, B., & Kim, A., (2011). Latino Access to Preschool Stalls after Earlier Gains. *New Journalism on Latino Children* Institute of Human Development Berkeley 2011.

15. Karoly & Gonzalez, 2011.

1

**Percentage of Preprimary Children Ages 3–5 Who Were Enrolled in Center-Based Early Child Care and Education Programs by Race, Ethnicity and Poverty Status, 2007**

■ Poor  
 ■ Nonpoor  
 ■ Total



likely to constitute the children of immigrant parents in California and other states, therefore have less access to the academic supports and environments needed to reduce gaps in early achievement.<sup>16</sup>

**Teacher Quality**

Teacher quality in early childhood education remains a challenge despite state and national efforts to improve qualifications among ECE teachers.<sup>17</sup> For Latino students, who are most likely to attend preschools with limited resources, ensuring access to quality early childhood teachers who have experience in working with bilingual bicultural communities is an area for improvement and engagement with state and national policy arenas. This is also an issue where two-year and four-year early childhood teacher-preparation programs in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) play a significant role in preparing a highly qualified ECE workforce that can meet the demand of an increasingly diverse pool of students from bilingual households.

16. Fuller & Kim, 2011.

17. Ackerman, D. J. (2003). *State's Efforts in Improving the Qualifications of Early Care and Education Teachers*: National Institute for Early Education Research.

### Support for Biliteracy in Preschool

Latino children are more likely than their peers to be bilingual as they enter preschool. Many preschools replace the Spanish language with English, rather than reinforce biliteracy in English and Spanish. Few preschools serve the needs of ELL students well. One potential solution to the low achievement that ELLs experience in K–12 schools is to utilize an English-Plus-Spanish approach in preschool; this practice supports both informal and formal approaches to using English and Spanish in the classroom.<sup>18</sup> It is well documented that students who have Spanish reinforced in the early grades retain literacy in their native language. Researchers have found greater academic benefits of bilingual over English only programs, with the potential to close the Latino/white achievement gap in reading in the early years.<sup>19</sup> Leading experts such as Eugene Garcia recommend that the number of culturally knowledgeable preschool and early elementary teachers proficient in English and Spanish be increased<sup>20</sup> to meet the demands of bilingual Latino students in early childhood contexts and to maximize learning opportunities.

### The Need for Better Early Learning Assessments

Early learning assessments are a challenge for this sector largely due to program variation and different purposes for ECE evaluation.<sup>21</sup> Assessment at the preschool level presents an even greater challenge for bilingual students.<sup>22</sup> Current assessment measures for young ELL students are inadequate because most early learning assessments are primarily administered in English and do not appropriately assess a child's knowledge across both languages.<sup>23</sup> Leading experts agree that early childhood assessments require further development and greater consistency across cognitive measures.<sup>24</sup> For ELLs in particular, assessment practices should take into account structural linguistic differences,

18. Garcia & Frede, 2010. *Young English Learners*. New York: Teachers College Press; Findings from the National Hispanic Task Force on Early Childhood Education for Hispanics, 2007, p. 40.

19. Garcia, E. & Jensen, B. (2009). Early Childhood Educational Opportunities for Children of Hispanic Origin. Publication of the Society for Research in Child Development., p. 9.

20. Ibid., p. 1.

21. Garcia E., & Frede, E., (2010). *Young English Language Learners*, pp. 187–188.

22. Espinosa, L. (2010). Classroom Teaching and Instruction “Best Practices” for Young ELLs. In E. Garcia and E. Frede, *Young English Language Learners*, p. 148.

23. Ibid., Garcia, E., & Frede, E., (2010). *Young English Language Learners*, p. 188.

24. Snow, C., & Van Hemel., S. (2008). Early Childhood assessment: Why, what and how. Washington, DC: The National Academic Press.

dialectal variations within languages, and differences in the order of vocabulary or grammatical acquisition.<sup>25</sup> Finally, state longitudinal data systems, such as the efforts that exist in Texas, Louisiana and Idaho, should include the pre-K assessment and progress data in their data files to better understand and systematically document the longitudinal effects of early learning on student achievement and to identify learning needs early on for students that require academic support to mitigate gaps in school success.

### Engage Latino Families

The need to engage Latino families at the beginning of the education pipeline is critical for ensuring an optimal experience among Latino students as they enter the formal schooling process. Parental involvement in preschool contributes positively to early literacy development and cognitive development.<sup>26</sup> Latino parents want what all parents want — their children to do well in school and in life. These aspirations among Latino parents are constant across the generational spectrum.<sup>27</sup> However, not all Latino parents have the knowledge of how to translate such aspirations into supporting school readiness and achievement.<sup>28</sup> Raising parent awareness about the U.S. education system and conveying the need to support their children throughout the schooling experience should ideally begin at the preschool stage.

25. Ibid.

26. Garcia, E., & Frede, E., (2010). *Young English Language Learners*; Arnold, et al., 2008; Crosnoe, 2006.

27. Fraga, L., Garcia, J., Segura, G., Jones-Correa, M., Hero, R., & Martinez-Ebers, V., (2010). *Latino Lives in America: Making it Home*. Temple University Press.

28. Crosnoe, R. (2006). *Mexican roots, American schools: Helping Mexican immigrant children succeed*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press; Gandara, P., and Contreras, F., (2009). *The Latino Education Crisis*. Cambridge. Harvard University Press; Contreras, F. (2011). *Achieving Equity*

# Dos

**WE RECOMMEND** that states and localities move toward professional norms for staffing middle and high school counseling offices and that colleges and universities collaborate actively to provide college information and planning services to all students (with a special focus on low-income students).

College counseling in middle and high school is critical to bridging the information gap among Latino students on the course work necessary to plan and prepare for the transition to college. Middle school counselors play a critical role positioning Latino students on a pathway for enrolling in a college-preparatory curriculum in high school. Information on the academic courses necessary to be ready for honors classes, Advanced Placement®, and a college-preparatory curriculum needs to be communicated to Latino parents at this stage. For example, it is well documented that students who take Algebra I in middle school transition to high school ready for a college-preparatory curriculum and are more likely to be placed in advanced and honors courses.<sup>29</sup>

### **Access to School Counselors**

The American Counseling Association recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. Public high schools with less than 10 percent minority students have 256 students to every counselor.<sup>30</sup> Schools that have more than a 50 percent minority student body have 628 students per counselor,<sup>31</sup> yet most Latinos attend these schools.<sup>32</sup> In addition to the issue of access, the messages that school counselors convey to Latino students are equally important. Counselors have the potential to assist students in reaching their post-high school

29. EdSource (2010) *Gaining Ground in Middle Grades: Why Some Schools do Better*; McDonough, 2005; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

30. NCES, 2002, Table 27-1.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

aspirations or to serve as gatekeepers.<sup>33</sup> Access to counselors who possess high expectations and “channel” Latino students into a college-going curricular path in middle school is one approach to increasing the number of Latinos on a clear trajectory for college. Finally, counselors have the potential to engage Latino parents as a means toward raising Latino college-going preparedness and patterns.<sup>34</sup>

The student-to-counselor ratio data include all school counselors and do not identify how much time, if any, they spend providing college counseling to students. It is important that all students receive college and career counseling early, particularly by middle school. Middle school is a critical point at which students must begin taking the necessary academic trajectory to prepare for college. School and college counselors are essential to students because they improve student access to information about college and career options. Also, while the student-to-counselor ratio shows the average number of students to one counselor in the state, there can be great variability by school.

In addition to the issue of low counselor-to-student ratios in schools, Latino students are less likely to seek out school counselors for college information because students perceive them to be uninformed or hostile to Latinos,<sup>35</sup> or these counselors have reputations for limiting opportunities and placing underrepresented students in noncollege track curriculum.<sup>36</sup>

The low counselor-to-student ratios have led to the teacher emerging as the primary source of college information for Latino students.<sup>37</sup> However, this knowledge is often transmitted by teachers informally and is often inconsistent. It is also beyond the scope of their primary role, which is to teach content. However, teachers will often select high-achieving classes or students that the teacher believes to be “college bound.” In a study of Latino student opportunities to learn in middle and high schools, teachers possessed lower expectations for their Latino students, with more than 65 percent asserting that less than one quarter of their Latino students would transition to college.<sup>38</sup> Depending on the expectations of teachers and counselors, both the teacher and counselor often serve as either the gatekeepers or the portal to college knowledge, information and encouragement.<sup>39</sup>

33. Auerbach, S. (2002). “Why Do They Give the Good Classes to Some and Not to Others?” *Latino Parent Narratives of Struggle in a College Access Program*, *Teachers College Record*. Vol. 104, No. 7.

34. Bryan, J. (2005). *Fostering Educational Resilience and Achievement in Urban Schools Through School-Family-Community Partnerships*. Publication of the American School Counselors Association.

35. Gandara P, & Bial, D., (2001). *Paving the Way to Postsecondary Education: K–12 Intervention Programs for Underrepresented Youth* Report of the National Postsecondary Education Cooperative Working Group on Access to Postsecondary Education. U.S. Department of Education.

36. Atkinson, D., Jennings, R., Livingston, L. (1990). Minority students’ reasons for not seeking counseling and suggestions for improvement. *Journal of College Student Development*. 31, 342-350.

37. Contreras, et al., 2008. *Understanding Opportunities to Learn for Latino Students in Washington State*. Report prepared for the Washington State Legislature and Commission on Hispanic Affairs.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Stanton-Salazar, Ricardo. D. (2001). *Manufacturing Hope and Despair: The School and Kin Networks of U.S. Mexican Youth*. NY: Teachers College Press.; Contreras et al., 2008; Contreras, 2011; Gandara & Bial, 2001; Plank, S. B., & Jordan, W. J. (2001). Effects Of Information, Guidance, and Actions On Postsecondary Destinations: A Study Of Talent Loss. *American Educational Research Journal*, 38 (4), 947-979.; Rosenbaum, J., Miller, S. R., & Krei, M.S. (1996). Gatekeeping in an Era of More Open Gates: High School Counselors’ Views of Their Influence on Students’ College Plans. *American Journal of Education*, 104 (4), 257-279.

**Latino Students and Multiple Forms of Counseling**

With high student-to-counselor ratios, Latino students often rely on alternative forms of counseling. Many of these counseling services are offered through programs such as AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), MESA (Math Engineering Science Achievement), Upward Bound or GEAR UP, most of which operate on school sites and serve as a central hub of information, services, and exposure to college information for Latino and underrepresented students.<sup>40</sup> Intervention programs that are the most successful serve to complement school efforts, have staff members located on school sites, and have components that engage parents and families.<sup>41</sup>

40. Gandara & Bial, 2001.

41. Gandara & Bial, 2001; Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

# Tres

**WE RECOMMEND** that states and local educational agencies adopt targeted interventions (starting in elementary and middle schools) focused on early warning signs of students in danger of dropping out, to identify such students and put an “educational safety net” under them.

Latino students represent the largest group of students dropping out of high school before graduation. In 2008, approximately one in five Latinos left high school before graduation.<sup>42</sup> Several factors contribute to high dropout rates, including academic achievement, test scores at the elementary and middle school levels, grade retention, and language proficiency.<sup>43</sup> The overall graduation rate for Latino students in public high schools that same year was 63.5 percent.<sup>44</sup> This represents a loss of talent, less opportunity for mobility, and lower wages; these translate into limited options for the dropouts and for lower community resources and state revenues.<sup>45</sup>

### **Addressing the Needs of ELL Secondary Students**

Latino students born outside of the United States are more than twice as likely to drop out of high school as those born in the country (Figure 2).<sup>46</sup> Higher English language proficiency also reduces the likelihood of dropping out,<sup>47</sup> thus requiring targeted efforts for this population that may include greater information for students and their parents who are likely to lack knowledge of the U.S. education system.<sup>48</sup> In addition, adolescent immigrants are likely to require

42. NCES, the Condition of Education 2010.

43. Rumberger, R., & Lim, S. (2008). Why students drop out of school: A Review of 25 years of research. Publication of the California Dropout Research Project.

44. Stillwell, R., (2010), Dropouts From the Common Core of Data: School Year 2007–08. First Look. JUNE 2010. Robert Stillwell. National Center for Education Statistics NCES.

45. Baum, Ma & Payea, 2010, Education Pays. The College Board; Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

46. Sheng, Z., Sheng, Y., & Anderson, C. (2011). Dropping out of School among ELL students: Implications for Schools and Teacher Education. *The Clearing House*, 84: 98-103.

47. Rumberger & Lim, 2008, p. 2.

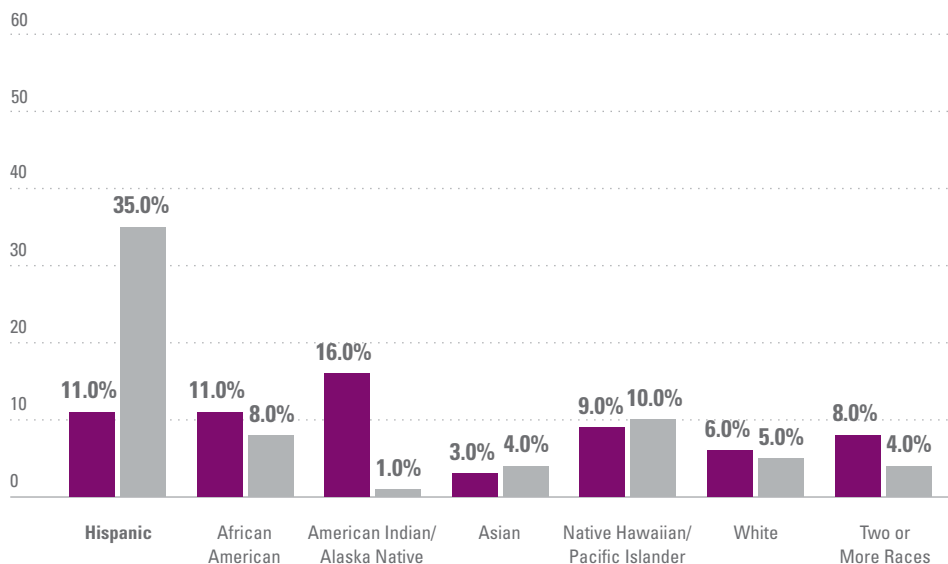
48. Contreras, et al., 2008.

2

**Status Dropout Rates of 16- Through 24-Year Olds, by Race/Ethnicity and Country of Birth (American Community Survey, 2008)**

■ Born within the U.S.  
 ■ Born outside the U.S.

Source: The Condition of Education, 2010.



ELL services, which schools are often unable to provide.<sup>49</sup> Partnering with community college ESL programs, or expanding ELL services across districts can help ensure that immigrant students are not losing valuable curricular and postsecondary preparation opportunities in high school.

**Provide a Safe Campus Environment that Promotes Student Engagement**

Providing an environment in which students feel safe and engaged academically and socially is an important element in a student’s likelihood of staying in school. For example, Latino youth appear to be less resilient in schools where students perceive gang problems or a gang culture to exist.<sup>50</sup> And Latino students who are engaged in their high school context, through a variety of extracurricular activities in the community, are more likely to graduate high school and transition to college.<sup>51</sup>

49. The National High School Center, 2009.

50. Catterall, J. S. (1998). Risk and resilience in student transitions to high school. *American Journal of Education*, 106, 302-333.

51. Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

**Utilize Data Systems to Diagnose and Develop an Early Warning System<sup>52</sup>**

Many states possess or are developing longitudinal data tracking systems. However, such state systems are not widely accessible to school staff or to the public for analysis. And most states focus analyses of drop outs at the high school level. For Latinos, monitoring middle school data for early warning signs such as grades and absenteeism, is a missing component of state and district data analyses. Schools and districts in particular would benefit from conducting their own analysis of their data to understand the behaviors of school dropouts, including: the number of units and the curriculum enrolled in at the point of departure; the migratory patterns of the dropouts within the district or local community colleges; the number of hours the student worked prior to leaving school; the number of absences in any given semester; incidences of disciplinary action; the students' grade point average (GPA) and the reasons for leaving school. Because students are most likely to drop out of high school in the ninth grade if not earlier, special attention to the academic progress of first year students would assist school staff in developing an early intervention system to the "warnings" that become apparent in the first year of high school. Students with a "warning sign" should be targeted early for parent conferences and an array of additional supports.

Addressing the Latino dropout crisis<sup>53</sup> is a critical aspect of broadening the pool of Latino students who successfully transition to college, earn college degrees and cultivate positive life options early in their adult years.

52. Every One Counts, 2011, San Bernadino County Superintendent of Schools, Key Recommendations in the Research on Dropouts.

53. Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

# Cuatro

**WE RECOMMEND** that governors, legislators and state education agencies work to provide a world-class education to every American student by aligning high school programs with international benchmarks tied to the demands of college and career.

The United States continues to fall behind developed nations in the number of college graduates annually produced. Too few of our high school graduates transition to and graduate from college with two-year and four-year degrees. Latino students are no exception and represent a sizable segment of the high school population that is “stopping out” of the educational continuum to work and help support their families. College preparation early — in middle school at the latest — is crucial for better positioning of Latino students to visualize themselves in college and actualize their early aspirations. Research on college aspirations has shown Latinos to have high aspirations for degree attainment.<sup>54</sup> Translating these aspirations into a plan for attainment early in a student’s educational trajectory is where the K–12 system may better align with college admission expectations. Latino students need better preparation in addition to information.<sup>55</sup>

## **Eliminate the Achievement Gap and Ensure Opportunities to Learn for ALL Students**

Latino students continue to lag behind their peers in achievement, as measured by state and federal standardized test scores, low high school graduation rates and college-going rates. These outcomes are a direct reflection of an achievement gap that begins very early for Latino students.<sup>56</sup> Figures 3 and 4

54. Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1998). Educational Aspirations of Minority Youth. *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 106, No. 3, (May, 1998), pp. 349-384. Published by: The University of Chicago Press; Swail, W. S., Cabrera, A.F., Lee, C., & Williams, A. (2005). Pathways to the bachelor’s degree for Latino students. Washington, DC.: The Educational Policy Institute; Contreras, et al., 2008.

55. Cabrera, A. F. & La Nasa, S. M. (2001). On the path to college: Three critical tasks facing America’s disadvantaged. *Research in Higher Education*, 42(2), 119-150. McDonough, P., (2004). Counseling Matters: Knowledge, Assistance, and Organizational Commitment in College Preparation. In William G. Tierney, Zoë B. Corwin & Julia E. Colyar (Eds.) *Preparing for College: Nine Elements of Effective Outreach*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

56. Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

show NAEP Scores in reading and mathematics for fourth-graders in 2009. The proportion of Latino students who scored at proficient or above in reading and math is significantly lower than that of their white peers.

These data convey the need to address gaps in achievement early to ensure student preparation and engagement in later grades. Access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum in high school will better prepare students for college level curriculum and reduce the need for remediation in college. Approximately 20 percent of Latino students require remediation in college.

### **Access to a Rigorous Curriculum and Academic Support to Thrive**

Access to a rigorous college-going curriculum in high school is uneven, particularly in the schools that Latino students attend.<sup>57</sup> In addition to limited access, Latino students are more likely than their white and Asian peers to score below a 3 on Advanced Placement (AP<sup>®</sup>) Exams — the passing score for college credit. This gap in AP scores is most pronounced in mathematics courses such as calculus, where the majority of Latino students in 2008 scored below a 1. Low passing rates on AP Exams across a variety of subjects suggests limited access to quality academic support to accompany the course offerings in the high school context.

Access to a rigorous and challenging curriculum in high school will better prepare students for a college-level curriculum and reduce the need for remediation in college.<sup>58</sup> Approximately 20 percent of Latino students require remediation in college. Few states have strong connections between the K–12 and postsecondary sectors, with respect to the content taught in secondary schools and the content expected in college.

The Common Core State Standards movement is attempting to ensure greater alignment in curriculum content across states in English/language arts and math. This effort calls for individual states to provide a clear framework for teachers, schools and families on the content knowledge a student should have access to and acquire in the core subject areas. Under the high stakes accountability framework that NCLB established, the Common Core State Standards have emerged as a step towards consistency in curricular delivery.

Greater alignment between the K–12 and postsecondary sectors on curricular content and offerings will provide opportunities for K–12 and postsecondary collaboration,<sup>59</sup> and allow for modifications to curricular approaches to better respond to the standards that exist in higher education. Equity in Common Core State Standards delivery and oversight is an important aspect for greater consideration, to ensure that Latino students have access to applicable, equitable and appropriate modes of curricular delivery as states attempt to meet these standards.

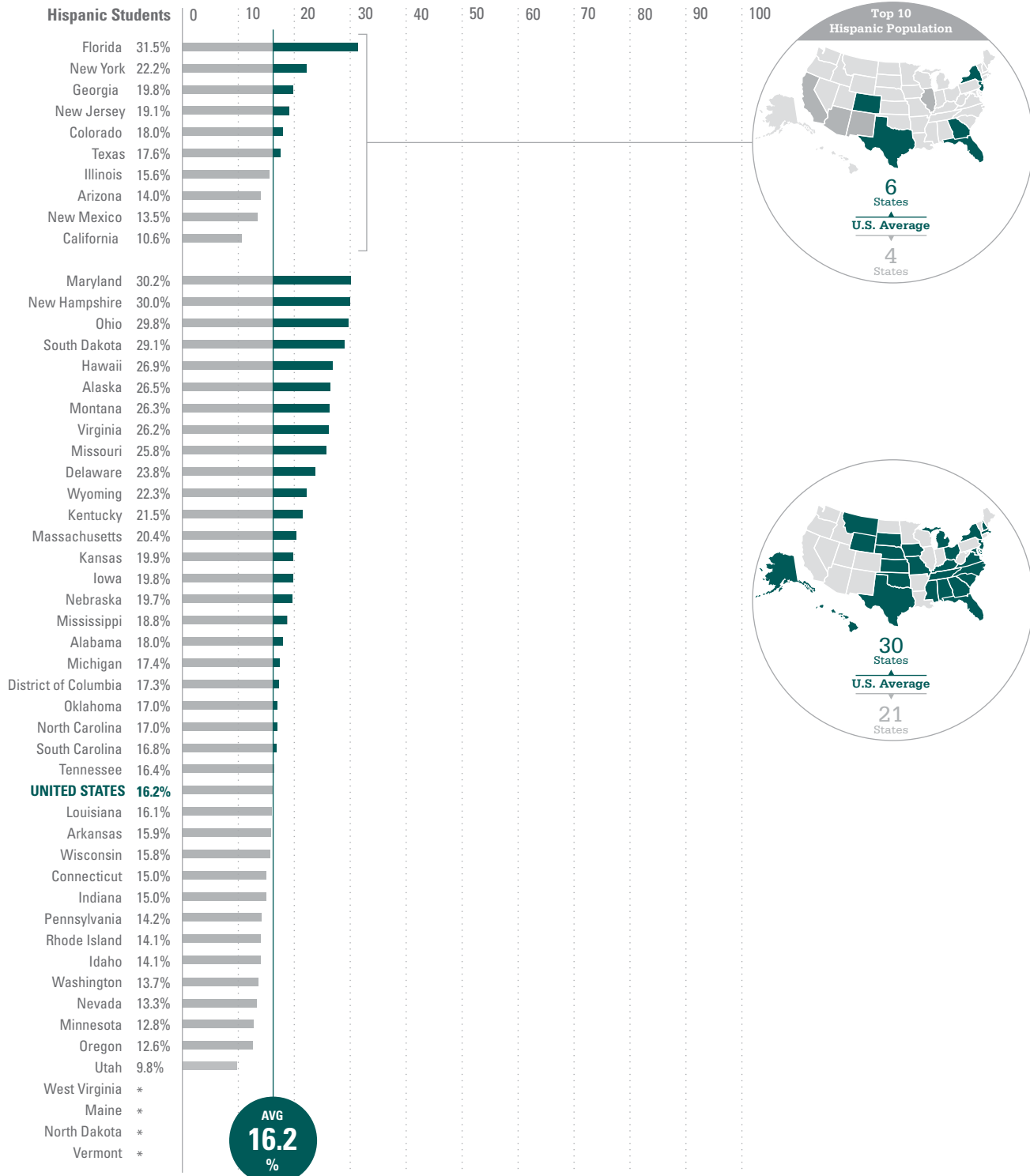
57. Contreras, 2005; Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

58. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. *Remedial Education at Degree-Granting Postsecondary Institutions in Fall 2000*, NCES 2004-010, by Basmat Parsad and Laurie Lewis. Project Officer: Bernard Greene. Washington, DC: 2003.

59. Conley, D., (2008), *Rethinking College Readiness*, Publication of EPIC Research Center.

### 3 Percentage of 4th-Grade Public School Students Who Scored At or Above the Proficient Achievement Level of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Reading, by Race/Ethnicity and State, 2009

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 and 2009 Reading Assessments, retrieved August 5, 2010, from the NAEP Data Explorer (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>).  
 Note: Achievement levels define what students should know and be able to do: Basic indicates partial mastery of fundamental skills, Proficient indicates demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, and Advanced indicates superior performance. The percentage of students at or above Proficient includes students at the Proficient and the Advanced achievement levels. Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.

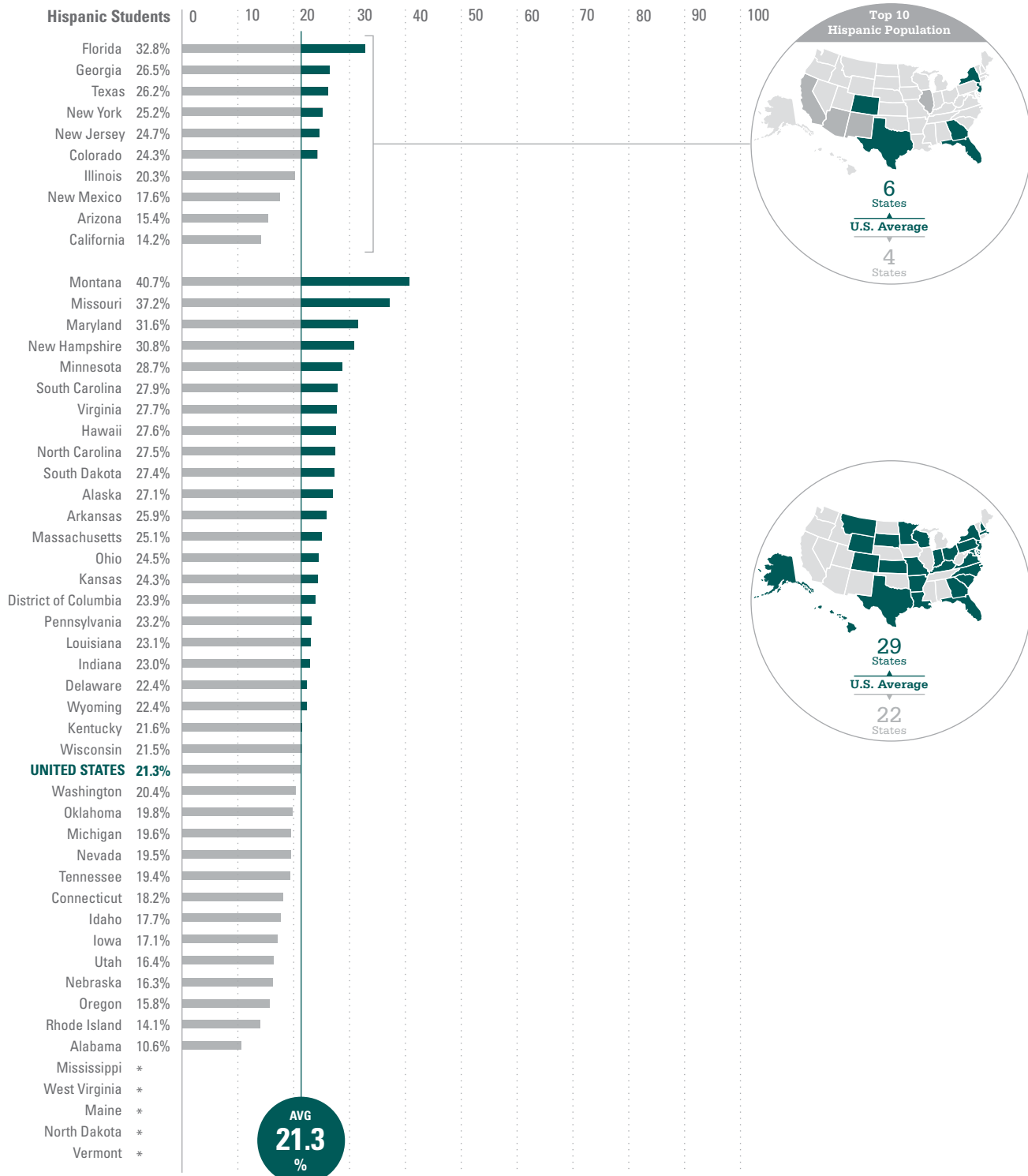


State	Total	Hispanic	American Indian/Alaska Native	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black	White
Alabama	28.2%	18.0%	*	*	13.1%	36.3%
Alaska	27.2%	26.5%	8.9%	18.8%	12.9%	38.4%
Arizona	24.7%	14.0%	11.8%	41.1%	20.4%	37.4%
Arkansas	28.8%	15.9%	*	*	13.8%	35.5%
California	23.7%	10.6%	*	48.3%	13.8%	38.6%
Colorado	40.2%	18.0%	*	52.6%	27.0%	51.3%
Connecticut	42.4%	15.0%	*	55.4%	21.6%	52.2%
Delaware	35.1%	23.8%	*	56.6%	19.2%	46.6%
District of Columbia	16.8%	17.3%	*	*	10.8%	74.6%
Florida	35.8%	31.5%	*	55.7%	18.3%	44.9%
Georgia	29.3%	19.8%	*	53.1%	15.1%	40.5%
Hawaii	25.7%	26.9%	*	22.3%	18.1%	41.8%
Idaho	32.3%	14.1%	*	33.2%	*	35.8%
Illinois	32.3%	15.6%	*	63.4%	11.4%	43.8%
Indiana	33.7%	15.0%	*	*	15.4%	38.2%
Iowa	34.2%	19.8%	*	45.9%	22.2%	36.1%
Kansas	35.1%	19.9%	*	50.2%	19.5%	40.1%
Kentucky	36.2%	21.5%	*	55.9%	13.1%	39.1%
Louisiana	18.3%	16.1%	*	*	9.2%	27.9%
Maine	35.5%	*	*	*	17.6%	36.1%
Maryland	37.1%	30.2%	*	59.2%	18.6%	49.7%
Massachusetts	47.2%	20.4%	*	56.3%	22.7%	55.7%
Michigan	29.7%	17.4%	*	42.0%	8.7%	35.7%
Minnesota	37.2%	12.8%	20.2%	33.6%	11.6%	43.3%
Mississippi	21.7%	18.8%	*	*	9.8%	35.3%
Missouri	35.7%	25.8%	*	*	16.0%	39.8%
Montana	34.6%	26.3%	16.5%	*	*	37.5%
Nebraska	34.8%	19.7%	*	40.1%	18.7%	39.7%
Nevada	24.0%	13.3%	*	37.9%	14.3%	33.5%
New Hampshire	41.3%	30.0%	*	44.9%	28.5%	42.0%
New Jersey	40.2%	19.1%	*	62.5%	18.4%	50.6%
New Mexico	19.8%	13.5%	9.8%	38.9%	13.5%	34.6%
New York	36.0%	22.2%	*	51.8%	18.4%	44.8%
North Carolina	32.2%	17.0%	18.4%	52.2%	14.4%	44.2%
North Dakota	34.8%	*	15.5%	*	*	37.1%
Ohio	35.7%	29.8%	*	*	12.9%	42.0%
Oklahoma	27.7%	17.0%	26.5%	*	10.6%	32.6%
Oregon	30.9%	12.6%	16.9%	42.8%	17.4%	35.2%
Pennsylvania	36.6%	14.2%	*	60.8%	14.5%	42.5%
Rhode Island	35.6%	14.1%	*	29.7%	17.4%	44.1%
South Carolina	27.6%	16.8%	*	*	11.5%	38.1%
South Dakota	32.8%	29.1%	11.0%	*	*	36.6%
Tennessee	28.0%	16.4%	*	*	12.1%	33.9%
Texas	27.7%	17.6%	*	52.2%	19.7%	43.3%
Utah	31.0%	9.8%	16.8%	30.0%	14.5%	35.8%
Vermont	41.4%	*	*	*	28.7%	41.6%
Virginia	38.5%	26.2%	*	56.9%	17.7%	47.4%
Washington	33.5%	13.7%	26.6%	35.3%	21.1%	40.1%
West Virginia	25.7%	*	*	*	15.6%	26.4%
Wisconsin	32.7%	15.8%	18.1%	35.6%	9.1%	38.3%
Wyoming	32.6%	22.3%	18.9%	*	*	34.1%
<b>United States</b>	<b>31.5%</b>	<b>16.2%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>48.3%</b>	<b>15.0%</b>	<b>41.1%</b>

\* Reporting standards not met.

## 4 Percentage of 4th-Grade Public School Students Who Scored At or Above the Proficient Achievement Level of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in Mathematics, by Race/Ethnicity and State, 2009

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2007 and 2009 Mathematics Assessments, retrieved August 5, 2010, from the NAEP Data Explorer (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/>).  
 Note: Achievement levels define what students should know and be able to do: Basic indicates partial mastery of fundamental skills, Proficient indicates demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, and Advanced indicates superior performance. The percentage of students at or above Proficient includes students at the Proficient and the Advanced achievement levels. Some apparent differences between estimates may not be statistically significant. Race categories exclude persons of Hispanic ethnicity.



State	Total	Hispanic	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	White
Alabama	24.5%	10.6%	*	*	7.5%	34.0%
Alaska	37.8%	27.1%	14.5%	35.1%	16.8%	52.3%
Arizona	28.0%	15.4%	13.5%	44.8%	18.5%	44.0%
Arkansas	36.3%	25.9%	*	*	11.9%	46.2%
California	30.2%	14.2%	*	61.1%	12.8%	50.6%
Colorado	45.2%	24.3%	*	50.6%	23.4%	57.0%
Connecticut	46.2%	18.2%	*	65.4%	14.1%	58.1%
Delaware	36.4%	22.4%	*	66.1%	16.8%	50.3%
District of Columbia	17.0%	23.9%	*	*	9.5%	81.4%
Florida	40.4%	32.8%	*	73.1%	20.0%	53.5%
Georgia	33.8%	26.5%	*	60.2%	14.7%	48.4%
Hawaii	36.7%	27.6%	*	34.7%	33.1%	50.6%
Idaho	40.5%	17.7%	*	*	*	44.2%
Illinois	37.6%	20.3%	*	73.2%	10.9%	51.6%
Indiana	41.6%	23.0%	*	*	12.6%	47.6%
Iowa	41.4%	17.1%	*	66.1%	17.4%	44.7%
Kansas	46.3%	24.3%	*	64.5%	18.5%	54.6%
Kentucky	36.5%	21.6%	*	68.9%	14.1%	39.2%
Louisiana	22.8%	23.1%	*	*	8.5%	36.7%
Maine	45.0%	*	*	*	27.8%	45.6%
Maryland	43.7%	31.6%	*	66.7%	20.9%	60.2%
Massachusetts	56.8%	25.1%	*	69.8%	30.2%	66.6%
Michigan	35.1%	19.6%	*	55.0%	9.1%	42.7%
Minnesota	53.8%	28.7%	27.0%	43.5%	25.2%	61.2%
Mississippi	22.2%	*	*	*	8.3%	37.4%
Missouri	41.1%	37.2%	*	61.6%	17.1%	46.1%
Montana	45.5%	40.7%	22.9%	*	*	48.8%
Nebraska	37.9%	16.3%	*	55.4%	9.9%	45.5%
Nevada	32.1%	19.5%	*	44.7%	11.9%	46.2%
New Hampshire	55.7%	30.8%	*	67.1%	*	57.0%
New Jersey	48.8%	24.7%	*	71.6%	19.3%	63.3%
New Mexico	26.2%	17.6%	13.6%	*	19.5%	46.7%
New York	40.2%	25.2%	*	67.4%	18.5%	49.6%
North Carolina	43.2%	27.5%	30.4%	61.9%	18.0%	58.5%
North Dakota	44.5%	*	16.6%	*	*	48.6%
Ohio	45.3%	24.5%	*	*	13.5%	54.0%
Oklahoma	32.7%	19.8%	28.5%	*	13.6%	39.5%
Oregon	37.1%	15.8%	15.0%	48.0%	17.8%	43.2%
Pennsylvania	45.5%	23.2%	*	62.5%	17.3%	53.5%
Rhode Island	39.4%	14.1%	*	40.1%	14.8%	49.7%
South Carolina	34.0%	27.9%	*	*	14.3%	46.3%
South Dakota	41.8%	27.4%	15.3%	*	16.6%	47.5%
Tennessee	28.4%	19.4%	*	*	7.0%	35.9%
Texas	38.4%	26.2%	*	71.1%	23.1%	60.7%
Utah	41.2%	16.4%	17.2%	38.7%	14.9%	47.7%
Vermont	50.7%	*	*	*	*	51.4
Virginia	42.5%	27.7%	*	63.9%	16.5%	53.6%
Washington	43.2%	20.4%	20.6%	55.5%	23.7%	50.5%
West Virginia	28.1%	*	*	*	19.6%	28.5%
Wisconsin	45.1%	21.5%	20.7%	38.7%	11.5%	53.5%
Wyoming	40.5%	22.4%	*	*	*	44.1%
<b>United States</b>	<b>38.4%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>22.8%</b>	<b>60.6%</b>	<b>15.4%</b>	<b>50.5%</b>

\* Reporting standards not met.

# Cinco

**WE RECOMMEND** that states, localities and the federal government step up to the crisis in teaching by providing market-competitive salaries, creating multiple pathways into teaching, and fixing the math and science crisis.

Latino children are the most likely to attend poorly resourced schools with teachers who do not possess advanced degrees and who have the least teaching experience in the profession.<sup>60</sup> More than 48 percent of Latinos attend high schools where over 76 percent of students qualify for the free and reduced-price lunch program, suggesting higher poverty rates and fewer community resources for the schools that Latino students attend. This translates into limited learning opportunities for Latino students, particularly the students who are designated as English language learners. Even fewer teachers have the capacity to serve ELL students in public schools despite the ever-increasing demand to serve bilingual and bicultural students.<sup>61</sup>

In schools where 76 to 100 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunches, 38 percent of secondary teachers possessed an advanced degree compared to 52 percent of secondary teachers in schools with less than 25 percent of their student body qualifying for free and reduced-price lunches.<sup>62</sup> Latino students are most likely to attend Low Resource (LR) schools where more than 76 percent of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunches.<sup>63</sup>

60. Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *Flat World and Education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

61. Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Gandara P., & Gibson, M., (2010). *Forbidden Language*. New York: Teachers College Press.

62. Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Drake, L. (2010). *The Condition of Education 2010 (NCES 2010-028)*. National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC, Table A-27-3.

63. *Ibid.*, Table A-27-3.

In addition to lower academic qualifications, Latino students are more likely to be taught by teachers that do not possess a degree in the content area in which they are teaching and by school teachers without the appropriate certification. For example, LR elementary schools were more likely to have a higher percentage of teachers with probationary (5.1 percent) or temporary waivers or emergency credentials (6.4 percent).<sup>64</sup> At the secondary level, 5.2 percent of teachers had probationary certification and 5.7 percent were temporary or emergency waiver teachers.<sup>65</sup> Close to half of Latino students are therefore attending schools where teachers are less likely to have advanced degrees or lack the appropriate certification to teach altogether. Improving teacher quality is therefore a critical component of raising Latino student achievement in the K–12 sector and increasing the number of Latino students who transition to and persist successfully through college.

### **The Need to Diversify the Teacher Workforce**

Teachers who are from underrepresented communities are most likely to identify with the communities of their students, serve as role models, and engage in culturally responsive pedagogy. A culturally responsive environment minimizes student alienation in the classroom and ultimately leads to greater student engagement with school.<sup>66</sup> More than 80 percent of the teacher population is white, despite the declining enrollments of this population in the K–12 sector, and suggests the need for targeted recruitment across states witnessing the most dramatic growth in Latino students. The value of having diverse teachers in schools is considerable, and extends beyond the benefits to Latino students. Diverse teachers bring different perspectives to their instructional approaches and have also been found to serve as a bridge between the school and community.<sup>67</sup> Combined efforts of raising teacher quality and effectiveness, contributing to ongoing professional development opportunities, retaining good teachers, and expanding the teacher workforce to include more bilingual and bicultural teachers who speak Spanish are efforts that have the greatest likelihood of increasing the transition to college and postsecondary completion rates for Latinos.

64. NCES, 2010, *The Condition of Education*.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Ladson-Billings, G., 1994, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*.

67. Lilia D. Monzó & Robert S. Rueda, 2001. Professional Roles, Caring, and Scaffolds: Latino Teachers' and Paraeducators' Interactions with Latino Students. *American Journal of Education*. Vol. 109, No. 4 (Aug., 2001), pp. 438-471.

# Seis

**WE RECOMMEND** that public and private institutions of higher education continue to uphold the highest professional standards in admission and financial aid and collaborate to make the admission process more transparent and less complex.

Latino students and their families would benefit from making more online college applications, financial aid and informational materials available in both English and Spanish. Broadening the “college knowledge” among prospective Latino students and their parents is necessary to increase the percentage of Latino students transitioning immediately to college after high school.<sup>68</sup> This includes translation services, which should be routinely available at college outreach programs. Providing materials in both English and Spanish for students and their families would send a powerful message of inclusion and commitment to raising Latino application and enrollment rates. While college knowledge among Latino students varies, it is considerably lower than that of their peers, largely due to the larger proportion of Latinos having first-generation status and coming from low-income backgrounds.<sup>69</sup>

Latino students, similar to other ethnic groups, begin thinking about college during elementary school<sup>70</sup>. However, their aspirations often do not translate into reality. College awareness must be accompanied by targeted efforts to increase academic achievement in earlier grade levels to make sure that Latino students are college ready by the fall of their senior year. In California, the work of the Campaign for College Opportunity through its “Save Me a Spot in College Pledge” and other advocacy efforts have focused attention on early preparation and opportunity for all students to attend college.<sup>71</sup> Similar campaigns can make an impact in other states with high Latino student populations. Therefore, direct

68. Vargas, 2004.

69. Vargas, 2004.

70. Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project, Senior Survey Data from 2000-2010.

71. <http://www.collegecampaign.org/our-work/early-commitment-to-college/>

steps to broaden “college knowledge” among prospective Latino students are necessary to increase the percentage of Latino students transitioning immediately to college after high school (See Figure 8 under Recommendation 9).<sup>72</sup>

College selection is often a family decision; therefore, it is important to develop effective ways to engage the parents as partners in the preparation and application processes. Cultural nuances also contribute to decisions made about college enrollment, and being culturally sensitive can make a major difference in convincing a student to leave home or a parent to take out a loan. Translation services are not routinely made available at student and parent college outreach sessions, but these services would help to alleviate parent concerns about sending their children to college.

By providing materials in both English and Spanish for students and their families, as well as expanding the mode of content delivery (online resources also in Spanish), would not only more effectively convey important information, but would broaden their pool of applicants by increasing their level of accessibility to Latino students and their families. In addition, understanding regional cultural differences within the Latino community would also help admission and financial aid officers when they communicate with Latino students and their families. Bilingual staff members are integral to the recruitment and retention effort for institutions.

### **Take the Mystery Out of What Constitutes Merit**

Another valuable step to clarify the admission process relates to the mystery surrounding the qualifications necessary for admission, particularly to selective institutions. For high-achieving Latinos in particular, this information is especially relevant to their college choice processes. Increasing the enrollment rates of Latino high achievers to selective institutions is a viable means for increasing college completion among this population, since selective postsecondary institutions graduate higher percentages of their underrepresented students.<sup>73</sup> However, many students are unaware of the specific attributes and variables, or “what constitutes merit,” at selective institutions.<sup>74</sup> Many universities and systems provide only baseline requirements, but not information about what makes an applicant “competitively eligible” for admission to selective colleges.<sup>75</sup> For example, not all Latino students are aware that taking AP or IB courses in high school serves as a signal to colleges about a student’s aptitude for college level course work. In addition, few first-generation students know that participating in dual enrollment programs may give them a boost in admission processes at many selective institutions. Although many selective institutions

72. Vargas, Joel H. 2004. *College Knowledge: Addressing Information Barriers to College*. Boston, MA: College Access Services: The Education Resources Institute (TERI). [www.teri.org](http://www.teri.org); Contreras, 2011.

73. Carnevale & Rose, 2003; Fry, 2004, *Latino Youth Finishing College: The Role of Selective Pathways*. Pew Latino Research Center.

74. Contreras, F., (2005). *The Reconstruction of Merit Post Proposition 209*. *Educational Policy*. Sage Publications.

75. Contreras, 2005, 2011.

and flagships have holistic review processes, many admission offices have developed and utilize their own rubrics for rating student achievement. Taking the mystery out of this process for students would expand student knowledge about the admission process and the steps they can take to prepare and build a strong case for admission.

Selective institutions also tend to have multiple deadlines, such as those they designate as an “early admission” deadline. For a first-generation Latino family, going through a process with multiple deadlines and trying to understand the importance of each deadline (early decision versus early admission versus rolling, etc.) can be overwhelming. It is important for institutions to fully explain this new vocabulary and the processes that many families do not encounter unless their children apply to selective institutions. The language and the messages can confuse Latino families and limit access.

Since most Latino students are enrolled in less selective colleges<sup>76</sup> increasing enrollment in more selective institutions requires targeted outreach efforts. It must be kept in mind that Latinos do not constitute a monolith and that college knowledge can vary based on many factors that include first generation and income status.<sup>77</sup> Providing Latino students and their families with tangible information about college preparation and practices would not only make them academically competitive for admission or transfer (e.g., AP course enrollment, extracurricular activities, sports) but also would serve to demystify the admission process, especially at selective institutions.

76. Rising to the Challenge Hispanic College Graduation Rates as a National Priority. American Enterprise Institute, 2010 Authors' calculations based on data for first-time, full-time students in three incoming classes (1999, 2000, and 2001) of 641 colleges studied, as reported in the NCES IPEDS.

77. Vargas, 2004.

# Siete

**WE RECOMMEND** that federal and state officials encourage increased access by providing more need-based grant aid while simplifying the financial aid system and making it more transparent and predictable, and finding ways to inform families, as early as the middle school years, of aid amounts likely to be available to individual students.

Providing additional need-based grant aid to low-income Latino students would lead to a greater proportion of Latinos persisting and graduating from college. Several studies have found financial aid to be a significant predictor of college success and completion for Latinos, allowing them to fully integrate into the academic and social infrastructure of the institution.<sup>78</sup>

The reality for many Latino students in college today is that work is central to their college experience. A study by Cunningham and Santiago (2008) found that Latino students received the least amount of financial aid compared to their peers, but were more likely to be debt averse.<sup>79</sup> As a result, many Latino students choose a pay-as-you-go approach to financing their college education.<sup>80</sup> More than 73 percent of Latino students attending college part time are employed and are likely to work more than 35 hours a week (43 percent).<sup>81</sup>

78. Cabrera, A.F., La Nasa, S.M., & Castaneda, M.B. (1993). College persistence: Structural equation modeling test of an integrated model. *Journal of Higher Education*, 64(2) 123-139. Perna, L., (1998), The Contribution of Financial Aid to Undergraduate *Persistence*. *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, v28 n3 p25-40 Fall 1998; Nora, A. (2004). The role of habitus and cultural capital in choosing a college, transitioning from high school to higher education, and persisting in college among minority and non-minority students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 3(2), 180-208.

79. Cunningham, A. & Santiago, D. (2008) Student Aversion to Borrowing: Who Borrows Who Doesn't. Publication of the Institute for Higher Education Policy and Ed Excelencia.

80. Ibid.

81. U.S. Department of Commerce, Census Bureau, Current Population Survey (CPS), October Supplement, 2008; NCES, Table A-45-2.

Over 60 percent of Latino students begin their postsecondary studies at a community college, often with the intent to transfer to four-year institutions. These students are likely to work and attend college part time. Given that fact that Latinos are the less likely than their peers to borrow and less likely to receive high amounts of grant aid, the pattern of working long hours and attending college part time leads to lower completion rates.

The largest proportion of financial aid available to low-income students in 2010 was loans (48.6 percent), with federal and state grant aid representing 18.6 percent of financial aid awards. Institutional grant aid accounted for 16.8 percent of financial aid awards. In fact, the greatest growth in aid over the past decade has been in the form of student loans.<sup>82</sup> The greater reliance on loans to meet the needs of low-income students is problematic because researchers have found loans to have a negative effect on student persistence.<sup>83</sup> In addition to attending college part time or working full time while in college, loans are among the top factors that have adverse affects on degree completion.<sup>84</sup> Given that Latinos are less likely than their peers to borrow and less likely to receive high amounts of grant aid, the pattern of working long hours and attending college part time is an area for targeted reform and investment.

### State Grant Aid Programs

Latino and other underrepresented students are less likely than their peers to receive state merit aid, and their award amounts are lower than that received by their peers. According to the 2008 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, most Latino students awarded merit aid received grants of less than \$1,200. Latino students are at a competitive disadvantage for merit aid awards for many reasons, including limited access to a rigorous high school curriculum.<sup>85</sup> States would benefit from a more expansive definition of merit — one that includes criteria that consider need, first-generation status, ELL status, or other factors that identify the student's ability to persist despite barriers to college transition.<sup>86</sup>

### Simplify the Financial Aid Process

The Federal Student Aid Commission, states, postsecondary institutions, local districts and communities play a collective role in simplifying the financial aid process and making information broadly available in both English and Spanish for Latino students and their parents.<sup>87</sup>

82. Trends in Student Aid, 2010. The College Board.

83. Dowd, A. C., & Coury, T. (2006). The effect of loans on the persistence and attainment of community college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 47(1), 33-62; Gladieux, L., and L. Perna. (2005). *Borrowers Who Drop Out: A Neglected Aspect of the College Student Loan Trend*. San Jose, CA: National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. 2005.

84. Gladieux & Perna, 2005.

85. Solorzano, Daniel Gilbert.

Ornelas, Armida.

*A Critical Race Analysis of Latina/o and African American Advanced Placement Enrollment in Public High Schools*

The High School Journal - Volume 87, Number 3, February-March 2004, pp.15-26; Contreras, 2011, *Achieving Equity for Latino Students*. New York: Teachers College Press.

86. Ibid.

87. Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

While steps are already underway by the federal government to simplify the FAFSA, conveying clear information related to both college costs and financial aid is also critical for students and their families.<sup>88</sup> In a study of more than 400 Latino youth in California, students cited the complexity of the FAFSA as a barrier to accessing aid programs.<sup>89</sup> In addition, Latino parents and students, like many first-generation students, overestimate the cost of college<sup>90</sup>. As a result, many students and their families consider a college education unattainable.<sup>91</sup>

Some colleges and universities have created virtual financial aid offices for students where several questions related to financial aid are available online. However, this alone cannot solve the information gap that exists in the financial aid process for Latino and low-income students. In a study of low-income, urban high school students in California, for example, Venegas found that access to computers and the Internet is an insufficient answer to the digital divide that exists within the Latino community. In addition, both students and parents are often suspicious of websites not linked to a specific college and are reluctant to provide information over the internet.<sup>92</sup> Thus, current virtual approaches by online financial aid offices that offer tools to estimate college costs by entering earnings or employment information creates anxiety and fear among Latino students and their families, given the anti-Latino, anti-immigrant climate in many states.

Simplifying application processes, increasing access to information in English and Spanish and having information sessions in Spanish for parents in schools and community settings are vital approaches to raising awareness about actual costs and financial aid opportunities available to Latino students.

88. Zarate, M., & Fabienke, D., (2007) Financial Aid as a Perceived Barrier to College for Latino Students. *American Academic* Vol. 3 pp. 129-140. ; Zarate, M. E., and H. P. Pachon. (2006). *Perceptions of College Financial Aid Among California Latino Youth*. Los Angeles, CA: Tomas Rivera Policy Institute.

89. Zarate & Pachon, 2006.

90. Perna, 2004; Zarate & Pachon, 2006; Grodsky, E., & Jones., M. (2004). Real and Imagined Barriers to College Entry: Perceptions of Cost. *Social Science Research* 36:745–766.

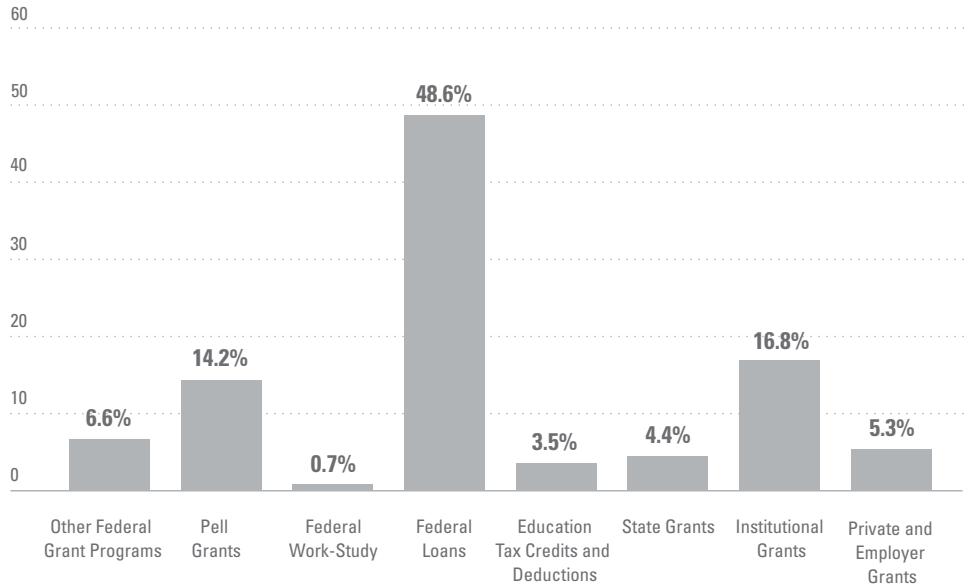
91. Zarate & Pachon, 2006.

92. Venegas, K., (2006). Internet Inequalities: Financial Aid, the Internet, and Low-Income Students. *American Behavioral Scientist* 49(12):1652–1669.

5

### Percentage of Total Student Aid by Source, 2010

Source: The College Board, Trends in Student Aid, 2010



# Ocho

**WE RECOMMEND** restraining growth in college costs and prices, using available aid and resources wisely, and insisting that state governments meet their obligations for funding higher education.

The rising cost of a college education serves as a barrier to college persistence and completion among Latinos. Affordability is therefore a central component to raising college enrollment and completion rates among Latino students across institutional sectors.

State appropriations per full-time enrollment (FTE) for higher education continue to decline across the United States, leaving colleges and universities with few mechanisms to fund public institutions (Figure 6). The primary response across public two- and four-year institutions to declining state revenue has been to raise tuition rates, a trend that has held steady since 1980 (Figure 7). Students are shouldering the burden of state fiscal shortfalls at a time when the United States increasingly needs a college-educated workforce.

For Latino students, such shifts in higher education financing further contributes to their likelihood of choosing community colleges, many of which are Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs), to begin their postsecondary pathway. This enables them to work in order to pay for school and remain in community contexts close to their families.<sup>93</sup> In fact, in a study that examined college choice processes of Latino students, Santiago found that close to half of all Latinos who are enrolled in postsecondary institutions attend Hispanic-Serving Institutions; citing both cost and location as the primary reasons for their college choices.<sup>94</sup>

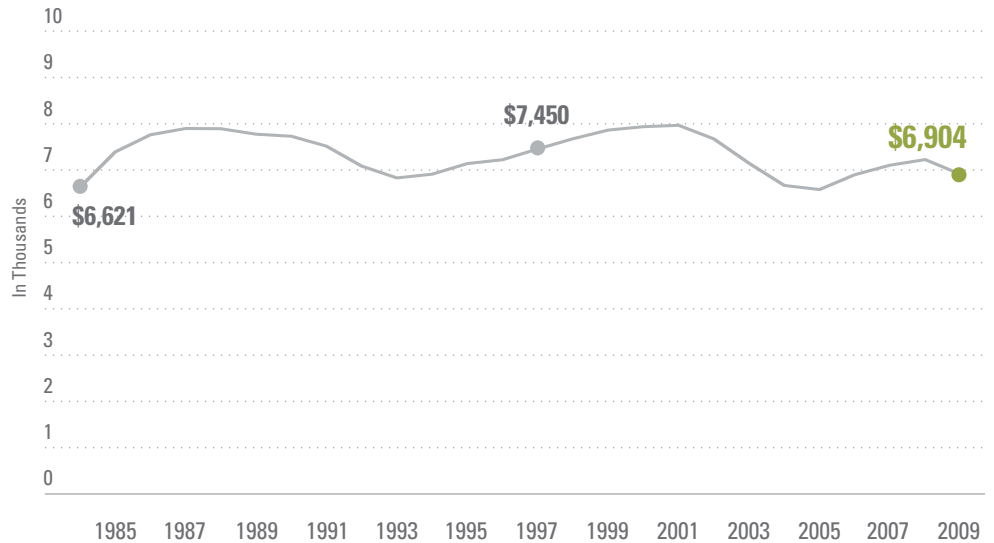
93. Contreras, Malcom & Bensimon, 2008; Gandara & Contreras, 2009; Santiago, 2007.

94. Santiago, 2007.

6

**Educational Fiscal Support per FTE, 1984–2009  
(In 2009 Constant Dollars)**

Source: State Higher Education Finance, State Higher Education, Executive Officers, 2010  
 Note: Constant 2009 dollars adjusted by SHEEO Higher Education Cost Adjustment. 2009 Educational Appropriations include ARRA funds. (HECA) Source: SSDB

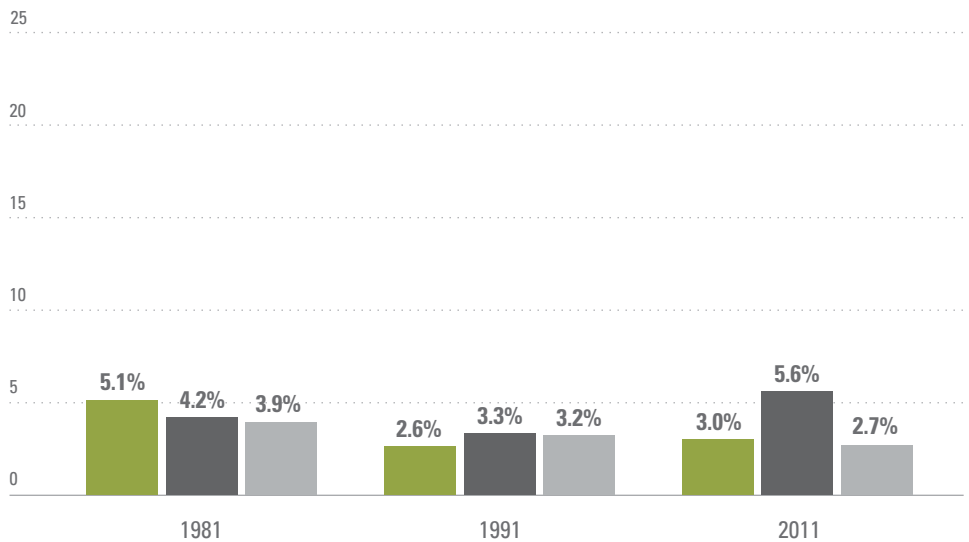


7

**Average Annual Percentage Increase in Inflation-Adjusted Published Prices by Decade, 1980–1981 to 2010–2011**

- Private, 4-Year
- Public, 4-Year
- Public, 2-Year

Source: The College Board, Trends in College Pricing, 2010



# Nueve

**WE RECOMMEND** that institutions of higher education set out to dramatically increase college completion rates by improving retention, easing transfer among institutions and implementing data-based strategies to identify retention and dropout challenges.

Increasing Latino college completion rates calls for direct investment in academic support programs, financial aid, and the broader student services infrastructure at two- and four-year institutions to ensure student retention and success. Many intervention programs that work to raise Latino student achievement and engagement in the K–12 sector, for example, primarily focus on college transition. Few programs follow the student through higher education, ensuring degree attainment.<sup>95</sup> In order to dramatically increase college completion rates, states must increase the pool of Latino students transitioning to college, provide academic supports for Latinos in college and effectively partner with Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) to address the needs of Latino students in higher education.

### **Increase the Pool of Latino Students That Transition to College**

The proportion of Latino students that transition to college is low compared to the composition of Latino students in the K–12 system. Although Latinos represent the largest growth in the K–12 system, the rates of immediate transition to college remain lower than that of their white peers (Figure 8). Since 2006, a greater percentage of Latinos have transitioned to college compared to African American high school completers, but Latinos still lag considerably behind their white peers.

95. Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

## 8

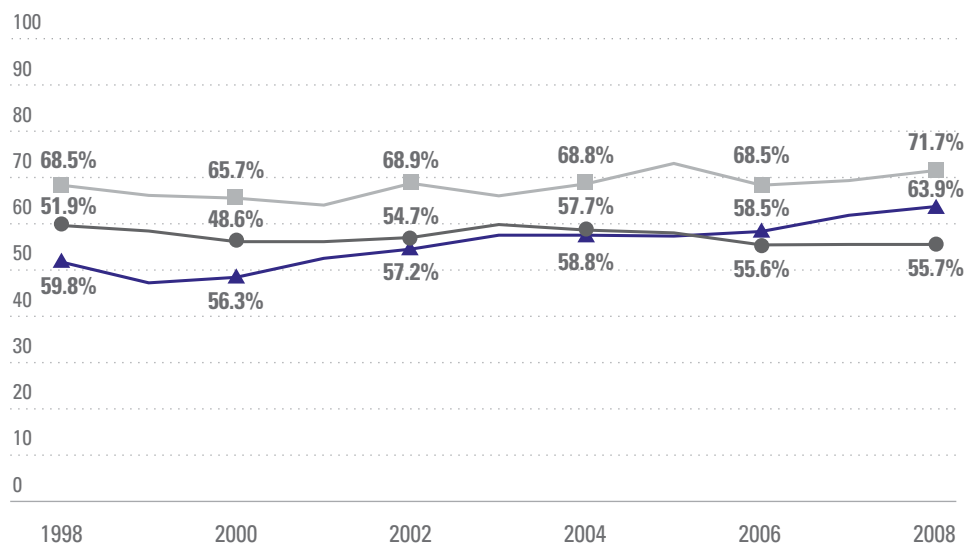
### Percentage of High School Completers Enrolled in Two- or Four-Year Colleges Immediately Following High School Completion by Race/Ethnicity<sup>1</sup>, 1998–2008

▲ Hispanic  
● African American  
■ White

Source: NCES, Condition of Education, 2010

Note: High school completer refers to those who received a high school diploma or equivalency certificate. This indicator provides data on high school completers ages 16–24, who account for about 98 percent of all high school completers in a given year.

(1) Due to unreliable (or unstable) estimates associated with small sample sizes for the low-income, Black, and Hispanic categories, moving average rates are presented. These rates were generally calculated as the average of the annual rates for the following 3 adjacent years: the year in question, the year immediately before it, and the year immediately after it.



Increasing the pool of Latino students who transition to college immediately after high school is therefore an important first step towards integrating Latino students into postsecondary pathways. In addition, greater attention to Latino male college enrollment is an important consideration, as Latino males are now less likely than Latinas to enroll in college altogether (Figure 9).<sup>96</sup> Initiatives and support that target males would prevent what Saenz and Ponjuan call “the vanishing Latino male in higher education,”<sup>97</sup> and would integrate this group to optimally contribute to creating sustainable Latino communities with their Latina counterparts.

#### Retention: The Need for Academic Support in College

Because Latino students attend schools that are largely segregated and poorly resourced, transitioning to college successfully requires academic support in college. Retention rates for Latino students in higher education are the lowest compared to the college-going population. Latino students are more likely

96. Lee, J.M. and Ransom, T. (2011). *The Educational Experience of Young Men of Color: A Review of Research, Pathways and Progress*. New York: The College Board.

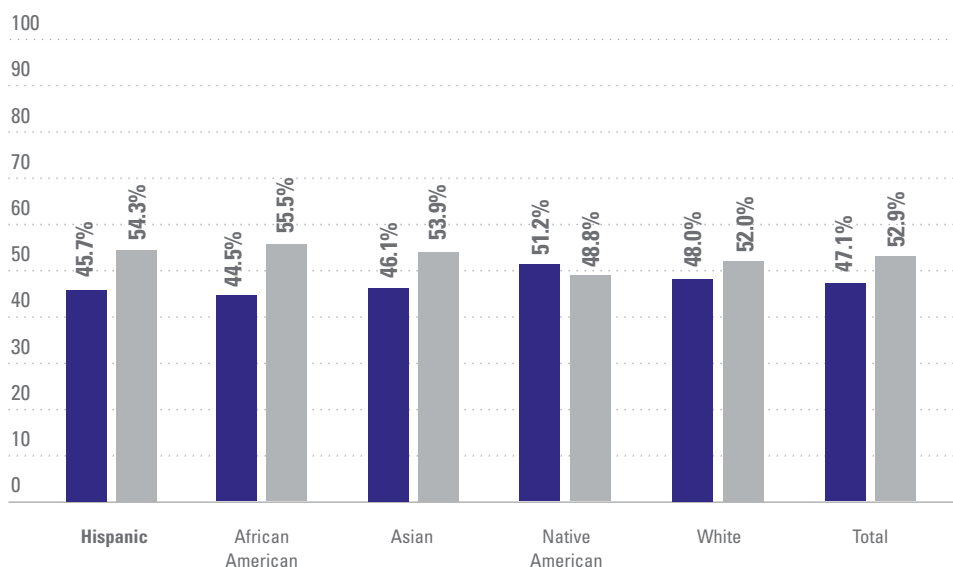
97. Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009.

9

**Enrollment Status of High School Graduates 15 to 24 Years Old by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, 2008**

■ Male  
■ Female

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 2008.  
Note: Weights corrected May 2010



to drop out of college and only half as likely as their white peers to earn a bachelor’s degree.<sup>98</sup> According to a study conducted by the Pew Latino Research Center, attending college part time, contributing financially to their families while in college and living at home contribute to Latino graduation rates.<sup>99</sup>

Inadequate preparation for college level course work is another factor predicting college retention and success. Remediation, the institutional response to under preparation, is an important part of the college experience for many low-income, first-generation students. For the 1992 cohort of 12th-grade students entering higher education, 20.3 percent of Latinos required remedial courses, with the majority of Latino students needing more than two remedial classes while in college.<sup>100</sup> The fact that one in five Latinos is enrolled in at least one remedial course in college affirms the need for greater alignment with the K–12 sector to reduce inequities, but this also raises the need for targeted efforts to ensure that students persist despite the need for remediation.

Direct programmatic supports to ensure academic progress are especially crucial in the community college sector, since approximately half (49 percent) of Latinos attend community colleges.<sup>101</sup> The need for remediation is the greatest in this sector and completion rates for Latinos who start in community colleges are the lowest across all racial/ethnic groups.<sup>102</sup> Promising results from select notable

98. Fry, 2004.

99. Ibid.

100. NCES, 2004. Table 18-1.

101. Lee & Rawls, 2010, The College Completion Agenda.

102. Lee & Rawls, 2010, The College Completion Agenda.

studies have found remedial classes to increase persistence rates among students in the early years of college.<sup>103</sup> However, when examining community college students in the Florida state system, Calcagno and Long found that while courses in reading and math led to persistence early in students' careers and in the overall total number of credits earned over six years of college, they did not lead to higher passing rates among students at the margin of placement exam cutoff scores.<sup>104</sup>

Focusing on raising the academic skills necessary to succeed in college would complement existing efforts for students in remedial courses and provide the additional support necessary for students on the margin to pass the placement test cutoff scores in order to transition out of remedial curriculum.

### **Partner with Hispanic Serving Institutions to Raise Completion Rates**

Hispanic Serving Institutions play a critical role in college access for Latino students. In fact 49.8 percent of all Latino students are enrolled in HSIs, the majority of which are two-year institutions.<sup>105</sup> Latino students are transforming higher education institutions and have contributed to the expansion of this sector.<sup>106</sup> Meeting students where they are — attending two- and four-year HSIs — is a viable strategy for states and the nation to invest resources in this sector to raise completion rates.

While many Latino students attend HSIs, this sector requires special attention to ensure equitable outcomes for students, particularly supporting an infrastructure for student success.<sup>107</sup> Although Latinos constitute a sizable proportion of HSIs, their three-year graduation rates, transfer rates to four-year institutions, and transition rates out of remedial classes remain a challenge for many HSIs. Since the majority of HSIs are community colleges, Latinos are less than twice as likely to complete their bachelor's degrees when compared to their white peers beginning in the same two-year institutions.<sup>108</sup> In addition, in an exploratory study examining student outcomes between Latinos and their peers across select STEM majors at two- and four-year HSIs, Latinos were less likely to have equitable outcomes with respect to retention in their majors and degree completions.<sup>109</sup> At the same time, student satisfaction levels or sense of belonging are high at HSIs compared to predominantly white institutions.

103. See Bettinger, E., & Long, B. (2009). Addressing the Needs of Underprepared Students in Higher Education: Does College Remediation Work?," *Journal of Human Resources*, University of Wisconsin Press, vol. 44(3); Calcagno, J.C. & Long, B.T. (2008). The impact of postsecondary remediation using a regression discontinuity approach: Addressing endogenous sorting and noncompliance. New York, NY: National Center for Postsecondary Research.

104. Calcagno, J.C. & Long, B.T. (2008). The impact of postsecondary remediation using a regression discontinuity approach: Addressing endogenous sorting and noncompliance. New York, NY: National Center for Postsecondary Research.

105. NCES, 2007.

106. Santiago, 2007.

107. Contreras, F., Bensimon, E., Malcom, L. (2008). An Equity-Based Accountability Framework for Hispanic

Serving Institutions. In Gasman, M. Baez, B., Turner, C., *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Understanding Minority Serving Institutions*. Suny Press (pp. 71-90).

108. Swail, Cabrera & Lee, 2004.

109. Ibid.

HSIs attract Latino students due to their accessibility and affordability. As such, this sector would benefit from partnership with and investment from states and the federal government to provide these institutions with the resources necessary to strengthen their infrastructure to better address the academic needs of Latino students and ensure equity in graduation outcomes.

### **The Role of Institutional Climate**

College climates play a critical role in student adjustment, persistence, achievement and graduation.<sup>110</sup> In particular, if students perceived a hostile climate toward diversity at the college they attended, regardless of institutional type, they experienced greater difficulty academically and socially and were less likely to acquire a sense of belonging at the institution.<sup>111</sup> Another study conducted by Nora and Cabrera across nine public institutions throughout the United States found that student perceptions of racism and discrimination within the college were associated with academic achievement, faculty interaction and commitment to remain at the college.<sup>112</sup> They further found that Latino students were more likely than their peers to experience discrimination both in the classroom and on campus. In fact, over 18 percent of the Latino students examined in this study were more likely than their white peers to hear faculty members make comments and apply stereotypes to different racial and ethnic groups.<sup>113</sup> Climate, therefore — with respect to discriminatory practices by institutional actors — plays a key role in persistence and college completion.

Hurtado and Ponjuan, using data from nine public institutions, examined Latino student perceptions of climate as well as the behaviors of Latino students in their sample. Among their key findings, Latino students who spoke Spanish at home were more likely to perceive a hostile climate than English-dominant speakers.<sup>114</sup> In addition, Latino students who took courses emphasizing diversity were more likely than those who had not taken such curriculum to report a greater sense of belonging.<sup>115</sup> Finally, participating in academic support programs on campus were positive and significant predictors of Latino students' self-ratings of analytical skills. Academic support programs in college played a role in building students' self-confidence in their academic ability,<sup>116</sup> which suggests the potential for intervention efforts for Latino students while in college.

110. Hurtado, S., Carter, D.F., & Spuler, A. (1996). Latino student transition to college: Assessing difficulties and factors in successful college adjustment. *Research in Higher Education*, 37(2), 135-157; Hurtado, S. & Ponjuan, L. (2005). Latino educational outcomes and the campus climate. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 4(3), 235-251.

111. Hurtado, Carter & Spuler, 1996.

112. Nora & Cabrera, 1996.

113. *Ibid.*

114. Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005, p. 244.

115. *Ibid.*, p. 245.

116. *Ibid.*, p. 248.

Institutional climate also plays a role in the selection of colleges by students. Latino students select institutions, largely HSIs for example, based on proximity, price and accessibility.<sup>117</sup> Perceived climate is related to the “open access” feature of many HSIs, particularly the two-year institutions. Because there is a critical mass of Latino students at HSIs, the perceived climate among students is that the institution is accessible to the Latino community. Predominantly white institutions, therefore, may learn how to attract Latino students from HSIs that are successful in graduating Latino students. However, moving beyond climate and perceived access, toward equitable educational outcomes,<sup>118</sup> remains both a challenge and opportunity for HSIs to become a leader in raising Latino college completion rates.

### **The Need for a Federal DREAM Act**

Passing a federal DREAM Act would enable undocumented students across the country to pay in-state tuition. Only 10 states have DREAM Act legislation, limiting the opportunity to earn postsecondary degrees for a relatively small, yet highly persistent and high-achieving pool of Latino students. California’s lead in providing access to financial aid through the California DREAM Act (AB130) on July 25, 2011 is a promising example for states, as they seek to maximize their pool of high achievers that remain in their respective home states and expand the base of educated workers.

For undocumented students, scholars have found that limited access to financial resources as well as the rising costs to attend college, represent significant barriers to college attainment for a student population that considers the United States home.<sup>119</sup> Passing a federal DREAM Act would allow undocumented students to pay in-state tuition across all institutional types, provide a pathway to citizenship, and serve as an incentive for this population to earn postsecondary degrees.

117. Santiago, D. (2007). Choosing Latino Serving Institutions (HSIs). A Publication of *Excelencia* in Education.

118. Bensimon, 2005; Contreras, Malcom & Bensimon, 2008.

119. Contreras, 2011; Gonzales, 2009; Perez, 2009; Gandara & Contreras, 2009.

# Diez

**WE RECOMMEND** a renewed commitment to adult education opportunities, one that supplements existing basic skills training and General Educational Development opportunities with a new “honors GED,” and better coordination of federal and state efforts to provide adult education, veterans benefits, outreach programs and student aid.

According to the National Community College Summit in 2010, “nontraditional” adult students represent the “new norm” in higher education.<sup>120</sup> Many adults are returning to school to earn a degree, to acquire the skills to enter a new profession and to gain skills that are valuable to the increasingly competitive labor market.

“Nontraditional” adult learners are broadly defined by NCES as students who have delayed college enrollment, have dependents, attend part time, work full time, are single parents, lack a high school diploma and are financially independent from their parents.<sup>121</sup>

Because Latinos are less likely to participate in adult education programs than their African American or white peers, broadening access to information about the availability of online adult education programs and translating content into Spanish is likely to expand the pool of Latinos enrolling in these programs.

120. White House Summit on Community Colleges, October 5, 2010, Closing Session.

121. NCES, 2002.

Of the Latinos enrolled in adult education programs, the majority are likely to enroll in job or career-related courses (25 percent in 2005), English as a second language instruction (approximately 1.1 million in 2007) or adult basic education programs (942,000 in 2007).<sup>122</sup> In addition, more than half of Latinos enroll in courses for informal learning or personal interest (57.5 percent in 2005). Utilizing ESL and adult basic education programs to expose adult learners to the variety of degree options that exist through community colleges and pathways to transfer are plausible approaches to increasing degree attainment among adult learners.

### **Integrate Latino Veterans into Higher Education at Faster Rates**

The Latino community has a long-standing history of service in all branches of the military. Latino veterans represent an untapped resource within the adult learner population. Veterans and service members who are older than the traditional college-age population (over the age of 24) are more likely to utilize veterans' education benefits.<sup>123</sup> Many Latinos enter the military for the educational benefits that national service provides, such as the GI Bill. However, these aspirations remain far from actualized. While Latinos represented approximately 16 percent of men and 17 percent of women in the military,<sup>124</sup> only 12.8 percent of Latino servicemen, -women and veterans were enrolled as undergraduates in 2008.<sup>125</sup> In addition, Latinas are less likely than Latino males to enroll in higher education within this subpopulation, counter to national trends that show Latinas outpacing men in higher education. For the Latino veterans and service members who do enroll in higher education, they are more likely to attend two-year and for-profit institutions.<sup>126</sup>

### **Encourage Greater Use of the GI Bill Among Latino Veterans and Service Members**

Use of the GI Bill among Latino veterans, like their fellow service members remains a challenge. In 2008, only 37.7 percent of veterans and military service members received veterans' education benefits.<sup>127</sup> Although many Latinos first enter the military with aspirations to enroll in college, few take advantage of this benefit. In 2008, 13.1 percent of veterans who received veterans education benefits were Latino (Figure 10). Encouraging greater use of the GI Bill among Latino veterans and service members is a viable approach to integrating Latino adult learners who serve our country into higher education.

122. Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), 2009.

123. Radford, A., & Weko, T., (2009). Issue Tables: A Profile of Military Servicemembers and Veterans Enrolled in Postsecondary Education in 2007–08. Institute for Education Sciences. U. S. Department of Education. NCES, Report No. 2009-182.

124. Segal, M., & Segal, D., (2009). Latinos Claim Larger Share of U.S. Military Personnel. Publication of the Population Reference Bureau.

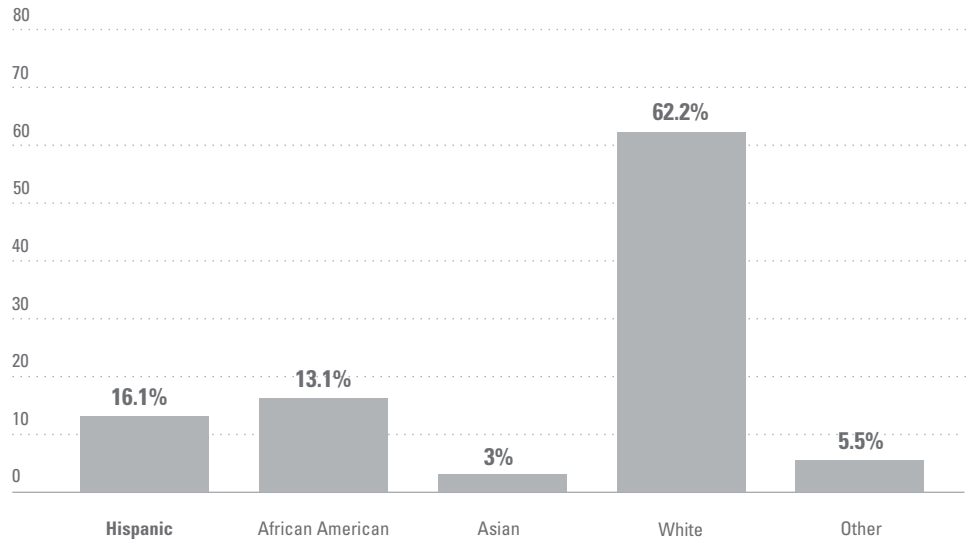
125. Ibid., Radford & Wako, Table 2-B.

126. Ibid., Segal & Segal.

127. Ibid., Radford & Wako.

**10**

**Military Undergraduates Who Received Veterans' Education Benefits, 2008**



The College Completion Agenda for Latinos represents a comprehensive approach to better preparing for, transitioning into, and graduating Latino students from college. Meeting the goal of 55 percent of Latinos with a bachelor's or an associate degree by 2025 is an imperative for the entire nation. Fully investing in the academic success of Latino students throughout the educational continuum is critical to ensuring a significant increase in educational attainment and securing our collective national future.<sup>128</sup>

128. Gandara, P. & Contreras, F. (2009). *The Latino Education Crisis*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Contreras, F. (2011). *Achieving Equity for Latino Students: Expanding the Pathway to Higher Education through Public Policy*. New York: Teachers College Press.

The economic infrastructure of the United States rests upon the talent and innovation of its residents — a return to prioritizing domestic investment as seen in generations past, is therefore critical to rebuilding our national prominence.<sup>129</sup> Higher education facilitates innovation, skill development, critical thinking, economic integration and mobility. Therefore, the pathway to and through higher education must remain accessible, applicable, transparent, affordable and equitable to ensure Latino college completion.

The 10 core recommendations presented here highlight distinct areas for attention, investment and policy reform by all key stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, institutions of higher education, policy makers and taxpayers. The United States would better leverage its resources by establishing targeted efforts to address these 10 core areas to increase Latino educational attainment levels. While during economic downturns the value of a college degree is questioned, the fact remains that individuals with higher levels of education have better employment options.<sup>130</sup> For example, of those unemployed in July 2011, 4.3 percent possessed a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 15 percent who had less than a high school education.<sup>131</sup> In addition, individuals with college degrees also experience a shorter duration of unemployed status, and are able to reenter the workforce at a higher rate than those without postsecondary degrees. Finally, gaps along racial lines remain, with African Americans (15.9 percent) and Latinos (11.3 percent) more likely than

129. Contreras, 2011.

130. Ibid.

131. Department of Labor, 2011. Unemployment Numbers, Downloaded, August 6, 2011 at: <http://www.deptofnumbers.com/unemployment/demographics>.

whites (8.1 percent) to be unemployed during economic downturns.<sup>132</sup> Wealth among Latino families declined 66 percent in the past four years (2005–2009);<sup>133</sup> such dramatic shifts in wealth represent a snapshot of what may lie ahead if the current trends in educational attainment continue.

Meeting the College Completion Agenda by 2025 has the potential to transform the Latino community for generations to come. The United States, through collective investment from key stakeholders, can ensure that investment rather than neglect is the approach taken toward the youthful, optimistic and hard working Latino community.

132. Ibid.

133. Kochhar, K., Fry, R., & Taylor, P. (2011). *Twenty to One: Wealth Gaps Rise to Record Highs Between Whites, Blacks and Hispanics*. Publication of the Pew Research Center.



## About the College Board

The College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of more than 5,900 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education. Each year, the College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success — including the SAT<sup>®</sup> and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup>. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators and schools.

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