

Texas Ranks Third in Nation's Hispanic College Enrollments

Education 2011-09-26 08:02:11

Washington, DC – Texas institutions rank after California and Puerto Rico among colleges enrolling the highest proportion of Latino undergraduates.

The finding comes from *Excelencia* in Education, of Washington, D.C. Their report shows that, out of nearly 3000, 293 colleges in 17 states and Puerto Rico enroll 54 percent of all Hispanic undergraduate students.

With 89, California has more than 30 percent of the institutions, followed by Puerto Rico (56), Texas (49), and New Mexico with 24. (See Table and Texas Institutions)

During the 2009-2010 school year, nearly 245,000 Hispanic undergraduates were enrolled in the state's "Hispanic Serving Institutions," or making up an average of 53 percent of the student population in those colleges.

HSIs are accredited, degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions, with 25 percent or more Latino undergraduate enrollments. The HSI designation has grown since 1995 from 236 to 293.

Dr. Raymund A. Paredes, Texas Higher Education Commissioner, points out that the state's education plan aims to close by 2015 the educational gaps within Texas and between Texas and other leading states in student participation, student success, and institutional excellence and research.

The state has no specific Latino strategy but targets communities through "Generation Texas" outreach, providing information about post-secondary education. The campaign "Advise Texas," targets low-performing institutions, and has met with extraordinary success, according to Paredes. College completions have gone up 80 percent, he says. "I doubt any state is doing better than we are."

Paredes points out a distinction that needs to be made between a Hispanic-enrolling and a Hispanic-serving institution. Just enrolling students doesn't mean they will graduate. However, successful colleges have some common denominators: open admissions, provide remedial work when that is needed after admissions, and provide support programs to complete course work.

University of Texas, El Paso, president Dr. Diana Natalicio explains progress at her institution is not merely a result of demographic growth but a deliberate effort to get the institution to better reflect the city's population. This effort is aided by programs between the public school system, the community college, and UTEP.

Natalicio says, "It is far more important to be pro-active," including changing attitudes when it comes to Latino talent and attainment potential. Institutional adaptations include how the university does business. She refers to arranging class schedules for working students, split financial aid between the community college and UTEP for joint enrollments, and even tracking students into a four-year program as soon as they become eligible with a community-college degree.

These program innovations are now mainstreaming into other institutions seeking to become more responsive to the state and nation's need for college graduates.

"We have tried to change how people think about our human capital. I think it is working," says Natalicio. In that sense, "El Paso is in the forefront of doing it in a different way," she adds.

Improving college enrollments and graduation rates have become imperative for Texas and the nation. Without new major initiatives, the State Data Center projects a decline in the proportion of Texas' work force with some college experience from 28.7 percent in 2000 to 23.9 percent by 2040. The share with a bachelor's degree is expected to decline from 18.2 percent in 2000 to 12.9 percent in the same period, as well as a similar decline for those with graduate and professional degrees.

Similarly, President Obama has asserted that America's economic future depends on becoming more competitive in the global economy. His administration's goal is to get initiatives in motion for 60 percent of Americans to obtain a high-quality, two- or four-year college degree or credentials by 2025.

Enrollment, retention, quality education and graduation are key policy elements, especially for Latinos, says *Excelencia* in Education's co-founder and vice president, Deborah Santiago. She is a former Department of Education policy analyst who served as an official with the White House Initiative for Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans during the Clinton administration.

The dense geographic concentration of Hispanics in some states is a factor for increasing enrollments and the new HSIs.

In 2006-07, about 70 percent of Latino undergraduates were concentrated in California, Texas, Florida, and New York and Puerto Rico, according to the National Center of Educational Statistics. Today, high enrollment density through HSIs has spread to more states and institutions.

Hispanic college enrollments reached an all-time national high of 12.2 million in October 2010, growing by 349,000 in one year, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

Santiago says, *Excelencia's* focus is on "intentionality." Those are the quality measures that pinpoint what successful institutions do to "provide a quality education that results in graduating students."

Hispanic Serving Institutions are represented by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and University, HACU, celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year.

National analysis, as well as other regional analysis on California, New York, and Arizona can be found at www.capitalwirepr.com.

Excelencia is a public-interest organization focusing on student achievement and outcomes. "New Hispanic-Serving Institutions Analysis," the HSI analysis and findings, is available at www.edexcelencia.org.

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WHEN : 2011-09-26 08:02:11
WHERE :

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Jose de la Isla isla@ediversity.net To increase awareness and understanding of options for Latinos in higher education, Excelencia in Education has collaborated in this series of on-going national and regional analysis. T.L. Oliver and Yonatan Arnold are contributors.