

Eight Arizona Colleges Rank among Leaders in Hispanic Enrollments

Education 2011-09-26 07:21:11

Washington, DC – Eight colleges help Arizona rank eighth in the nation among institutions with Latino undergraduate enrollments.

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

Latino undergraduates in the eight Arizona colleges represent nearly 33 percent of the total enrollment in those Hispanic-serving institutions, or HSIs.

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

Ranking ahead of Arizona are California's 89 institutions, followed by Puerto Rico (56), Texas (49), New Mexico (24), Florida (16), New York (14) and Illinois with 13.

During the 2009-2010 school year, nearly 29,000 Hispanic undergraduates were enrolled in the state's HSIs, all of which are community colleges.

Dr. Eugene Garcia, vice president of educational partnerships at Arizona State University, points out that the state's demographic shift has been both substantial and dramatic. The greatest school-age growth has been among children in the earlier age brackets who form about 40 percent of the K-to-12 population. This suggests that "You are going to get a bump in the post-secondary education" population continuing for a decade.

College enrollments, he says, are impressive but are not even now running on par and may represent only 15 to 20 percent of the eligible age group for post secondary education.

The Arizona community college system has been a great positive force, says Garcia. It is a much better buy for many students, although they often lack the expected transfer rates from a two-year to a four-year institution. We are "not seeing what we would expect" there, he added.

Improving college enrollments and graduation rates have important public-policy implications for Arizona and the nation.

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

Enrollment, retention, quality education and graduation are key elements of the policy's success, 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.

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, Texas, and New York can be found at www.capitalwirepr.com.

Excelecia 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 07:21:11

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.