

## California Leads the Nation in Hispanic Enrollments

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Washington, DC – California institutions lead the nation with Latino undergraduate enrollments.

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 those institutions, followed by Puerto Rico (56), Texas (49), and New Mexico with 24.

During the 2009-2010 school year, nearly 433,812 Hispanic undergraduates were enrolled in the state's "Hispanic Serving Institutions."

The 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.

California State University, Dominguez Hills, president Mildred Garcia explains that her institution's 40 percent Latino enrollment is an outgrowth of outreach efforts instead of waiting for incremental demographic growth to reach the college, especially when it comes to attracting students who are first-generation college enrollees.

Among the factors affecting where first-time college students might attend include proximity to home, word-of-mouth recommendations from peers, whether they feel comfortable in the institutions and with faculty, and whether they get the support they need (financial and academic). Family involvement, even as early as primary school to prepare for college, is an important factor, she says.

Garcia explains that increasing enrollment is the hallmark of community outreach. In the end, she says, "When our students graduate, they are achieving the best they can be, sometimes choosing to continue into graduate school. That's the success story: becoming better citizens prepared for careers and responsibility in a democracy."

Jorge B. Haynes, the Cal State Chancellor's director of external relations, explains university outreach is largely responsible for soaring enrollments at 12 campuses. An annual event, *Es el momento*, cosponsored with the Spanish-language TV network Univision, prepares parents and relatives to support family members to begin early preparation for college enrollment. The event began three years ago, expecting a thousand family members to attend. Last year it posted 27,000 and the program has gone national.

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

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the state could fall short by a million college graduates of its work-force needs by 2025.

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 elements to 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.

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.

*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](http://www.edexcelencia.org).

A step-by-step poster, available in eight languages--used to help families guide students toward college enrollment--is found at: <http://www.calstate.edu/college/poster.shtml>.

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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.