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Facilitation College Success Among Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions: Multiple Perspectives Yield Commonly Shared Diversity Goals

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Facilitating Success:

Insights for community colleges with a growing Latino student population

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The Greater Texas Foundation serves the citizens and educational institutions of Texas by supporting initiatives that increase rates of post-secondary enrollment and completion for all Texas students, with a particular focus on students who may encounter barriers to post-secondary success. To learn more about the Greater Texas Foundation check out their website: www.greatertexasfoundation.org

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Overview

The role of community colleges in the pipeline for postsecondary completion has been a focus of Achieving the Dream since its inception in 2004. Latino students constitute a significant portion of the nation's eligible college population. Improving educational outcomes among Latino students is crucial because their educational attainment is lower than other groups and the Latino population in the United States is rapidly growing. Although colleges must have a full-time Latino student enrollment of at least 25 percent to federally qualify as a Hispanic Serving Institution, colleges with a Latino student enrollment of 15-24 percent are commonly referred to as "Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions." As more community colleges approach such enrollment percentages, it is important for faculty and administrators to better understand factors that may affect student success.

Based on interviews with faculty and administrators, as well as focus groups with Latino students at two Texas community colleges—College of the Mainland and Richland College—this research brief captures important "on the ground" perspectives of student success factors.

The primary findings include:

- Many Latino students arrive to campus with limited college knowledge. Administrators and faculty can make important progress in increasing college knowledge through formal and informal means.
- Administrators, faculty, and students, identified the need to hire more Latino faculty, increase bilingual staff, and provide cultural competency training for all faculty.
- Engaging Latino families and the broader Latino community is critical in promoting Latino student success. Community colleges need to reach out to Latino students' families directly and include a family-based perspective in their recruitment and retention efforts.

The findings identified in this research brief are most relevant to community colleges that have traditionally served very few Latino students and are now experiencing significant enrollment growth in this population. Faculty and administrators at such institutions may find these experiences useful as they consider approaches designed to promote student success among their own increasing Latino student population.

As a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving student success at community colleges, Achieving the Dream is well positioned to provide guidance and tools for colleges working to overcome the challenges they face in promoting student success for students of color. Through its *Equity Resource Center* and national conferences, Achieving the Dream can speak directly to barriers faced by Latino students and how institutions can work to conquer them.

Introduction

Based on interviews with faculty, administrators and Latino students at two Texas community colleges—College of the Mainland and Richland College—this research brief identifies key factors that may affect student success among Latino students. Both College of the Mainland and Richland College are participating in Achieving the Dream, a national non-profit organization dedicated to improving student success at community colleges. These colleges are also adapting to the expanding growth of their Latino student enrollment, which creates new challenges and opportunities to promote student success.

Capturing the "on the ground" perspectives of faculty, administrators, and students, offers important formative feedback for other community colleges, as well as to Achieving the Dream more broadly. These perspectives are useful as community colleges consider how to most effectively promote student success among Latino students. Data from the faculty, administrator and student interviews at College of the Mainland and Richland College yield three primary findings:

- Many Latino students arrive to campus with limited college knowledge. Administrators and faculty can make important progress in increasing college knowledge through formal and informal means.
- Administrators, faculty, and students, identified the need to hire more Latino faculty, increase bilingual staff, and provide cultural competency training for all faculty.
- Engaging Latino families and the broader Latino community is critical in promoting Latino student success. Community colleges need to reach out to Latino students' families directly and include a family-based perspective in their recruitment and retention efforts.

The findings identified in this research brief are most relevant to community colleges that have traditionally served very few Latino students and are now experiencing significant enrollment growth in this population. Faculty and administrators at such institutions may find the experiences of College of the Mainland and Richland College useful as they consider approaches designed to promote student success among their own increasing Latino student population. Additionally, the recommendations offered in this research brief take into account the context and practical constraints that many community colleges face in an era of decreased funding and increased student need. Finally, although colleges must have a full-time Latino student enrollment of at least 25 percent to federally qualify as a Hispanic Serving Institution, colleges with a Latino student enrollment of 15-24 percent are commonly referred to as "Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions." As more community colleges approach such Latino student enrollment percentages, it is important for faculty and administrators to learn more about student success relative to this growing population. This research is intended to provide practical, useful information for community college administrators and faculty at such colleges.

Background Context: Achieving the Dream and Texas

Achieving the Dream, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping more community college students, particularly low-income students and students of color, stay in school and earn a college certificate or degree. Evidence-based, student-centered, and built on the values of equity and excellence, Achieving the Dream is closing achievement gaps and accelerating student success nationwide by: 1) guiding evidence-based institutional change, 2) influencing public policy, 3) generating knowledge, and 4) engaging the public. Conceived as an initiative in 2004 by Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations, today, Achieving the Dream is the most comprehensive non-governmental reform movement for student success in higher education history. With 160 community colleges and institutions, more than 100 coaches and advisors, and 15 state policy teams - working throughout 30 states and the District of Columbia - Achieving the Dream helps 3.5 million community college students have a better chance of realizing greater economic opportunity and achieving their dreams.[1]

Achieving the Dream is changing the conversation about student outcomes. The organization has helped drive student success to the top of the community college change agenda.[2] The imperative to transform community colleges into learning organizations dedicated to student success requires systematic cultural change at most institutions. Characterized by high concentrations of low-income students and students of color, students at the participating colleges are also largely underprepared for college-level work.[3] Ultimately, Achieving the Dream seeks to help more students reach their individual goals.

A key part of Achieving the Dream is a focus on helping colleges pursue excellence and equity in the promotion of student success. Through the organization's website, colleges have access to the *Equity Resource Center* which provides tools, readings, activities, and assessments designed to help support the work that colleges are doing to reduce achievement gaps and promote student success (see Appendix A). The work that College of the Mainland and Richland College are doing to adapt to their increasing Latino student population contributes to this conversation by promoting a better understanding of the factors that contribute to Latino student success.

The role of community colleges in the pipeline for postsecondary completion has been a focus of Achieving the Dream since its inception in 2004.[4] The focus on postsecondary completion and the supporting role that community colleges play has become an increasingly important part of the national and state higher education agenda. Because Latino students constitute a significant portion of the nation's eligible college population, improving outcomes among this group is particularly important. Latino educational attainment is crucial because their educational attainment is lower than other groups and the population is rapidly expanding.[5]

Community colleges are important vehicles for moderating inequalities in educational attainment because they offer non-competitive access to higher education to socially, financially, and

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[1] Achieving the Dream (2011)
[2] McClenney (2008).
[3] Bailey, Calcagno, Jenkins, Kienzl, and Leinbach (2005).
[4] Achieving the Dream (2009)
[5] Martinez and Fernandez (2004)

academically disadvantaged students, who may otherwise not be able to enroll in college. Specifically, community colleges have become integral components of Latinos' educational pathways. Latino students are more likely than students from other racial or ethnic groups to begin their postsecondary education at a community college.[6] However, only 21.7 percent of Latino adults (ages 18-29) have earned an associate or bachelor's degree, compared to 32 percent for blacks and 49.1 percent for whites.[7] This constitutes a large equity gap. Increasing successful college completion among Latino students is imperative to closing educational equity gaps.

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[6] Adelman (2005)
[7] U.S. Census Bureau (2008)

Why College of the Mainland and Richland College?

Both College of the Mainland and Richland College have a significant Latino student population and have identified Latino student success as an area of focus within Achieving the Dream. College of the Mainland is one of the Houston colleges that joined Achieving the Dream in 2006 and is funded by the Houston Endowment. Richland College joined Achieving the Dream in 2009 and is funded by the Greater Texas Foundation. While both College of the Mainland and Richland College were selected due to their significant Latino student population and their expressed commitment to promote Latino student success within Achieving the Dream, faculty and administrators at both colleges conveyed they did not view their college as a "model" for Latino student success. Rather, they are most appropriately viewed as two community colleges that have identified promoting Latino student success as a priority. Administrators and faculty at both colleges cautioned that much work remains in promoting Latino student success, and in many ways, they are still in the early stages of this important work.

Table 1 provides a demographic comparison of College of the Mainland and Richland College. Richland College is significantly larger than College of the Mainland enrolling 18,201 students. The overall graduation rates of both College of the Mainland (7 percent) and Richland College (9 percent) are low. In 2010, 24 percent of the associate degrees and 22 percent of the certificates were awarded to Latino students at College of the Mainland. Richland College awarded 23 percent of its associate degrees and 15 percent of its certificates to Latino students in 2010. For both College of the Mainland and Richland College, the associate degrees and certificates awarded to white students far exceeds that of Latino students. Only one in four Latino students are awarded a degree compared to one of every two white students. These figures are similar to overall college graduation patterns in Texas where 26 percent of college graduates are Hispanics compared to 54 percent of whites.[8]

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[8] IPEDS (2009)

Table1: College Demographic Comparison		
Characteristic	**College of the Mainland**	**Richland College**
Total Undergraduate Enrollment (N)	3,916	18,201
Undergraduate Attendance Status (%)		
Full-time	31	27
Part-time	69	71
Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (%)		
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0
Asian/Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	3	16
Black or African American	18	20
Hispanic/Latino	19	22
White	54	36
Non-resident Alien	0	1
Race or Ethnicity Unknown	4	4
Undergraduate Enrollment by Gender (%)		
Female	61	55
Male	39	45
Undergraduate Enrollment by Age (%)		
24 and under	63	62
25 and over	37	38
Undergraduate Retention Rate[a] (%)		
Full –time students	59	68
Part-time students	52	55
Undergraduate Graduation Rate[b] (%)	7	9
2010 Associate Degrees Awarded by Race/Ethnicity (%)		
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	.4
Asian/Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	4	17
Black or African American	21	17
Hispanic/Latino	24	23
White	48	37
Non-resident Alien	1	2
Race or Ethnicity Unknown	.3	4

SOURCE:U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences 2009. *IPEDS College data* 2009-2010. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

NOTES:
> [a]Retention Rate – the percentage of first-time students who began their studies in Fall 2008 and returned in Fall 2009.
> [b]Graduation Rate – for full-time, first-time, degree/certificate seeking undergraduates that complete their program within 150% of normal time

Methods

Data for this study were collected primarily through semi-structured interviews with college administrators, faculty and staff, as well as focus groups with Latino students at College of the Mainland and Richland College. The data were collected from June to August 2011. The interviews were intended to capture faculty and administrators' perspectives on the challenges facing Latino students at their institutions, the programs and services these two colleges are using to support student success of Latino students, and lessons and experiences that may be useful for other colleges.

Although the specific titles vary somewhat by institution, at each college the research team typically interviewed the college President, Chief Academic Officer, Director of Student Services, Director of Institutional Research, counselors/advisors, members of the faculty, and others who were directly involved in Achieving the Dream and with Latino students. We conducted individual and small group interviews for a total of 23 persons interviewed. Most interviews lasted about an hour. At each community college, we conducted two focus groups with Latino students—one with male students and one with female students. We asked students questions across multiple topics including: how they selected the community college they are attending, their perceptions of the college (in particular, how the college promotes student success), overall campus climate, and their perceptions of other factors influencing student success. We conducted a total of four focus groups ranging in size from three to nine; a total of 26 students participated. Each focus group was 90 minutes.

The qualitative approach of this report is designed to capture faculty, staff, and student perspectives on factors related to Latino student success. This perspective provides an "on-the ground" approach designed to better inform the Achieving the Dream about factors related to Latino student success. The experiences shared in this research brief may be most useful for community colleges that traditionally served very few Latino students, but are now experiencing a significant increase in Latino student enrollment.

Additionally, during our fieldwork, faculty and administrators largely viewed their colleges' Achieving the Dream efforts a component of their larger institutional emphasis on student success. Throughout our interviews and focus groups, administrators, faculty, and students largely discussed their participation in Achieving the Dream work within a broader framework of student success.

Report of Findings

I.   *Many Latino students arrive to campus with limited college knowledge. Administrators and faculty can make important progress in promoting college knowledge and student support through both formal and informal efforts.*

Many of the Latino students we interviewed indicated they had not considered college when they were in high school and subsequently entered college with limited college knowledge. Several of the students in the focus groups "happened" upon college, rather than having college enrollment as a specific goal during high school. As one Latino student commented, "For me, going to college wasn't always in my plans. It was not until my senior year that I had a strong influence that knew a lot and helped me get started" (Latino, Richland). Once enrolled in college, many Latino students found they lacked college knowledge regarding critical aspects such as financial aid, advisement, and course scheduling. College knowledge is a general term used to describe the basic norms, structures, requirements and expectations associated with college, such as registering for classes; study skills; time management; navigating financial aid; and college academic expectations. Acquiring college knowledge can be particularly challenging for first-generation college students who do not have parents familiar with the norms and expectations of college.

Providing opportunities for student engagement and support from faculty can make a significant difference in building a student's college knowledge. As one faculty member noted, "I can get them to the front door of the class, but if they do not have that support they go sideways. . .It is getting them in and getting them in early." Bridging the gap in college knowledge for Latino students needs to occur at the beginning of a student's higher educational experience before this lack of knowledge negatively affects the student's potential for college success. Faculty, administrators, and students discussed the importance of formal and informal approaches in increasing "college knowledge" among Latino students. Students recognized and shared the significance of having the support of faculty, staff, and programs that helped guide them through their educational experience. As one student shared:

> We all know who [faculty and staff] care and who do not care and tend to be around those who care. We use that positivity to get through the things we don't think we can [get through]. There is always someone here who will help us. (Latino, Richland)

Formal approaches: AALMSS[9], Rising Star, Athletics, and HSI Designation

Both Richland College and College of the Mainland offer a variety of programs designed to impart college knowledge and promote student success. Some programs have a specific focus on Latino or minority issues; whereas others are universally designed. For example, Richland College has an African-American and Latino Male Student Services mentoring program. The program serves as a resource for an array of areas from information on purchasing books and supplies to information on employment, interview skills, networking, and perspectives on manhood and family roles. As

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[9] African American Latino Male Student Success

one of the AALMSS administrators explained, he works "with students on male issues and their role in the household or the school."

Another program at Richland College, Rising Star, is open to all students who meet the eligibility criteria. Many Latino students are enrolled in the program and view it as an important source of support. As an administrator at Richland College noted:

> It [Rising Star] is open to all students who meet the criteria, but for some reason other minorities to not apply as often as the Hispanic students. They recruit each other. Students in the program tell their friends and relatives about the program.

As explained in Textbox 1, Rising Star provides direct financial resources. Beyond the financial supports; however, the program also serves as an important networking resource for students, with the connections continuing beyond the community college experience. A staff member explained, "In the program it has always been once a rising star, always a rising star."

Textbox 1: The Rising Star Program at Richland College

Created in 1999 by the Dallas Community College District and its Foundation, the Rising Star Program is designed to provide incentives and encouragement for students to stay in high school, graduate, and continue with their education. The Rising Star Program provides a $4000 award for tuition and books that must be used within a three year period. It is designed to provide funding to cover all direct costs of a two-year college education. To be eligible for the program, students must graduate in the top 40 percent of their class from a Dallas County eligible public high school and demonstrate financial need. The program is accessible to US citizens, permanent residents and undocumented students. In addition to providing financial support to cover direct college costs, the Rising Star Program requires students to submit regular academic progress reports and promotes student success through disseminating information about various topics, such as selecting a major, graduation requirements, and on-campus recruiters from 4 year universities.
Source: www.richlandcollege.edu/risingstar/about.php

Other venues, such as sports can also promote college knowledge among Latino students. The coach of Richland College's soccer team is clearly committed to student success. As he explained, "My day is diverse in terms of meeting students that need any sort of academic advising. As the head men's coach, I am constantly going to Dallas high schools to recruit and hold open tryouts on campus to encourage local kids to come. . ."

The varied assortment of opportunities---formal programs, clubs, and athletics---all facilitate the same outcome of student support and engagement. The challenge for community colleges is ensuring all students are touched in some manner by these supportive structures--there are some students who still slip through the cracks.

As a staff member explained:

> We are seeing that it is not the ones who join the clubs, come to class, and make the good grades, it is the ones in the background who don't know how to ask for help, who are not necessarily failing, but are not at the A level either. We are trying to cast a wider net and get those students that need a little more mentorship, work with them more one-on-one and figure out the help that they do need.

Increasing funding opportunities to promote student success through becoming an Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

Importantly, the College of the Mainland has recently announced its desire to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), which, if obtained, will allow the institution to access and compete for additional resources to better serve Latino students. HSIs are defined by the U.S. Department of Education as any accredited, degree-granting institution whose full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollment is at least 25 percent Hispanic. Receiving HSI designation provides colleges with Title V grant funding that can be allocated toward colleges to better serve Latino students, and promote student success generally. By setting the institutional priority of becoming an HSI, College of the Mainland is also demonstrating to the community its desire to access additional external resources to better meet the needs of their Latino student population

Informal approaches: faculty relationships, communication, and building trust

While formal programs provide an invaluable resource in promoting "college knowledge" and fostering student support, faculty, administrators and students alike underscored the importance of informal, relationship-based approaches as well. As the President of Richland College explained, "We believe that it is all about the relationship. . .So you balance the rigor with the relationship and we think that is a very powerful combination."

As one faculty member remarked, "It makes a huge difference when they [students] know that someone is holding them accountable and cares." Once faculty have a better understanding of student needs, they are often able to identify resources within the college that may offer needed supports. Another professor noted, "Another thing is when a student fails a test, they are ready to give up, especially with Hispanic students. They just want to walk away. . .we have a program where if a student is doing badly, I send them to a life coach to help them."

Faculty can serve as a critical asset, by taking the time to communicate. The importance of mentorship and a strong support system were recurring themes among faculty and administrators. As a Richland College faculty member explained:

> Faculty are encouraged to have as much outside interactions with students as much as possible. Trying to make sure they are engaged with students at least via email--taking the time to make inquiries with students who may disappear from class to encourage them to come back.

While faculty-student communication and informal relationship building is generally important in promoting college knowledge and student success, Latino students specifically articulated a cultural hesitation to approach faculty. Reluctance to communicate with faculty was a recurring theme reported by Latino students. Many students expressed their reluctance and fear to speak up or ask questions of faculty. Many of the students in the focus groups were very reluctant to initiate communication with an instructor. As one student explained, "Culturally, that's how it goes. The teacher would have to reach out to us. We don't want to look ignorant, so we don't ask" (Latina, COM).

Importantly, during the focus groups, other Latino students directly encouraged their peers to recognize the importance of communication to their own academic well-being. As one student advised her peers, ". . .the best thing you can do is go to the instructor so he can see that you really care." (Latina, COM). Another student further emphasized the point to her peers: "You really do have to talk to the instructor. As long as they see that you're trying, they will help" (Latina, COM)

Importantly, some Latino students linked their reluctance to speak up with previous negative faculty or staff experiences at the community college. They expressed skepticism of some staff members being willing to share helpful information with them. As one Latina student detailed:

> I went to the advising center about the CLEP[10] and they were reluctant to hear about the CLEP test and to tell me about the resources that they had for the CLEP. . .I was told by an instructor that I could not talk to the students about the CLEP. I was pretty surprised. I thought that the only reason was financially. If the students take of advantage of this, they would not have a job. That is not fair. They are holding us back (Latina, Richland).

Another student agreed, stating, "Well, I read that it is a well kept secret and that the college doesn't want students to know about it. When I took my Spanish CLEP, there were hardly any Hispanics there taking it—the majority was Anglo." (Latina, Richland).

Alternatively, students who were able to connect with faculty and staff in the college, reported a much more positive experience. In general, these students felt much more connected to the college and perceived a more supportive environment. As one Latina student commented, "I have an anthropology professor who would give up her Saturdays to help us prepare for a test. I think it is amazing when you find a professor who will not only teach you, but impact your life" (Latina, Richland).

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[10] The College Level Examination Program (CLEP) allows students to test out of taking introductory college level courses. http://clep.collegeboard.org/

Application of findings: What Community Colleges and Achieving the Dream Can Do

A primary focus area within Achieving the Dream is student support and engagement. Community colleges should consider the alignment of their support and engagement efforts with their specific student population. Community college administrators might develop an inventory of their formal "college knowledge" resources. Then, they can develop a matrix to track the "take up" rate of these resources by sub-groups of students. What formal "college knowledge" resources are regularly utilized by Latino students? African-American students? How do these formal resources vary by groups of students? Such an inventory can identify important gaps in formal college knowledge dissemination. Colleges can use this information to better align formal resources with student needs.

Informal dissemination of college knowledge is also a valuable resource. Community colleges may consider ways to track and promote informal communication. Students who "stand out" due to personality types, strong or weak academic performance, or presence on campus may readily make these information connections, while students who fall outside of these parameters may be underserved. Collecting data from faculty identifying the students they informally communicate with will more systematically identify students who are not making these connections. Consistent with the values of Achieving the Dream, community college administrators could use a data-driven approach to promote interventions to reach omitted students. Such an approach offers a significant improvement over the current informal relationship building system, which is untracked and left largely to chance.

Community colleges may also need to review the criteria to receive designation as an Hispanic-Serving Institution. Given the significant growth in the Latino population, community colleges that previously did not meet the criteria, may find this is no longer the case. Within Achieving the Dream, offering workshops explaining the HSI criteria, application process, reporting requirements, and potential resources could be held at national or regional level meetings. This informational resource could be very beneficial to many community college administrators. Additionally, colleges with a Latino enrollment of about 15-24 percent are commonly referred to as "Emerging Hispanic Serving Institutions." Such colleges have achieved a "critical mass" – meaning their Latino populations are large enough that they would transform the colleges' cultures[1]. Achieving the Dream may wish to avail community colleges to resources from organizations such as Excelencia in Education that provide resources to colleges that are aggressively seeking to increase student success among Latino students.

II. Administrators, faculty, and students, identified the need to hire more Latino faculty, increase bilingual staff, and provide cultural competency training for all faculty.

Although the Latino student population at College of the Mainland and Richland College is significant, there are very few Latino faculty at either college. As one Latino faculty member noted, "There is something about Hispanic students taking a class from a Hispanic person. Sometimes they need that in the beginning. . .Something that is familiar because there is a lot of fear when they go to college."

As this same faculty member explained, role models for Latino students are particularly important, especially for those who come from families where education is not highly valued or supported. "We need to have role models and this is so important. We don't have the social mirrors for these students." Latino students often find it difficult to imagine obtaining a better life. Having faculty role models to visually demonstrate this possibility can offer a powerful image of realized educational success.

Another Latino faculty member discussed being able to relate personal experiences and decrease social distance. As this faculty member explained, "I relate a lot of my personal experiences in class to reach my Hispanic students. I have a lot of parallel issues and if it is not me. then it was my mother or some of my relatives. That helps to break some of those barriers."

While some senior administrators expressed the difficulty in recruiting and retaining Latino faculty, other administrators and faculty expressed skepticism of this perspective. As a College of the Mainland faculty member explained, "People argue they cannot find Latino faculty. I don't buy that excuse. The Latino population is 17-18 percent in the US and much higher in Texas."

Latino students are interested in having more Latino faculty and staff

Students across the four focus groups expressed the desire to have more Latino faculty and staff at their community college. In general, they feel Latino faculty and staff are more welcoming than non-Latino faculty. As one student commented, "As far as other departments—admission and advising—I see how they treat Hispanic students and it's not welcoming" (Latina, COM). Another student agreed: "Most of the most welcoming experiences are with Hispanics" (Latina, COM). Yet, another student expressed, "I know this is horrible to say, but someone who looks like you just makes you feel more comfortable" (Latina, COM). Students suggested the need to add more Latino faculty and staff, especially in the area of recruitment, admissions, and advisement.

Several students expressed frustration in Latino students constantly being perceived by faculty and staff in the college as one monolithic group with common ties to Mexico.
As one student commented, ". . .everyone thought that Hispanic means that we are all from Mexico. That Latin equals Mexican only. This is a problem." (Latina, Richland)

Latino students share gender and cultural factors that impact their pursuit of education

Students in the focus groups also discussed the relationship between gender and culture. For male students, work and money are important drivers in their decision to attend and stay in college*.* Across the focus groups, male students expressed a direct relationship between college and money, with a particular emphasis on current versus future earning potential. Many males who already earn a living wage, may not have as much interest in college. As one Latino student commented, "They [Latino males] don't see the importance of coming to college. They started making good money as a welder and now he doesn't mention coming back to college." (Latino, COM). Another remarked, "[My brother] is working in the plants making $18-21 an hour. Nothing I could tell him would make him come to college" (Latino, COM).

Many female students reported their family members expect them to help take care of other family members, especially male family members. Female students report an expectation from other family members to operate in more traditional roles. As one Latina student expressed, " I don't have any brothers, but I have a lot of male cousins and they depend on us to make their food." (Latina, Richland). Another student agreed, stating, "There is a lot of male complacency. My son is in tenth grade and I have to practically sign him up for everything. We need to stop babysitting them" (Richland, Latina). A few male students also recognized this: "I think the main issue is that when the girls have children, they are more likely to take care of their children and work rather than pursue higher education" (Latino, Richland).

Additionally, Latino students expressed gender differences in terms of economic motivators. Whereas Latino male students were strongly motivated by short-term economic factors, Latina students expressed the importance of self-determination in realizing longer term goals*.* They largely view their pursuit of a college education as an individual goal, which will require certain sacrifices, but yield long-term investments. Understanding gender dynamics within Latino culture is also an important aspect of promoting cultural competency.

Cultural competent faculty and staff are key to Latino student recruitment efforts

In addition to the need for more Latino faculty, some administrators and faculty noted the need for more bilingual staff and a broader understanding of Latin American culture. This is particularly important for recruitment. As a College of the Mainland staff member explained, "We need to hire not necessarily Hispanic people, but people who are bilingual. They have taken the bilingual requirement out of the position. This is a problem. This is essential to reach the population." A faculty member from the College of the Mainland agreed. "We need someone who is versed in the many variances of the Latin American experience in terms of the students we serve—from Mexico to Argentina—sometimes we think about this just from a monocultural point of view. This individual needs to understand these complexities and be knowledgeable of what it means in the entire spectrum of this population."

Community college faculty and administrators recognize the need to invest in cultural competency training and professional development

Faculty and administrators also expressed the importance of professional development for faculty. Increasing the cultural competence of faculty and staff in general is very helpful in promoting an

understanding of Latino students. Through communication and relationship building, students view faculty as more accessible. They become more comfortable approaching faculty to discuss academic concerns, personal or financial challenges, or educational experiences in general.

Several of the administrators and faculty we interviewed noted the importance of faculty understanding the complexity of situations often encountered by Latino students. As the Interim President of Richland College explained, "In truth, our students have great potential, but many times they have obstacles in their path. Faculty need the skills to recognize those issues and step in. If you didn't grow up facing these challenges, then we are oblivious."
As one administrator noted, the background of many Latino students is very complex. These complexities may serve as a barrier in engaging students to consider the long term.

> To get them to say that they are going to college for 4-6 years – they cannot even fathom that. They think they could get shot or get in a fight and die tonight. We have to figure out a way to get them to realize that they are not going to fight because they have so much to lose. . .If you get them to buy into that, you are set.

Another faculty member commented, "The teacher has to be aware of who the student is and what the socioeconomic background is and even though it is not suppose to matter, it does matter. People forget that real life happens outside of these walls."

Recognizing the importance of cultural competent faculty, Richland College offers intercultural competency training to faculty and staff. It is designed to promote cross-cultural understanding. Faculty and staff at Richland College complete intercultural competency training each year and it is strongly endorsed by the college's senior leadership. As the Interim President of Richland College explained, "That is a requirement. If faculty and staff do not complete intercultural competence or the professional development, their contracts are not renewed."

Most recently, Richland College has enhanced its intercultural competency training by introducing a new session -- The Framework for Understanding Poverty. Based on a book by the same title and supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, this framework is designed to provide an inspection of the social and economic class structure of the United States and seeks to provide those living in middle class with a better understanding of the challenges that face those living in poverty. As a Richland staff member explained, "It is an [sic] excellent information on learning about people who grow up in poverty, being able to understand them, understanding their situations and the obstacles kids deal with on a daily basis."   Building upon this theme, a faculty member at Richland College noted, "We developed a board game based on Monopoly called Studentopoly. It was created to open the door to discuss poverty. The game is setup to illustrate the cycle of poverty."

Richland College's emphasis on promoting cultural competency is widespread. As a faculty member remarked, "Our plan is to have 30 sessions in the Fall and to have all 1400 of our employees to go through the program. That is the major part of the grant." Faculty at Richland College view these professional development resources as critical to promoting an understanding of structural inequities that undergird a variety of present-day college outcomes. "That is part of

the focus on professional development. A lot of people are miseducated about the historical aspect of structural inequity and are in disbelief when you talk to them about it."

Application of findings: What Community Colleges and Achieving the Dream Can Do

The expressed need to hire more Latino faculty, more bilingual faculty and staff, and increase cultural competency among existing faculty and staff are all explicit human resource management issues. Community colleges need to examine their diversity plans and develop and monitor clear goals for each of these areas. Staff job descriptions in the areas of recruitment, advisement and student outreach should include bilingual language requirements sufficient to serve the needs of their local population.

Within Achieving the Dream, workshops can be developed for senior administrators and HR directors that directly integrate HR diversity management practices to overall student success. Example workshop topics may include assessing faculty and staff hiring needs from a diversity perspective; effective diversity recruitment techniques; performing a diversity assessment of job descriptions, and offering professional development for faculty and staff in cultural competency.

III. **_Engaging Latino families and the broader Latino community is critical in promoting Latino student success. Community colleges need to directly include these groups in their recruitment and retention efforts._**

Both colleges discussed the need to engage with their respective community and to have a presence that goes beyond the confines of their institutional walls. The community college's relationship with its service area is important to maintaining its vitality and serving its core mission. The growth in the Latino community within the service areas of both the College of the Mainland and Richland College, requires the colleges to engage and interact differently. In particular, they realize the importance of a family centered approach, as opposed to an individual student focus.

Nearly all of the students cited family relationships, expectations and values as strongly influencing their ability to succeed in college. About half of the students indicated their families supported them in going to college and viewed college as a positive step. Students with strong family support systems found their support very motivating. "They all support me and I'm an example. My siblings want to do the same now" (Latino, COM). Many students indicated their parents clearly expressed to them that they wanted to see their children have a better life. "My parents are supportive. My dad said, "If you don't go to college, then a shovel is waiting for you" (Latino, COM).

The other half of the students indicated that their families were indifferent toward college or did not view education as particularly valuable. As one female student noted, "In general, the vast majority think that you get out of high school and you form a family. The expectation for education is low" (Latina, Richland).

Many students felt current college recruitment practices are often distant, impersonal, and less than engaging. As one student explained, "There is a disconnect between a pamphlet and action. They [students] could feel that everyone is given a pamphlet, but when you hear it from a friend, it is different" (Latino, Richland).

These student comments support the need for community colleges to offer more cultural competency training of faculty and staff, so employees of the college better understand the complexity of their Latino student population.

Recruitment efforts need to be relationship-centered

Serving Latino students and meeting their cultural needs requires community colleges to be relationship-centered to design recruitment and instructional efforts that not only engage the Latino students, but their families as well.[11] Both College of the Mainland and Richland College discussed the decision to pursue higher education as being largely a family decision within the Latino community. It is simply not enough to have a relationship with the high schools in their

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[11] Martinez and Fernandez (2004); Rendon (1999)

service area. Also, they must engage the family to build a relationship and create trust. This means the community college has to operate differently to meet the needs of their Latino students. A College of the Mainland faculty member emphasized the familial nature of education by noting, "It is essential that we reach the parents. It's the parents and the culture." Another administrator at College of the Mainland underscored the importance of involving family: "Even when the student is fluent in English, their family members may not be. So, if we can get their family more involved, that will support the student's success. Family may be the most effective unit intervention for Hispanic students."

Some of the most important components of the college's outreach to Latino families include: countering concerns related to immigration, providing clear pathways to college access, and emphasizing the importance of education for Latino students and their families*. As one faculty member at College of the Mainland shared,

> We have a lot of undocumented people who can still come here, but they don't even know that. For five years now, we've been working with the ESL students in the high schools. Here in Texas they can pay in-state tuition and even qualify for some state funds.

Another faculty member at Richland College stated, "We have to fight the misconception that students who are not citizens cannot apply for scholarships. We try to get past that."

Faculty and administrators recognize the importance of engaging the Latino community, the importance of information dissemination, and providing a road map to college access for non-citizens. Both colleges commented on the need to provide assistance to Latino families in completing financial aid applications, especially for students whose parents are undocumented or who do not have a social security number. One advisor at College of the Mainland commented, "They are afraid to disclose any type of household information. They fear they will be reported."

Beyond legal considerations, faculty and administrators also discussed the need to demonstrate the worth of college to many Latino families. A senior administrator at College of the Mainland commented, "In this area, we have migrant workers. Trying to convince the family that education is important is difficult because of work and the immediacy of their needs."

Another faculty member at Richland College provided a concrete example of her approach to addressing family-related concerns about the overall benefit of college and associated costs.

> There are too many Hispanic students who want to get an education and have to battle their parents over it. It is the poverty mindset: 'it would be nice to get an education, but that is not for us". I would run into that when I was doing presentations. Or, the 'it would be nice to get an education but we don't have the money.' The Hispanic community is very adverse to student loans. I would give my presentation about student loans and I would draw an analogy to car buying. . .I say think about how much you children's skills are worth right out of high school and they [the parents] say minimum wage. I ask them if they were to invest in an education for five years, how much would their child's skills be worth? I then ask them to tell me which one is better --the $20,000 spent on a car that is now worth

$5,000 or the $20,000 in student loans that has increased the student's skills. Which is the better investment?

Colleges develop creative Latino family outreach approaches through local school districts and adult GED and ESL programs

Some creative ways College of the Mainland and Richland College are reaching out to Latino families is through community-based outreach and reaching Latino parents through their GED and ESL classes. As The President of Richland College explained:

> We do a lot of work with the high schools in our area. That is probably the largest feeder. Then we go into the community churches and the various segments in the community. We try as much as possible to have people on our campus. Once they get here, they have the chance to see the campus and the resources here.

Both colleges discussed working with their local school district to host special presentations, holding workshops in Spanish for both students and their parents, and providing opportunities for campus visits. A faculty member at College of the Mainland shared, "I am the contact person for the Hispanic students. I work with them in the high school. I give my business cards to the parents –not just the students. . ."

The colleges host efforts specifically targeted toward Latino students and programs that traditionally reach Latino students. For example, the College of the Mainland reaches out to first generation college students, many of whom are Latino, through their Upward Bound Program. The President of College of the Mainland shared:

> We have a long standing Upward Bound program. We have a significant number of Hispanic students participate. [In] last year's graduating class, five out of 12 of the students were Hispanic. We have a program called "Dolo" which is similar to a bridge program. We invite Hispanic students to come to campus to participate in a program that is put on by COM alumni that are Hispanic, who are in the world of work or at a 4 year college. The program is for Hispanic students who are still in high school to encourage them to finish and complete an application for higher education and work. It is a one day program and we invite all Hispanic students in the service area.

Another faculty member at College of the Mainland shared that their Dolo program is designed to provide students information about the campus and going to college. "We help students by giving them a tour of campus, information about financial aid, advisement, and just going to college period. We provide workshops on cultural diversity and setting goals. It's like a college day for Hispanic students."

Additionally, both College of the Mainland and Richland College encourage their GED students and English as a Second Language (ESL) students to consider academic programs at the colleges for themselves and their children. As an administrator at College of the Mainland shared,

> We encourage our ESL/GED students to come to COM. [A staff member] does an absolutely awesome job. He goes to the classes or we schedule a tour when they get a COM ID, so they feel like they are part of the college. . . He gives them personal information and serves as a contact.

As Latino parents become more directly involved with their local community college, they are more willing to bring their children to the college because of the relationship and bond already established through the Adult Education programs.

Recognizing and celebrating cultural holidays promotes positive relationships with the Latino community

Another creative approach includes celebrating cultural holidays and hosting festivals to promote community-college interaction. Faculty and administrators discussed the activities their colleges host to embrace and interact with the community. For example, the colleges host international festivals, celebrations for Hispanic Heritage month, and other cultural holidays like Cinco de Mayo. The College of the Mainland has the distinction of hosting the first college celebration of Cinco de Mayo in the United States. As the event's founding faculty member explained,

> Yes, the Cinco de Mayo Festival originated here at this college. We started it in 1974. . . I established it for two reasons --to make the presence of the college felt in the community and vice versa. We went to churches where Hispanics congregate. We talked to the pastors and priests. We went to two Baptist Hispanic congregations. We were able to promote enrollment---we want you to come.

The same faculty member also shared:

> We are going to have a Columbus Day program—that will bring in all [Hispanic] student populations. We're all impacted by Columbus. And, that will bring in the Hispanic world—the Day of the Race. It is not called Columbus Day, but the Day of the Race. We will have Columbus Day/Day of the Race, during college hour.

By engaging the community in fun cultural events, the colleges build relationships and demonstrate that they are providing a welcoming and supportive environment that values Latino culture.

Challenges to Colleges' Latino Outreach

Although faculty and administrators recognize the importance of outreach within the Latino community and familial engagement, they have also experienced its difficulty. They have cited limitations in their efforts, noting Latino outreach efforts are largely initiated by individual faculty members, rather than at the institutional level.

Both College of the Mainland and Richland College administrators and faculty discussed the lack of budgetary resources to make more resources available in Spanish. They noted that it is not sufficient for information to be provided in Spanish, but information also needs to be accompanied by staff resources to share the information at a level that can be understood. As one faculty member explained,

> We need to get someone out in the Hispanic community than can speak Spanish--someone who understands the college terminology and can break it down for uneducated families. We want to reach them at their level and not intimidate them.

Another important challenge at the College of the Mainland is the racial tension between the African-American and Latino community. As one faculty member shared, "They [Latino community] do not think they [College of the Mainland] are for the Hispanics. The people I have spoken to see a big push to increase enrollment and to hire African Americans. They have not seen that happen for Hispanics." The College of the Mainland, under the leadership of President Elam, has made strides to repair the community relationship and move past racial tension to promote the success of all students.

A few Latino students also expressed concern that the College of the Mainland places too much emphasis on African-American students and provides limited support to Latino students. Given the changing demographics of the US and the rapid increase in the Latino population, some students indicated colleges do not seem to be focusing on this changing trend. Rather, colleges continue to focus on African-American students. A student explained, "They [the college] seem to focus more on African American students but they do very little as far as seeing the needs of Hispanic students" (Latina, COM). This underscores an important challenge for colleges to respond effectively and operate systems that are inclusive or all minority students, rather than one particular group.

Application of findings: What Community Colleges and Achieving the Dream Can Do

These findings suggest community colleges need to specifically consider the importance of a family-centered approach to Latino student recruitment. An important starting point is to assess the college's current level of involvement with the Latino community. Developing a solid relationship with the Latino community is an important factor in ultimately promoting student success in community college. This enables community colleges to promote the importance of education in multiple venues—for example, through middle school experiences and reaching parents through ESL and GED classes. In Texas, educators are increasingly focusing on offering a K-16 coordinated educational structure, which offers a pipeline of education success achieving the state's mission and vision to increase the educational outcomes of Latino students and other underrepresented groups.

Building strong relationships with the Latino community will also increase the cultural knowledge and understanding of community college administrators, faculty, and staff. This will facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexities of the Latino cultures, rather than approaching Latino students as a monolithic group. Structuring college institutional support systems in clear relationship to cultural processes can prove to be a strong force in Latino student success in terms of student recruitment, retention, graduation, and transfer to a 4-year institution.

Both faculty and administrators at College of the Mainland and Richland College cited budgetary concerns in making more college resources available in Spanish. Community colleges may consider recruiting student interns from 4-year colleges and universities majoring in Spanish, mass communications, education and/or marketing to assist in developing more bilingual resources for the community college.

As community colleges enhance their focus on Latino student success, it is also important for faculty and administrators to consider the demographic composition of their entire student enrollment to avoid unintentionally pitting one minority student group against another in the allocation of community college programs and resources.

Within Achieving the Dream, sessions at national and regional conferences can provide an important venue to share best practices from community colleges in implementing a family-centered approach to Latino student recruitment, while remaining in compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other legal statutes. Colleges can also share approaches to strengthening their ties to their local Latino community through outreach, collaborations, and cultural events.

Conclusion

Although faculty and administrators at Richland College and College of the Mainland readily concede much work remains in their efforts to promote student success among Latino students, their experiences to date offer useful insights for Achieving the Dream and other colleges to consider. Achieving the Dream urges colleges to make a commitment to eliminating achievement gaps, while improving outcomes for all students. To achieve high rates of success for all students, especially Latino students who traditionally have faced the most significant barriers to achievement, the findings of this research suggest institutions should have a student-centered vision, a culture of evidence and accountability and a commitment to equity and excellence. Achieving the Dream helps institutions examine their policies, practices, and institutional culture with the goal of reducing inequities that create barriers to success.

Each community college will need to consider the appropriate mixture of formal programs, professional development, bilingual staff, mentoring, and student-to-student support. While the specific elements will vary from college to college, approaching student success among Latino students needs to be based upon an intentional, well developed effort. As one faculty member commented, "Regardless of what you are trying to do, know your audience so that you do not walk in and hit people over the head and expect them to have some kind of epiphany. We need to do it in a way that is meaningful to them and will not immediately cause them to shut down." Although faculty and administrators at Richland College and College of the Mainland readily concede much work remains in their efforts to promote student success among Latino students, their experiences to date offer useful insights for other colleges to consider:

- *Student engagement and Latino faculty role models are important* – The pervasive opinion held by administrators, staff, and students was the importance of students being supported and engaged during their academic experience. This is particularly critical once a student first enrolls in classes and during the early semesters of his or her academic career. The Latino students in our focus groups, as well as faculty and staff, cited the lack of college knowledge many students face. Designing interventions to disseminate this information and promote a comfortable environment for students to ask questions is important.

- *Senior leadership must move the issue forward*—While promoting student success among Latino students necessitates a well planned effort, senior administrators are critical in conveying a clear message regarding priority and importance. As one senior administrator noted, "It's critical that there be leadership with a vision for who the clientele is and how we can serve them. "

- *Both senior leadership and faculty Involvement are key to creating a unified institutional response to promoting the success of a growing Latino student population.*

Despite the complexities involved in better serving Latino students, faculty and administrators at both community colleges emphasize the importance of getting started and moving forward. Administrators at both colleges counseled against allowing resistant faculty to stymie progress. As one administrator noted, "You cannot focus your time on the non-compliers. . .You work with the group that is an early adopter and it really becomes about peer pressure." Over time, working with administrators and faculty who are supportive can be a catalyst to promote buy-in from more resistant faculty. As the interim president of Richland College emphatically explained, "Responsible risk taking is one of our core values. What isn't acceptable is to sit back and do nothing."

- *Involving the family is an important component of Latino student success* -- A clear theme across nearly all of the administrators and faculty we interviewed was recognizing the important role of family in Latino student success. As a College of the Mainland faculty member stated, "The focus needs to be on families. Kids may speak English, but parents are making the decision and these are the ones that have to be convinced." The Interim President of Richland College agreed: "Often it is first working with the family structure and encouraging families to send their children for advanced education."

- *Build strong relationships with the Latino community* -- Developing a solid relationship with the Latino community is an important factor in ultimately promoting student success in community college. This enables community colleges to promote the importance of education in multiple venues—for example, through middle school experiences and reaching parents through ESL and GED classes. In Texas, educators are increasingly focusing on offering a K-16 coordinated educational structure, which offers a pipeline of education success achieving the state's mission and vision to increase the educational outcomes of Latino students and other underrepresented groups.

  Building strong relationships with the Latino community will also increase the cultural knowledge and understanding of community college administrators, faculty, and staff. This will facilitate a deeper understanding of the complexities of the Latino cultures, rather than approaching Latino students as a monolithic group. Structuring college institutional support systems in clear relationship to cultural processes can prove to be a strong force in Latino student success in terms of student recruitment, retention, graduation, and transfer to a 4-year institution.

*Support Achieving the Dream can offer Community Colleges*

Achieving the Dream needs to continue to provide guidance and tools for colleges working to overcome the challenges they face in promoting student success for students of color. Specifically, the *Equity Resource Center* could be expanded to include tools and resources that speak directly to the structural inequities faced by Latino students and how institutions can work to overcome

them. In addition to providing tools and resources, Achieving the Dream could offer a broader array of sessions and resources that address the nationally growing student population of Latino students during its annual meetings. These conference venues not only provide colleges with new ideas and approaches, but also provide support for the work they are already doing and encourages them to continue these important student success efforts.

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Appendix A: Achieving the Dream's Equity Resource Center[12]
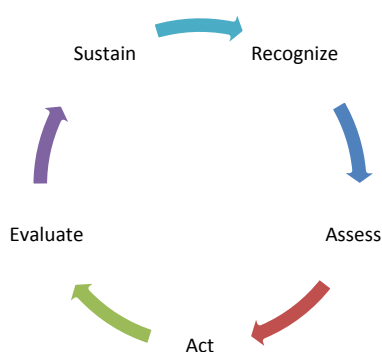
The *Equity Resource Center* contains tools and resources to help colleges reduce achievement gaps on their campuses and promote success for all their students. Resources on the Equity Resource Center are grouped into five categories: Recognize, Assess, Act, Evaluate, and Sustain.

RECOGNIZE helps colleges deepen their understanding of the Achieving the Dream perspective on the equity and structural inequity. Resources in this section discuss the differences between equity and equality, and describe the impacts of the achievement gap on students, families, and the American economy. This section is recommended for colleges that are just beginning their work with equity and those that seek to deepen their understanding of this work.

ASSESS helps colleges understand the inequities at work in their own institutions. Resources in this section help colleges assess their practices, policies, and competencies in the area of equity, and promote dialogue about how these areas can be improved. This section is recommended for colleges that are trying to understand which interventions will make the greatest changes in equity on their campuses.

ACT offers resources to colleges to help them begin to plan substantive equity interventions on their campuses. This section contains tools for colleges that range from a comprehensive plan from California's community colleges to improve access, diversity and equity, to a searchable database of interventions that have promoted minority male success, to a discussion guide for state and community college leaders, and many more. This section is recommended for colleges beginning to plan their equity-focused interventions.

EVALUATE contains tools that help colleges measure the impact of their equity interventions on closing the achievement gap and increasing student success. Some resources on the site focus on evaluation that takes power and privilege into account, while another offers an "Inclusive Excellence Scorecard" to help colleges rate their progress. This section is recommended for colleges that have already put an equity intervention into place and are seeking to understand its usefulness in reducing achievement gaps.

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[12] Source: http://www.achievingthedream.org/campusstrategies/equityresourcecenter/default.tp

SUSTAIN provides materials that help reinforce the progress that colleges have made toward equity by deepening and improving their interventions. The resources in this section help colleges respond to the information that they gained from evaluating their interventions, provide tips for maintaining the momentum of an equity intervention, and provide additional resources for minority students and strong teachers. This section is recommended for colleges that have completed and evaluated their equity interventions and are looking for more ways to promote equity on their campuses.