Policy Brief

Institutionalizing Support Systems for Latino Students in Higher Education

At a Glance:

- **Three** institutional examples of integrating Latino student support services
- **Fast facts** on college completion by race & ethnicity
- **Specific recommendations** for institutional policy development
- **Overview** of legislation relevant to undocumented and DACA eligible students

Executive Summary

Tennessee is in the spotlight for being the fastest improving state in the country in education. With a statewide goal of 55% degree attainment by 2025, educators and stakeholders across the state must continue investing in growth in K-12 and access and completion in postsecondary. While progress is being made, disparity among ethnic groups is most severe in college participation. In 2014, only 41% of Latino students were enrolling in institutions of higher education, compared to 54% of their Black peers, and 59% of their white peers. Coupled with low enrollment rates, Latinos had only a 78% retention rate in four-year institutions, and 60% in two-year institutions.

While many organizations and institutions are developing student support and financial aid services for Latinos in Tennessee, it is imperative to the continued success of the Latino community that support for Latino students and families becomes institutionalized via the adoption of university policies.

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Introduction

Conexión Américas is pleased to invest in Maryville College's efforts to engage the Latino community in East Tennessee regarding higher education opportunities. By way of the Equity & Excellence sub-grants, Maryville College will be supplementing their Villamaria program, and working to enhance programs and supports for Latino students and families, while also engaging K-12, university, and community actors to advocate on institutional and state levels for support systems for Latinos.

Across the country, there are a variety of institutions of higher education that have institutionalized their support for Latino and undocumented students. These colleges and universities have taken existing programs, and through collaborations with staff, students, and administration, have led the university to establish policies, set aside funds, and in some cases establish student centers that support Latino populations. An examination of three institutions may serve as the foundation of expanding institutional policy aims via the Maryville College sub-grant initiatives.

UC Berkeley: Undocumented Student Program

Housed in the Haas Dreamer's Resource Center, the UC Berkeley Undocumented Student Program (USP) provides wrap around support services focused on academic, personal, and professional development combined with legal support services, emergency funds, mental health counselors, and a food pantry.

Apart from student support services, the USP provides an "UndocuAlly" training program for university faculty and staff. With support from funding from the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Equity & Inclusion, UndocuAlly trainings provide an understanding of the history, legislation, and current/future realities of the undocumented student community.

Individuals who complete the training are added to an UndocuAlly online directory, and receive a sticker they can display in their office which signals to students that there are welcoming and safe spaces for them.

"Institutions are defined not by how they treat the most privileged, but how they treat the least privileged of their constituents."

- Robert J. Birgineau, Former Chancellor

Hamilton College: First In Family Program

At Hamilton College, out of a class of 475, 14% of incoming freshmen are first-generation students. The First in Family initiative evolved from the organic formation of a student body that was comprised of a significant first-generation population, including faculty, staff, and the college president. It began as a website that showcased the experience of first generation faculty, and grew into a component of the Dean of Student Life.

The website lists the large number of administrators and professors who were first-generation students, and the initiative invites students to connect with them.

The First in Family initiative now also includes a Multicultural Peer Mentoring model, which facilitates relationships among first-year international, first generation, and historically underrepresented students and experienced student mentors.

In 2014, the First in Family initiative took on a pilot program called First-Year Forward, which works with 30 to 35 first-year students and in collaboration with the career center provided targeted support and career exploration. Those who commit and obtain a career-related summer experience between their first and second years receive a $2,000 stipend.

The initiative has also developed a fund to support emergency and exceptional needs for students with significant financial barriers.

California State University, Los Angeles: Parent Academy

The CSU LA Parent Academy is a university program hosted for parents of incoming students during their senior year of high school. The Parent Academy curriculum is centered around topics such as: the differences between high school and college, what it takes to succeed in college, financial aid, and making college success a family goal.

The Parent Academy hinges on an apparent discrepancy of challenges students face from their parents and family members while attending college, and Pew Research Center trends which point to 88% of Latinos agreeing that college is necessary for getting ahead. Recognizing a disconnect between what Latino parents of first-generation college students want for their children, and what they know about college life, the CSU Parent Academy aims to equip parents and families with an understanding and familiarity with the university.

The Parent Academy offers three half-day programs offered in English and Spanish, and is intended to engage parents and families to support their children more effectively and with a greater degree of understanding while they are in college.

Core of Parent/Family programs:

- Institutional recognition of the critical role that Latino parents and families play in retention, academic success, and graduation of children while in college
- Reorientation on how institution welcomes, relates to, and includes Latino parents and families
- Building relationships and trust with Latino parents and families on an institutional level
- The needs, background, and culture of the parents and families of students who are being served should be the principle focus in program design and delivery
- The program must provide information and examples that help equip parents and family members to contribute to making college success a family goal.

"While it may seem like a new paradigm, colleges and universities interested in enrolling, retaining, and *graduating* Latino students must develop and implement robust parent/family programs, not merely provide parent orientations or sponsor parent associations."

- Alfredo Gonzalez, Professor and Dean Emeritus, CSU LA

Conclusion

Since 1960, the United States Latino population has increased ninefold, from 6.3 million then to 55.3 million by 2014. It is projected to grow to119 million according to projections from the last Census. Latinos make up 17.3% of the population (2014 Census), and are expected to reach 28.6% by 2060. As the Latino population grows, so does Latino college enrollment. In 2014, 35% of Latinos 18-24 were enrolled in two or four year colleges, up from 22% in 1993. However, even though Latino

population rates and enrollment rates are increasing, Latinos are still lagging behind other groups in obtaining a four-year degree. As of 2014, just 15% of Latinos 25-29 have a bachelor's degree or higher. Institutions of higher education must recognize the specific needs of the

Latino community if they hope to not only enroll, but also graduate Latino students. Many institutions have begun implementing startup phase programs to recruit and retain Latino students, but more must be done to ensure that programs become self-sustaining, and that they play a lasting and integral role in university-wide support systems for Latino students.

In states like Tennessee where there are no tuition equality laws in place, it comes down to individual institutions of higher education to come up with creative alternatives to support the undocumented student population. As institutions consider approaches to institutionalizing supports for Latino students, considerations for undocumented students are essential for leveling the playing field in higher education.

Maryville College is uniquely poised to pioneer support programs for Latino families in East Tennessee. By considering methods of bringing these support systems into the fabric of the institution, rather than them existing in silos, Maryville can spur other institutions in East Tennessee, and across the state to take steps to ensure Latino students and their families thrive in higher education.

Fast Facts

College completion by race and ethnicity

% ages 25-29 with a bachelor's degree or more, 2014

Asians	63%
Whites	41
Blacks	22
Hispanics	15
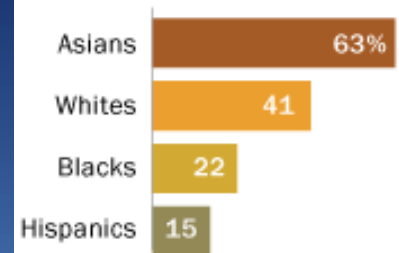
Note: Whites, blacks and Asians include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race.
Source: Pew Research Center tabulations of the March Current Population Survey (IPUMS).

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This gap is due, in part, to the fact that Latinos are less likely than some other groups to enroll in a four-year college, attend an academically selective college and enroll full-time.

Recommendations

- Integrate into the Conexion Americas Equity and Excellence sub-grant aims the goal of growing institutional commitment to Latino student and family support.
  Example: UCB USP 5 year strategic plan: http://undocu.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/USP_FinalStrategicPlan-1.pdf

- Develop a model based on the work being done at Maryville that can be replicated by other colleges and universities.
  Share this model in an effort to increase institutional, wrap-around support for Latino students and families in higher education

- Consider integrating Latino support services with Tennessee in-state tuition equality efforts.
  - Enhance advocacy aims of sub-grant work by elevating the needs and voices of the undocumented student community.
  - Consider including the undocumented student experience into the op-eds to be written as part of the sub-grant plan.
  - Integrate legislative visits into the college preparation mentorship program.

Overview of Relevant Legislation for Undocumented and DACA Eligible Students:

Title of Legislation	Year Passed	Description
Family Education and Privacy Act (FERPA)	1974	Federal law that protects the privacy of student records.
Plyer v. Doe	1982	Guarantees all children living in the U.S. the right to primary and secondary education, regardless of immigration status.
Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)	1996	States that undocumented individuals are not eligible for any Federal public benefit, including postsecondary education (8 U.S.C. § 1611).
Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)	1996	States that undocumented individuals cannot be eligible on the basis or residence for any postsecondary education benefit unless a citizen is eligible for such a benefit.
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	2012	Policy which allows certain undocumented students to receive a renewable two-year work permit and exemption from deportation.

Tuition Equality For Undocumented Students: Access by State

Source: http://unitedwedream.org/about/projects/education-deep/
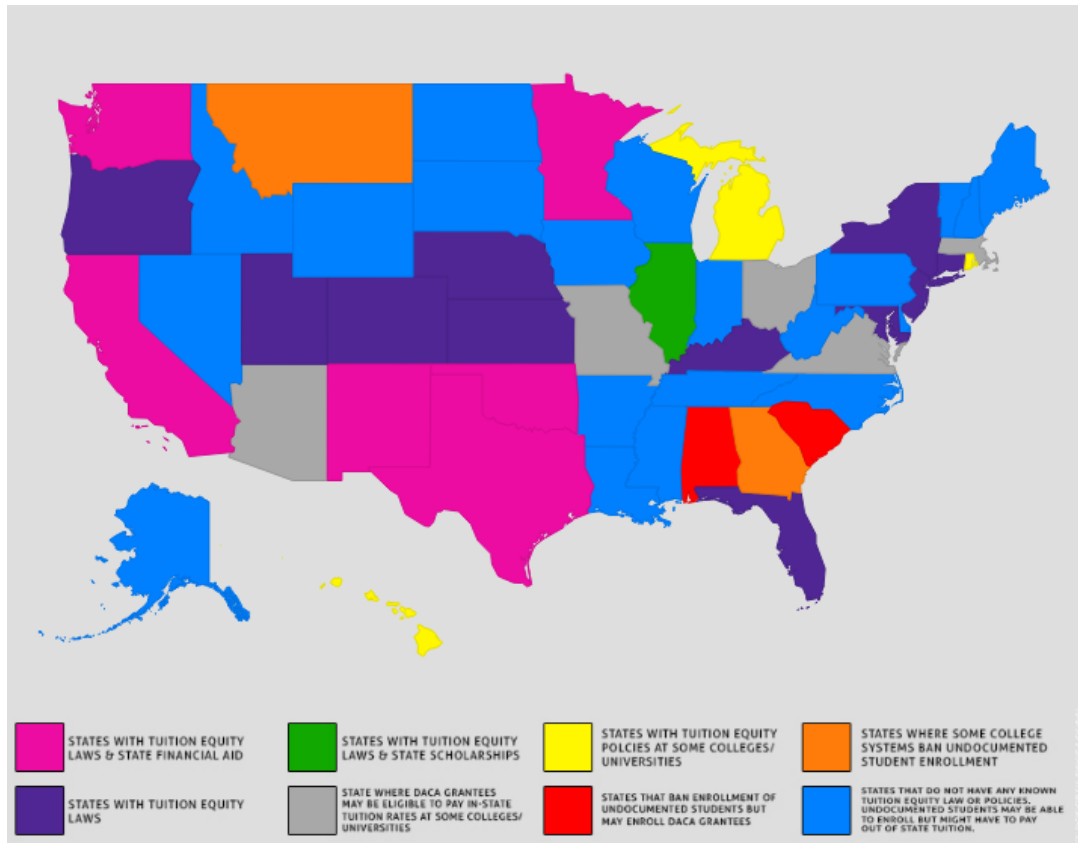
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