



SUPPORTING LATINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS:

An Investment in Our Economic Future

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The views expressed represent *Excelencia* in Education and Single Stop USA's perspectives and do not necessarily represent the views of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

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Excelencia in Education accelerates higher education success for Latino students by providing data-driven analysis of the educational status of Latinos, and by promoting education policies and institutional practices that support their academic achievement. A national not-for-profit organization, *Excelencia* is building a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to address the U.S. economy's need for a highly educated workforce and for civic leadership. For more information, please visit www.EdExcelencia.org.

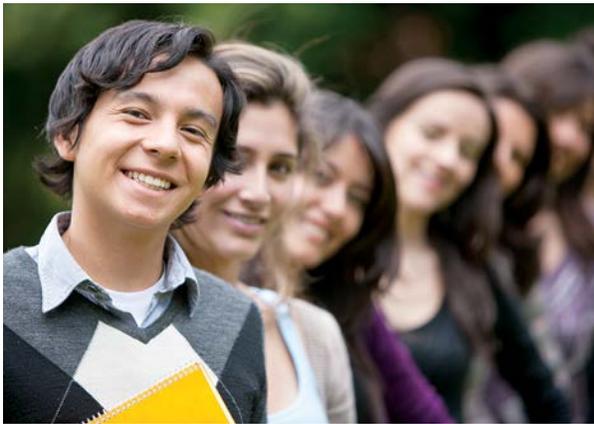
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Single Stop USA is a national non-profit dedicated to helping low-income individuals achieve financial self-sufficiency and economic mobility through a unique "one-stop" program that combines benefits screening, application assistance, and financial counseling. These resources promote health; help individuals attend school; help families remain in their homes; and offer a path to economic stability. In 2012, Single Stop served over 158,000 families in seven states at 90 sites, connecting them with over \$470 million in existing benefits and services. For information, visit www.singlestopusa.org.



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Supporting Latino Community College Students: An Investment in Our Economic Future

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leaders from the public and private sectors are recognizing the importance of helping students complete a college degree. Major foundations including the Lumina Foundation and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have echoed the calls of President Obama and congressional leaders to increase the representation of college graduates in the U.S. Given the changing demographics of the U.S., it will be impossible to achieve this goal without improving the college success rates of Latino students. Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing population group in the United States. Currently they represent over 20 percent of students in K-12 and they are projected to increase their representation more than other demographic groups. However, their educational attainment levels are low. In 2012, 21.3 percent of Latino adults had earned an associate degree or higher compared to 40.1 percent of all adults (U.S. Census, 2011).¹ While degree completion can be improved for all adults, meeting the growing demand for college educated workers requires strategies that will increase the rate of Latino college completion.

Most Latino students who enroll in college begin at community colleges. This paper highlights how *Excelencia* in Education (*Excelencia*), Single Stop USA, and innovative community colleges across the country are making smart changes in their student services that are helping thousands of Latino students access millions of dollars in supports and services that can help keep them in college. Together, these organizations are helping Latino students succeed and are providing a path for policymakers and college leaders to follow that can result in millions of additional college graduates.

While student enrollment at community colleges has increased over the last 10 years, degree completion has not grown as quickly for Latino students. This limited

degree attainment is the result of several barriers students face such as college cost, limited college knowledge, increased family responsibility, and work. For example, many Latino students are the first in their family to attend college and make choices to contain costs by enrolling at community colleges, attending part-time, and working more than 20 hours per week while enrolled. Unfortunately, these practical choices to contain costs, can hinder students' college completion. Too few students know there are resources available to assist with college costs that can increase Latino student success. They are also less likely to access financial resources like tax credits, food assistance and public health insurance that can enable them to maintain a stable family budget while enrolled.



Excelencia in Education and Single Stop USA are improving how colleges meet the financial needs of Latino students, and can provide valuable insights for policymakers in ways to apply existing resources to address the concerns of 21st century college students. The focus on financial needs and aid is part of *Excelencia*'s larger focus to highlight colleges and organizations taking practical steps to improve the success of Latino students. For example, *Excelencia* has examined national data and interviewed students to better understand how Latino students pay for college and the factors that inform their college choices. Further, working with eight community colleges and university Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), *Excelencia* found institutions were using financial aid to go beyond improving access and facilitating student retention to completion.²

Single Stop is helping 17 community colleges across the country rethink the services they provide to their students, and eight of these are HSIs with a student full-time equivalent (FTE) population that is more than 25 percent Latino. Single Stop sites at community colleges are helping students to file their taxes, apply for government benefits, and receive financial and legal counseling from organizations in their communities. This model allows Single Stop and its

community college partners to connect thousands of students to millions of dollars in existing benefits and services that immediately reduce the financial strain faced by Latino students. Together, these community colleges, Single Stop, and *Excelencia* provide a replicable way for community colleges to help Latino students succeed. We recommend the following actions for federal, state, and community college leaders:

- Federal policy makers can utilize the Higher Education Act reauthorization to incentivize colleges to implement student services that are well aligned with retention, completion and employment outcomes, such as the models being developed by Single Stop.
- Complement investments in financial aid by providing student support services that address multiple barriers that can thwart Latino student completion.
- Improve targeting of information regarding financial aid by intentionally developing dissemination strategies that will more effectively reach Latino, low-income and other post-traditional students.
- Address antiquated eligibility rules that disqualify needy students from receiving aid that can help them complete college and attain self-sufficiency.



The Stakes of Latino College Completion

The U.S. is experiencing two important changes shaping the future of the country. The first change is demographic. Latinos represent the youngest and fastest-growing population group in the U.S. Latinos have a median age of 27 compared to 41 for white non-Hispanics.³ Latinos already comprise a large number of students being educated in secondary and post-secondary institutions across the country. In the near future (2025), half of all U.S. workers will be of Latino descent.⁴

The U.S. is also experiencing structural changes in the economy. The path to the middle class has changed. A high school diploma is unlikely to provide a young adult a good shot at middle class employment. Middle class jobs of the future will be middle to high skill and require more than a high school education. By 2025, 63 percent of all jobs will require some post-secondary education.⁵

Leaders from multiple sectors understand the importance of improving United States college completion rates. For example, CEOs for Cities is demonstrating how a one percentage point increase in college attainment can result in financial benefits for our nation's cities through the Talent Dividend initiative.⁶ The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has made multi-million dollar investments in college completion.⁷ The Lumina Foundation supports efforts at the local, state and national level to reach the goal of 60% higher education attainment.⁸ And President Obama has set a goal that by 2020, the U.S. will once again lead the world in the proportion of its population with a college degree.⁹

Given the changing demographics of the US, it will be impossible to achieve this goal without improving the college success rates of Latino students. We must identify opportunities to expand Latino student success to meet the broader national goals of an educated citizenry and a competitive workforce. With the future of the U.S. economy linked tightly to the success of Latino students, colleges must think creatively about how they can use their resources and the services available in the community to ensure Latino student success.

The Latino undergraduate profile influences—and is influenced by—participation in financial aid. Consequently, *Excelencia* in Education has studied the impact of financial aid policies and practices on Latino student college access and success since 2004. Federal financial aid is critical to student access and success in postsecondary education for many students, including most Latinos. However, three current realities are challenging the effectiveness of federal financial aid policy today: 1) the inability of federal aid to keep pace with the increase in college costs for

students; 2) the growing representation of students who do not meet the characteristics of “traditional” college students; and, 3) the recognition federal aid policy must be redesigned to meet national needs of a more educated citizenry and workforce.

In a white paper¹⁰ released in February 2013, *Excelencia* in Education uses a Latino lens to articulate challenges and opportunities for financial aid policy using both public data and input by students, institutional partners, and other stakeholders. The Latino lens is not intended to exclude consideration of other groups. Instead it offers a contemporary lens to more accurately see America’s student population and provides a fresh perspective on financial aid policy using the profile of

this young and growing population as the baseline, rather than the footnote, to define the post-traditional student. With a Latino lens, policymakers can develop more effective policies, engage diverse stakeholders, and enhance tactical responses to better serve a growing majority of students with a post-traditional profile.

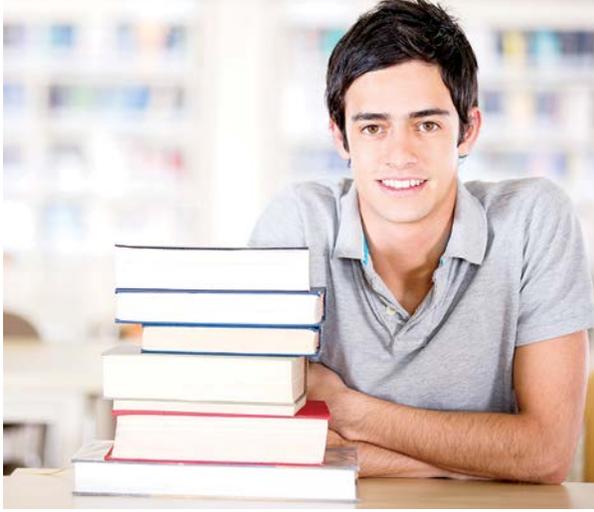
Sharing broad profiles of students to guide public policy obviously muddles the individual profile or experience, but is a necessary tool to work at scale. Whereas the term “nontraditional” is used to describe students that do not fit into a traditional profile, *Excelencia* in Education uses the term “post-traditional” to describe a growing majority of students who have evolved beyond the traditional profile.

Traditional student profile	Post-traditional student profile
College-ready	May need academic prep or remediation
Enroll in a college or university full-time	Enroll at a community college and attend part-time
Enroll the fall after high school graduation	Delay initial postsecondary enrollment while entering the workforce
Live on-campus	Live off-campus with their parents or with their own dependants
Complete a bachelor degree in four years	Take more than four years to complete a degree
Parents have college degree	First in family to enroll
White, non-Hispanic	Latino or African American
Do not work while enrolled	Many work 30 hours or more a week
Make college choices based on financial aid, academic programs offered, & institutional prestige	Make college choices based on cost of attendance, location, & accessibility

From : *Using a Latino Lens to Reimagine Aid Design and Delivery*, *Excelencia* in Education (2013)

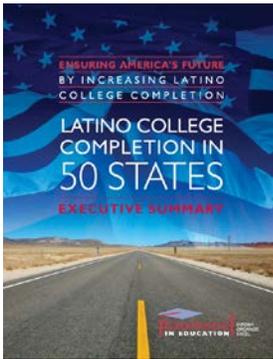
The profile of Latinos in education is increasingly representative of the growing majority of students—a post-traditional profile—yet the traditional student profile currently drives so much of the public policymaking and institutional practices. *Excelencia* in Education calls the question: What if financial aid policies and practices changed to serve post-traditional students rather than trying to force students to fit into

a decreasingly relevant traditional profile? Community colleges must be ready to answer this question as they are the colleges of choice for 51 percent of all Latinos enrolled in undergraduate education today.¹¹ Further, community colleges are already deeply involved in making changes to their financial aid and student services to better serve post traditional students and increase Latino college completion.¹²



Excelencia in Education and Single Stop USA

Excelencia's mission is straightforward: accelerating Latino student success in higher education. To reach this objective, Excelencia is expanding knowledge through research; building will for institutional and policy change; applying action through evidence-based programs; and equipping the field to excel. One initiative central to this mission is Excelencia's **Ensuring America's Future by Increasing Latino**



Visit www.EdExcelencia.org/eaf
to find out more about EAF

College Completion (EAF). EAF was created to organize the efforts of 65 organizations and institutions working to increase Latino success in higher education behind a comprehensive action plan to promote Latino student success at the federal, state and campus level. Sharing the work of the partners in EAF with policymakers creates an environment where practice informs policy. The same strategies used to support Latino students through EAF create opportunities for college leaders and policymakers to improve the chances of all college students.

Single Stop USA, a national non-profit focused on economic mobility, shares Excelencia's commitment to Latino student success. Since 2009, Single Stop has used training, technical assistance, and technology to build the capacity of its community college partners to connect their students with benefits and resources like free tax preparation, financial counseling, and legal services. Importantly, these are resources that already exist in their communities. These benefits and resources are critical and underutilized provisions that community colleges can use to support their students. And when community colleges help students access pre-existing public benefits and community services in concert with traditional financial aid, they are finding new, cost effective resources to help economically disadvantaged students stay enrolled.

IN 2012, COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS RECEIVED AN AVERAGE OF \$2,000 WORTH OF BENEFITS AND SERVICES THROUGH SINGLE STOP.

Financial Barriers to Community College Completion



Community colleges are a particularly attractive option for Latino students to begin their college education because they are located in their communities, have open access, and are more affordable and flexible than four-year colleges. The average annual cost of tuition and fees at a community college in 2012-2013 was \$3,130, as compared to the tuition and fees for 4-year public college of \$8,660.¹³ In addition to tuition and fees, students face living expenses and opportunity costs (forgone income). Even with financial aid, these aggregated costs are often too high for many Latino students to persist through degree completion. Financial aid is frequently too low for many Latino students to focus on their education. Thirty-five percent of Latinos who dropped out did so for financial reasons. While 70 percent of Latinos who apply for college will apply for financial aid, the award amounts they receive are lower than other racial/ethnic groups.¹⁴

Given the costs of community college and a desire to help support their families, the majority of Latino students choose to work while they pursue their education. Latino college students must juggle the competing priorities of school, family, and work without the financial support and college experience of other demographic groups. In 2008, 42 percent of Latino students enrolled full-time and 74 percent of those enrolled part-time were employed.¹⁵ Twenty-eight percent of full-time students worked 20 or more hours a week. Forty-three percent of part-time students worked 35 or more hours per week.¹⁶ Thirty-four percent of Latino college students were both first in their family to go to college and come from a low-income family.¹⁷ Financial stresses, like supporting yourself and your family, mean students are more likely to go to school part-time, live off-campus, work significant hours, and follow longer and non-traditional paths to completing school. Each of these factors is correlated with lower rates of college completion. Given this profile, Latino students are more vulnerable to financial stresses that could cause students to make a short term decision to drop out of school that costs

them in the long run. These factors led eighteen percent of Latino community college students to drop out.¹⁸

THIRTY-EIGHT PERCENT OF STUDENTS SERVED BY SINGLE STOP IN 2012 WERE LATINO—MORE THAN 9,000 LATINO COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS RECEIVED PRE-EXISTING BENEFITS AND SERVICES TO KEEP THEM ENROLLED.

In addition to these tensions for Latino students, community college students overall face barriers that include a lack of academic preparedness, difficulty in acclimating to the college environment, and trouble paying for the cost of college. Nationally, only 20 percent of all community college students will complete a 2-year degree in 3 years.¹⁹ For Latino college students, the level of community college completion is lower than the general population. In 2010, the 3-year Latino degree attainment rate was 16 percent.²⁰



Single Stop: A Practical Program to Address the Financial Needs of Latino and All Students

The Single Stop model works by placing a Single Stop office within a community college’s financial aid or student services department. When a student enters the Single Stop office, the Site Coordinator conducts a short, structured interview of the student’s household characteristics. The Site Coordinator enters this information into Single Stop’s online screening software, called the Benefits Enrollment Network (BEN). BEN uses this information to quickly provide an estimate of the dollar value of various supports the student is eligible to receive. With the information from the interview and BEN, the Site Coordinator is able to advise the student as to the benefits and services that are available to help the student stay in school.

If the student decides to apply for a public benefit, the Site Coordinator then helps the student with each aspect of the application process, guided by prompts and tools in the software. The research and rules engine embedded in the BEN software enable a single Site Coordinator to quickly provide detailed assistance on multiple programs. This guidance can range from interpreting difficult questions on the application to letting the student know what documents to bring to a visit to the food stamp (SNAP) office. Through these services, Latino students receive valuable benefits like SNAP, cash assistance, and public health insurance.

The benefits screening and application assistance provided by Single Stop play a key role. Many students don’t believe they are eligible for public assistance programs. Restrictive rules that disqualify many college students from receiving assistance prevent the safety net from being a ladder out of poverty, and feed into general perceptions among students that income support programs are out of reach. In this context Single Stop has helped to change perceptions about the acces-

HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTIONS PARTNERING WITH SINGLE STOP	
Contra Costa College	California
Miami Dade College	Florida
Central New Mexico Community College	New Mexico
CUNY Bronx Community College	New York
CUNY Borough of Manhattan Community College	New York
CUNY Hostos Community College	New York
CUNY LaGuardia Community College	New York
CUNY Queensborough Community College	New York

sibility of the safety net. Single Stop plays an important role in explaining that low-income working adults living independently are not disqualified from food stamps simply by being in school, and helps to explain the situations in which low-income parents can fit their education into the context of their state’s work requirements for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

In addition to benefits counseling, the Site Coordinator provides a link between students and other services they need to address financial challenges. Single Stop and its college partners develop relationships with local community-based organizations to provide a quick and coordinated approach to financial stability. Importantly, these partner organizations frequently come on campus to bring their additional services to the students where they are. Legal service organizations provide services related to issues like consumer debt and evictions that can exacerbate economic insecurity. Financial counselors help students develop a sustainable budget. Free tax preparation is available on campus through the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. This service helps to connect students and their families to the earned income tax credit (EITC), child tax credit (CTC) and American Opportunity Tax Credit (AOTC) which frequently exceed more than a \$1,000 per student, especially among working students with children.

By providing students on-campus access to public benefits like food stamps or public health insurance, financial advice, legal services, and free tax preparation, Single Stop connects them with thousands of dollars worth of benefits and community services. Research indicates that targeted financial interventions of this size can keep students in school from semester-to-semester. In an experimental study of a performance-based scholarship program, 57 percent of low-income community college students who received a \$1,000 per semester financial incentive re-enrolled the following semester, as compared to 39 percent of low-income students who received no financial incentive.²¹ Single Stop is helping community college students receive benefits and services comparable in value to this scholarship and college administrators have embraced Single Stop as a part of their college retention and completion approach. Single Stop is well aligned with the broadly shared goal of moving families to self-sufficiency as the students we serve increase their educational attainment and find jobs where they can be independent of income support programs.

Importantly, the benefits and services that students access through Single Stop are already available in the community but often are not accessed. For example, a student who files her taxes through Single Stop may receive the EITC. This student can then work with the financial counselor to determine how to apply her EITC to tuition. And with the information from her tax return, this student can now apply for federal financial aid by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

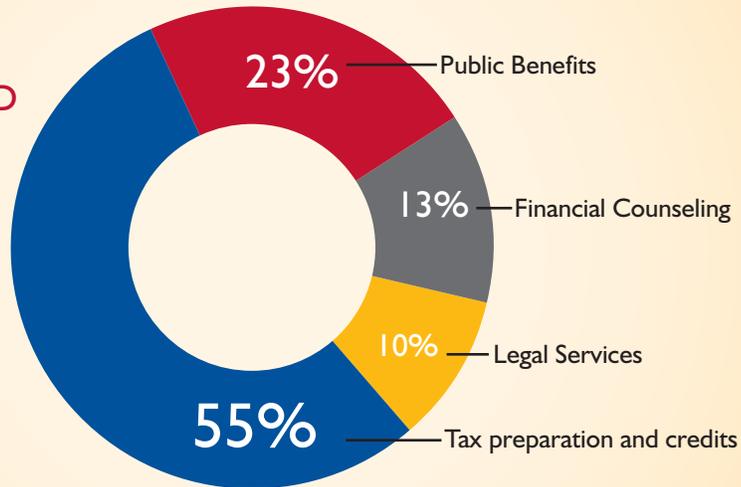
JULIO'S STORY AT MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

Julio, 23-years-old, is a former construction surveyor who was laid off during the Great Recession. He lives at home with his father and disabled step-mother. After losing his job, Julio decided to enroll at Miami Dade College (MDC) but didn't know if he could afford to stay in school long enough to get a degree.

After hearing about the family's economic problems, MDC's Financial Aid Department referred Julio to the on-campus Single Stop office. At Single Stop, MDC staff helped Julio and his family apply for food stamps, Medicaid, and disability. Julio reported that "we received \$367 a month in food stamps and found out that we were eligible for \$200 a month in energy assistance. We are also waiting for a decision from Social Security about my mother's disability." After meeting with Single Stop's financial counselor, the family commented that they "helped us budget our new income while also saving for a rainy day."

Now working toward a degree in architectural design, Julio noted that "If it weren't for Single Stop, I wouldn't be in college. Thanks to them, I can focus on my studies rather than on how we'll pay the rent this month or whether we'll have enough to care for my mom."

BENEFITS AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO LATINO STUDENTS AT SINGLE STOP LOCATIONS, 2012



Like many of the *Excelencia* initiatives, the Single Stop offices at these colleges are connected to existing student services and financial aid office, but are addressing an unmet need with the addition of a modest amount of new resources. Single Stop USA's technology and programmatic design expertise can be quickly deployed, allowing campuses to experience a high return on an investment even in the first year of a site.

Single Stop has 17 community college partners. Many of these community colleges are also serving high percentages of Latino students. Eight of Single Stop's most successful partners are HSIs. Through its community college partnerships, Single Stop served almost 23,500 community college students, connecting them with benefits and services worth more than \$40 million in 2012. That is an average of \$2,000 in benefits

and services for each student. Thirty-eight percent (9,002) of these students were Latino.

The HSIs in the Single Stop network have a history of going the extra mile for Hispanic students and have developed other programs that have been featured as evidence-based practices by *Excelencia*. For example, Miami Dade College has developed targeted programs that have increased Latino student success in math and sciences, and has demonstrated its commitment to meeting both financial and academic needs by putting Single Stop programs at three different campuses of the college. As the largest public college in the country, Miami Dade College and Single Stop are working to ensure that all of its 164,000 students who can benefit from Single Stop's additional services are able to access them.

From Practice to Policy: Taking Innovations to Scale



Both *Excelencia* in Education and Single Stop are focused on encouraging innovation at HSIs. The leading institutions in this category are developing student services to meet the students where they are, and realize that academic success depends on the collective effort of multiple approaches. Single Stop is an example of a service that enables community colleges to discover unmet needs of Latino students and re-imagine how student services are delivered to ensure student success. The success of Single Stop is not only in serving students but in changing the approaches colleges use to address student needs. *Excelencia* and Single Stop are committed to sharing the findings from their partnerships with leading community colleges with both practitioners and policymakers.

It is clear that reaching a tipping point around Latino college completion will require multiple interventions working in concert. Single Stop identifies resources that can augment traditional financial aid to ease financial barriers, which will make it possible for students to take full advantage of academic, social and mentoring support. Services knit together this way can become the foundation for student success centers embedded within colleges.

Through its Ensuring America's Future initiative and the Growing What Works portfolio — which recognizes and promotes the use of evidence-based practices improving Latino student success — *Excelencia* is making analytical and tactical information available to a national audience. Similarly, Single Stop is sharing how its partnerships with leading community colleges across the country are informing how Latino students and all students complete their college educations through conferences and white papers. Together, *Excelencia* and Single Stop are improving how colleges meet the financial needs of all students, and can provide valuable insights for policymakers in

ways to apply existing resources to address the concerns of the 21st century college student.

Excelencia in Education and Single Stop know too many students must make daily financial calculations that affect their ability to graduate. Forward-looking institutions recognize this need as well and have adapted to better support post traditional students as they navigate their lives and studies. These supports enable students to achieve their goals — an associate's degree and career-ready credentials, smooth transfer to institutions to earn bachelor's degree, and the on ramp to the road to prosperity. Now is the time to expand adoption of these effective services and grow the use of innovative approaches.

The following policy recommendations offer leaders at the federal, state and community college levels the means to bolster the existing system of financial support to students and advance college transformations to better serve Latino students and all students.



Policy Recommendations

The research, partnership, and services provided by *Excelencia* in Education and Single Stop provide a valuable, starting place for this conversation but policy is about scale. The following are recommendations for consideration at the federal, state, and institutional policy levels. The intended audience(s) for each recommendation are shown below on a red background with white text.

Incentivize expanded, coordinated student services

Federal

State

Institutional

Increasing college completion will require student services that solve key barriers to college completion. Foremost among these barriers are increasing costs and financial challenges. Single Stop USA and other programs that guide low-income students to existing resources they are eligible to receive are one of several promising models that merit replication.

The upcoming reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) provides the opportunity to incentivize colleges to re-think the services they offer to their students and to make sure funding helps to address barriers to key educational outcomes like retention, completion, and employment measures. Bolstering competitive grant-making and demonstration funding linked to promising practices is one way HEA reauthorization can seed more student service innovation. Similarly, state policymakers should use their higher education appropriations to encourage community college reform that addresses barriers to college completion.

Complement financial aid with additional support

Federal

State

Institutional

For many low-income, first-generation, and Latino students, financial aid is a necessary but insufficient form of support for college completion. Student support services that complement financial aid create a more holistic structure to address the multiple and complex barriers these students face. Student support services ensure that those students receiving a federal financial aid investment get the guidance they need to persist and complete college. Explicitly aligning financial aid with student support services in federal policy can make this holistic structure the norm. Single Stop USA is an example of a program that colleges are using to link financial aid, student services, and public and community resources with the case management needed to address barriers to student success in a holistic manner.

Improve outreach with information on financial aid

Federal

State

Institutional

While there are multiple sources of financial aid to support low-income students, too few students are aware of these programs or have familiarity with the processes needed to access these sources. Community colleges must improve how they market the financial services they make available to students, while federal policy makers and agencies must couple financial aid reforms with dynamic outreach strategies. Beyond simplifying the regulations to access and supporting expansion of partnerships to do this on students' behalf, policymakers can also improve the quality of information and targeting to post-traditional students regarding these financial aid opportunities. This requires more intentional efforts to identify and implement dissemination strategies that are both relevant and impactful to the low-income and Latino students intended to benefit from these programs. Approaches like Single Stop and many other initiatives promoted by *Excelencia* show how important it is to address this information gap with innovative approaches that meet students where they are.

Increase flexibility for institutions to serve students

Federal

State

Institutional

The institutions serving low-income, first-generation, and Latino students are continually challenged to keep up with the changing and growing numbers of regulations to administer financial aid and serve the needs of their students. Too often, services for students are crowded out by the need to meet administrative requirements. This is one reason that more community college students are not maximizing their use of programs intended to financially provide them with opportunities for college access and completion. Streamlining the federal regulations imposed on institutions to access and manage financial aid will increase institutions' flexibility to replicate the work done by Single Stop and better serve their students.

Expand eligibility aligned to need

Federal

State

Institutional

Accessing the safety net can require students to meet challenging immediate work requirements that make it more difficult to complete their college program. Too often Latino and other low-income students encounter difficult tradeoffs when identifying the financial aid that will allow them to access and persist to degree completion. State and federal policies should give welfare agencies more flexibility to provide benefits to individuals moving through educational programs that will enhance their employability and reduce their dependence on safety net programs in the long-term.

Expand relationships with effective external partners

Federal

State

Institutional

External partners can bring expertise in areas such as facilitated benefits access, free tax preparation, financial counseling and other key services not traditionally provided by colleges themselves. Single Stop's successful partnerships with 17 community colleges are a particularly promising example of institutions forging strategic partnerships to improve their student services. Likewise, *Excelencia's* EAF partnerships demonstrate how colleges and community-organizations can share their promising practices with one another and with policymakers. Community colleges should seek to form partnerships with organizations like these that are helping to address the barriers to student success. Moreover, by working with partners who are performance driven and focused on impacting measurable student outcomes, more community colleges can accelerate their efforts to orient their institution towards increased levels of Latino student completion.

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Ensuring America's Future by Increasing Latino College Completion



ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

An emphasis on college degree attainment by the Obama Administration, and major foundations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation, reflects the growing recognition that increasing college completion is key to future prosperity. Given current educational attainment levels for Latinos, demands for economic competitiveness, and projected Latino demographic growth in the United States, increasing American college degree attainment is vital.

According to the U.S. Census, only 20 percent of Hispanics in the United States had earned an associate degree or higher in 2010. In comparison, 39 percent of whites, 28 percent of blacks, and 59 percent of Asians had earned an associate or higher in 2010. Further, demographic predictions show Latinos will represent 22 percent of the U.S. population by 2025. In combination, these facts create a compelling call to action.

To meet this challenge, *Excelencia* in Education is shaping a policy strategy with measures, tactics, and strategies focused on young adults generally, and Latino students specifically. The initiative, Ensuring America's Future by Increasing Latino College Completion (EAF) brings to the forefront of public attention the role Latinos play in meeting the country's college degree completion goal. With 65 national and community based partner organizations representing seven sectors—business and workforce, educational associations and policy groups, government and elected officials, institutions and systems of higher education, Latino advocacy, media and philanthropy—the coalition is actively collaborating for collective impact to increase Latino college completion.

Excelencia in Education is uniquely positioned nationally to tackle this challenge in several ways. By using its voice and convening power, *Excelencia* makes the case for the importance of getting Latino students to and through college. It is prepared to expand its information role to track progress towards Latino college degree completion, as well as engage stakeholders at national, state, and institutional levels in purposeful deliberations to develop and deploy a policy roadmap to accelerate Latino college degree completion.

Accelerating Latino college degree completion requires: (1) intentionality in serving this group of students; (2) delineation of degree completion goals and measures of progress; (3) commitment to practices and policies that produce positive results; and, (4) clarity about the federal, state and institutional policy environments that affect Latino student success. There is a role for all stakeholders committed to increasing U.S. college degree completion.

For more information please visit:
www.edexcelencia.org/initiatives/EAF/full



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