

Spring 2016

Identifying Best Practices to Increase Latino Student Enrollment and Retention at Non-Hispanic Serving Institutions

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Running Head: Increasing Latino Student Enrollment and Retention

Identifying Best Practices to Increase Latino Student Enrollment and Retention at
Non-Hispanic Serving Institutions

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Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Master of Education in Higher Education
Degree, Merrimack College

Abstract

Latino college students are the fastest growing population in the United States, yet their educational attainment falls significantly behind compared to Asians, Whites, and Blacks (Santiago & Soliz, 2012). This study sought out to identify best practices to recruit and retain Latino students at US four year colleges and universities. Interviews with seven knowledgeable stakeholders at non-Hispanic Serving Institutions across the country were conducted. Participants were asked about specific programming and strategies used at their institutions to meet the needs of the Latino population. The findings suggested that this special population needs additional financial, cultural and academic support in order to succeed and persist in higher education. Specific strategies that were highlighted by participants include the need to collaborate with a variety of offices across campus, the need to see Latino/Hispanic identities reflected within the faculty and staff, and the need for bilingual marketing tools. Recommendations for institutions looking to increase their Latino population include the need for more faculty and staff that identify as Latino, peer mentoring programs, and dedicated spaces to explore their intersecting identities.

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Introduction

The growth of the Latino population has impacted the face of college students today. In 2010 alone, 32% of Latino students, ages 18-24, were enrolled in college, which is equivalent to 1.8 million Latino students on college campuses (Fry, 2011). The rapid growth of Latinos in the United States, however, has led to a discrepancy in the education system, because in 2011 only 21% of the entire Latino Population had earned an associates degree or higher, compared to 57% of Asians, 44% of Whites and 30% of Blacks (Santiago & Soliz, 2012). The numbers clearly show that, although Latino students have made tremendous educational strides and are enrolling in college at a much higher rate now, they are still acquiring and completing higher education at a much lower rate than their Asian, White and Black counterparts. Not only is this concerning for the Latino population, but it is also concerning for the future of the United States. By 2050, fifty million new jobs will require a post secondary degree (Mazyck, 2014), requiring a much more highly skilled workforce. If something is not done about increasing access and retention for Latino students, Latinos will continue to live in poverty, as education is often linked with social mobility, and the economy of the United States will suffer from not having the means to hire qualified, educated personnel.

Due to the concerning statistics and underrepresentation of Latinos in college, this study examined recruitment and retention strategies that appear to increase Latino presence on college campuses. I began by looking at what the existing literature reveals about this special population to better inform my understandings of their needs on college campuses. To expand on the literature and on my own personal knowledge, I conducted interviews with knowledgeable stakeholder at a variety of institutions across the country. These included the Director of a Latino Center, the Director of a Latino Studies Program, an Admissions Counselor, and a variety of

student affairs personnel who work in institutions with a track record of high Latino engagement and completion. I specifically interviewed personnel at institutions that are not specifically Hispanic- serving institutions, assuming that these colleges are already recruiting Latino students at a high rate. An HSI is an “accredited, degree granting institution where at least 25%” of the student population is Latino (Lynch & Engle, 2010).

Conducting these interviews allowed me to add to and validate the already existing body of literature on the trends and factors affecting the Latino student population. Three major themes surfaced in the literature and that includes specific outreach strategies for Latino students, Latino identity and the effects of that on student engagement, and support services that aid in their retention. Similar themes also surfaced in the findings where participants discussed Latino identity and how the campus environment can affect that, the importance of partnerships within the institution and in the community, and services that can promote Latino recruitment and retention.

The purpose of this study was to examine this population and better understand their needs as well as how they can best be served by higher education institutions all over the country. By conducting qualitative research, I provided some insight on some successful strategies for Latino engagement that already exist on campuses, so that other institutions looking to increase and or support their Latino population can look to these as examples. Based on the literature and my own findings, a list of recommendations is included at the end of this paper.

Literature Review

The next section will review the literature that already exists on Latino students. The findings in the literature fall under three sub-sections. The first sub-section focuses on

recruitment and outreach strategies that institutions have adopted or should adopt in order to attract Latino students. The second sub-section focuses on how Latino identity and campus environment effect Latino student engagement in higher education. Lastly, the third sub-section focuses on programs and services that help Latino students persist in college.

Recruitment and Outreach Strategies and Latino Students

In their research, Dumas-Hines, Cochran and Williams (2001), provide a list of recommendations colleges and universities can use to effectively promote diversity within their student body and faculty. They based their recommendation on research done at 29 universities in Midwestern United States. Four main strategies came out of the research. First they emphasized the importance of developing a philosophy and or mission statement that is inclusive and promotes cultural differences. Secondly, there should be a constant assessments and analysis of cultural diversity in the student body and within the faculty. They stated that analyzing these data could help institution create a framework for future plans to diversify the campus. The third strategy focused on researching best practices that promote recruitment and retention of students and faculty of diverse backgrounds. The last strategy focused on developing, implementing and evaluating a comprehensive plan, based on the mission, assessments and research that had been done prior.

Cortez and Cortez (2004) took a more comprehensive approach at answering similar questions around recruitment strategies, specifically for Latino students, by using research completed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). Their study focused on answering three questions pertaining specifically to San Antonio College: 1) What strategies is the college using to recruit students from targeted (minority and low-income) and non-targeted groups and how effective are the strategies? 2) What recruitment strategies worked for

targeted students who enrolled at the college? 3) What institutional changes are needed at the college to improve recruitment for target students? With the authorization of San Antonio College, the IDRA used a mixed method approach, which was made up of analysis of archival data like demographics and feeder schools in the area, focus groups and individual interviews of stakeholder, high school administrators, counselors, high school students, and they also surveyed and interviewed Alianza Program Directors. These participants were asked questions that related to their decision to attend the college, what type of students were enrolling, and how could the college improve their recruitment strategies. Findings suggested that in order to increase access, targeted students, their parents and their teachers needed to have more access to accurate information. However, there needed to be a shift in focus from getting students to access college to getting students to succeed in college. In terms of recruitment strategies, the study provided a list of best practices based on similar findings from the eight Project Alianza Directors at different universities. They identified some key strategies such as public service announcement in both Spanish and English TV stations, creating partnerships with K-12 schools in the district, targeting students in English as a second language courses at the college, using non-traditional students to help recruit non-traditional students, keeping students in cohorts and creating a space for faculty working with the cohort to exchange data, and collaborating with individuals and entities that help develop exposure and provide insights for the rest of the community.

Unlike Cortez and Cortez (2004) who conduct their own research on how to recruit Latino students, Stavans (2006) drew on his own experiences, as a Latino faculty member at Amherst College to examine the outcomes of elite colleges in the northeast, and how they fail Latino students. He incorporated his own explanation as to why Latinos will continue to enroll in small numbers. He focused his discussion on how the college had failed Latino students given

the fact that out of 115 Latino students who had applied, only 24 students enrolled. He admitted that although colleges meant well when hosting weekends and panels that target students of color, they lack real knowledge on the basic history of Hispanic civilization. He believed that this affected their effectiveness when targeting Latino students because faculty and staff members at the colleges failed to realize that they all come from different places and they do not all share the same culture. Some Latino students however, hold on to their culture, their language, their food, and their music very strongly. Colleges are not yet welcoming to this mixture. Similarly to Cortez and Cortez (2004), Stavans (2006) said that when it comes to recruiting these students colleges were constantly relying on SAT scores. Because the elite colleges were all trying to compete against each other they all target the same students and therefore the same 325 Latino students that applied to Amherst applied to similar colleges. Even when these students are successfully enrolled at Amherst they were constantly being asked to represent the Latino group on campus and present on different cultural traditions even though these traditions might not be ones that they actually practice. Lastly, he talked about not having enough Latinos in positions of power like admissions, as president, deans, trustees or as donors. This in turn makes it harder for Latino students to form a relationship with their teachers and other authority figures, and makes it harder for institutions to make them a priority.

Smith (2008), on the other hand, focused on one specific area of recruiting which is the importance of family when recruiting Latino and African American students. Smith suggested that there needs to be a shift in the outreach approaches done by admissions in order to target more African American and Latino students. He focused his reasoning on the importance of family and how the shifts needed to be more family-oriented instead of student-oriented especially because so many of these parents were misinformed or were lacking information

about the college admissions process, financial aid and costs. He acknowledged the competition between colleges being an impediment for successfully recruiting low SES African American and Latino Students. According to Smith (2008), they use all of their resources to recruit students who score high on their SAT tests rather than other students who have great potential beyond test-taking skills. Smith (2008) suggested that in order to make this shift schools needed to 1) host these students and their families on campus visits and to welcome them to the campus community, 2) host summer programs such as Upward Bound, but make sure that parents are also included and learn about the different college process, and 3) ensure that admissions counselors be more present in low-income high schools, including weekends when their parents are more available. Lastly, Smith suggested, like Stavans (2006) mentioned previously, that instead of schools competing against each other for the same students, they should work together to increase the number of students they are reaching. By pooling their financial resources to host collaborative events within the same area not only are they reducing the cost of their recruitment efforts, but they reach more Latino and African American students from low SES and their families, while also working for the public good.

Effects of Identity and Campus Environment on Latino Student Engagement

This section focuses on Latino students' experiences on campus. In his qualitative study, Hernandez (2002) wanted to better understand the first year experience for Latino students. He used purposive sampling and interviewed ten Latinos who were involved in a mentoring program in a mid-Atlantic university in the United States. He asked open-ended questions that related to the students experience in their first year, family influences, cultural influences and involvement in campus activities. He found that although only one student expressed hating their experience, all students had to cope and adjust to the college environment. Some students found it difficult to

find friends and some were more affected by feeling as if they did not have access to their culture. When it came to their family influences, Hernandez (2002) found that students were strongly encouraged by their family members to attend college even if their parents themselves did not attend. Others stated that they were in college because they wanted to financially support their family members once they got out. Although some students were getting involved with student organizations, two students in his study talked about not getting involved because they wanted to test out how the work load and wanted to put their academics first. Lastly, Hernandez (2002) found that students were constantly feeling torn between two cultures because some were raised in the U.S but were raised with the expectation for their parents' culture.

Castillo and his colleagues (2006) took their research on identity a step further by looking at the relationship between ethnic identity, perception of the university and whether that affected college persistence. Using undergraduates who self-reported as Hispanic or Latino, students from Latino organization and a snowball technique they mailed out survey to students at a predominantly white institution in western United States. Out of the students who were contacted, 180 Latino undergraduates completed the survey, which made up 23% of the Latino population at the college. Students were asked questions based on a ranging scale, some of which were 4 or 5-point scales (strongly agree to strongly disagree) or 7-point scales (not at all true to very true). Questions were around persistence attitudes, perception of university environment and ethnic identity. After analyzing the data, the researchers found that Latino students who had a higher ethnic identity were more likely to have a negative perception of the school and therefore were more likely to not persist in college. The researchers suggested that in order to change the perception that Latino students have of the college to a more positive one, therefore increasing the persistence attitudes, colleges should provide them with resources such as Latino

student organizations and opportunities or programs that encourage positive student-faculty interactions.

Nelson et al. (2007) took a different approach to analyzing the identity and campus environment. Instead of focusing on the student's identity, they focused on the identity of the schools and whether that had an impact on Latinos students' engagement. More specifically they were interested in gaining a better understanding of Latino student experiences at predominantly White institutions (PWI's) and Hispanic-serving institutions (HSI's) compared to the experiences of African American students at PWI and historically Black colleges and universities (HBCU's). Using and analyzing data from the 2003 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), they narrowed down their sample size to 2,896 African Americans seniors and 2,149 Hispanic seniors. Of those African Americans, 334 were at PWIs and 1,852 were from HBCUs. Of the Hispanics, 321 were at PWIs and 2,028 were from HSIs. The survey asked questions related to students' participation in a variety of activities like asking questions in class, making contribution to class discussions, interactions between student and faculty, campus environment, college satisfaction and gains in overall development. The analysis of the data showed that while African American students were more engaged at the HBCUs than their counterparts at PWIs, Hispanic students did not show significant difference between the two institutional types. The study suggests that a possible explanation for this is the recent establishment of HSIs. Many of these schools have recently been characterized as an HSI because of the influx of Hispanic student enrolling in the colleges and not so much the support that they provide for these students. Many HSIs are still structured, internally, as PWIs because that is the population they originally served. Consequently this affects Hispanic students and their ability to be engaged within the

college community, including the classroom, because there are no programs and services geared toward their success.

Programs and Services and Latino Student Retention

Lastly, the literature identified support services that Latino Students need in order to persist in college. Saunders and Serna's (2004) study takes a longitudinal approach and followed a group of 30 students who were enrolled in a college-prep program over a number of years. They were interested in knowing if there was a long-term affect of college prep programs in relation to the way Latino students navigated the transition to college and their ability to use support services, both academically and socially. They used quantitative data to gather information on students post high school, for examples grades and class patterns. They also used qualitative data and conducted one on one interviews twice a year with 10 students out of the original 30 students who participated in the research. These students were asked questions relating to challenges and adjustments they encountered in the transition, participation, immediate or future plans, goals and social justice activism. In addition to surveys and interviews, they also collected data through focus groups, cyberspace communication, written reflections and first-hand college observations 2-3 times a year.

In the end they found that the Latino students fell under three categories: those who were able to effectively establish new networks and using resources on their new campuses, those who were more comfortable maintaining and only seeking old networks and resources, and then there were those who were unable to seek help in either their new campuses or maintain relationships in their old networks. The findings reveal that students who fall under category one, where they were able to establish new networks, felt more comfortable and secure on campus and achieved a higher G.P.A because of it. They suggest that college-prep programs expand their services from

high school to college so that they can continue to support their students and that the college adopt a pedagogy that instills a sense of trust and community for first-generation Latino students.

Oseguera, Locks and Vega (2008) went more in depth than Saunders and Serna (2004) by using theories, that bring forward new information on Latino student retention, to analyze the factors that Latino Students face before entering college and once they are in college. Like Cortez (2008) and Stavans (2006), mentioned earlier, Oseguera et al. wrote about the over-reliance on standardized test as being a major factor for these students, especially since Latino students are constantly scoring lower on these tests than any other groups. Campus culture is the second factor they identified because Latino students are in higher risk of experiencing culture shock due to what Saunders and Serna (2004) found in their study and their constant need to navigate between two cultures: the culture at school and their culture at home. The authors described civic engagement and the need for diverse faculty and staff members as the next two factors that Latinos face. Civic engagement as named because the population served by the institution should feel a social responsibility to engage with other students, and doing so provides students with the opportunity to have their point of views questioned. Secondly, having faculty and staff members of color can serve as a liaison between the student and the school, promote cultural awareness and serve as role model for students. Lastly, they talk about finances being a major factor for Latino students because many of them do not have the resources to pay for school and therefore rely heavily on financial aid. In the end of their study they took it one step further than Saunders and Serna (2004) and provided a list of programs that are already put into place, whether that is nationally, like TRIO, statewide, like Puente Programs, or locally, like Purdue University's HORIZONS program. These programs were designed to help

underrepresented student population and some were even designed specifically for Latino students.

Although not an actual study, Santiago's (2008) report focused on practices and programs that work for Latino students. This report is the third briefing in a series of three and specifically focused on the observation of twelve HSIs, six of which were community colleges and the other six were public colleges, located in New York, Texas and California. He focused his observation on the institutional leadership and practices that aid in Latino student success. He found that these schools focused on five areas related to institutional practices: community outreach, academic support, data use, faculty development, and transfer paths. Some best practices around community outreach were programs that encouraged students to enroll in college or that connected the colleges to feeder schools through summer programming, in specific subject like math, or workshops that connected students to community leaders like business owners. Three different support programs came out of academic support: developmental education, cohort support programs and academic advising. Developmental education included summer immersion programs that prepared students for the placement test, while courses like First Year Experience fell under cohort support programs. Data use was found to be important because it created a "culture of evidence" and it helped facilitate campus discussions. Some best practices around faculty development included programs that taught faculty how to pronounce non-English names. Lastly, they found that there needed to be an open line of communication between community colleges and bachelor awarding institutions in order to provide a clear path for students to transfer after earning their associates degree.

In a separate report by Santiago (2012), he focused on the top 25 institutions that are graduating Latinos. This brief remained very general in the sense that it only looked at the top 25

institutions graduating Latino's based solely on the number of certificates awarded in 2009-2010. Although the report does not provide much information of what these institutions are doing in order to graduate these students, it does, however, break up the 25 institutions, including public, private, non-profit and for-profit institutions, based on education level ranging from certificates to doctoral degrees. The report found that Hispanic students were graduating at a higher rate from certificate level programs (58% - 74%) than they were from doctorate level program (7%). It also found that most of the institutions on the list were Hispanic serving institutions (HSIs) and were only located within 14 States, DC and Puerto Rico. Majority of schools on the list that were on the top certificate awarding institutions were for-profit institutions. Lastly, the institutions listed in this reports graduated 30% of the entire Hispanic population in higher education programs.

The literature showed that there are many factors outside of the students' control that play a role on whether Latino students access and succeed in college. Parents and family members, recruitment strategies, and institutions themselves all need to work together in order to recruit and retain Latino students. The literature suggests that Latino students and their parents must have access to accurate information especially around the applying and financial aid process in order to make college accessible and affordable for these students and their families. Institutions, on the other hand, need to make sure that they are creating an inclusive campus environment in order to attract these students and once these students are admitted, they need to make sure that they are getting the student support services that they need in order to be successful.

Additionally, faculty and staff members need to become more knowledgeable in Latino culture so that students are not grouped as just one, but instead as individuals within the group.

The next section of this paper will delineate the methods approach I took in my own research. Below, I will further discuss the paradigm, data collection process, and how my findings have helped me develop my understanding and the understanding of others when working with Latino students.

Methods Section

The goal of this study was to generate a list of strategies and best practices that will help personnel at higher education institutions and myself better understand how to increase Latino student enrollment and retention at institutions that are not Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI). To develop this understanding further, I conducted my research through a pragmatic paradigm. This paradigm supports the idea that there is only one reality, but each individual has its own representation of it (Mertens, 2015). In this study, the reality is that Latino students are one of the most underrepresented populations in higher education and that the representation is not proportional to the amount of Latinos living in the U.S. However, what institutions are doing, and have done, to support these students is unique to that specific institution. This study unifies all of these best practices in order to better inform other institutions that are trying to do the same. As the researcher, using the pragmatic paradigm gave me the freedom to choose what is important and appropriate, based on the needs of the Latino population (Mertens, 2015).

In order to generate a list of strategies and practices, I conducted interviews with personnel at institutions across the country. Using purposive sampling, I identified twenty-two non-Hispanic serving institutions that have seen an increase in Latino enrollment in recent years. These institutions were identified through the literature and recent articles and reports published in websites such as the Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, and Excelencia. After contacting several institutions, I used snowball sampling in order to grow my sample pool.

Snowball sampling, as stated by Mertens (2015), allowed me to ask participants to recommend other people that are also knowledgeable about the subject that I then contacted. In the end I interviewed seven individuals at six different institutions. The participants included a Director of a Latino Center, a Director of a Latino Studies Program who was also a tenured professor, a Director of Intercultural Affairs, a Dean of Students, an Admissions Counselor, a Director of Student Orientation and First Year Programs, and a Director of an Education Program (*see participant table in Appendix A*). Five out of the six institutions included in this study were predominantly White Institutions with the exception of one. The institutions included a 1) large, Midwestern, public institution, 2) a medium, public institution in the Mid-Atlantic, 3) a medium, religiously affiliated, private institution in the West Coast, 4) a small, religiously affiliate, private institution in the Northeast, 5) a small, public institution in the Northeast, and 6) a large, public institution in the Northeast.

The interviews with each participant varied from 25 – 60 minutes. The interviews began with a general overview of the institution, the institutional type and the participants' role. Throughout the interview they were asked about current trends with the Latino student population on their campus. More specifically, the interview included questions around programming and/or techniques that have helped with the increase of Latino presence on their campus, and whether the institution had adopted and or ran specific programs that target Latino student. Additionally, they were asked directly what kind of suggestions they have for other institutions trying to also increase their Latino enrollment and retention.

Current Latino students were not interviewed for this study, and because I did not directly deal with an underrepresented population, there was no risk involved in the data collection process. The study included minimal risk and there was no discomfort anticipated for

participants. The original proposal for this study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Merrimack College. Prior to interviewing, participants were asked to sign and return a consent form and were reminded during the interview that they were free to withdraw at any moment. In order to maintain confidentiality and privacy of the participants of this study, all names, of personnel and institutions, were masked. Additionally all transcriptions, recordings and notes will be kept in a password protected computer that only I have access to. To analyze my data, I used standard methods of coding qualitative data (Saldana, 2015). I transcribed each interview/focus group, then conducted line by line coding to identify themes and patterns, from which my findings and subsequent recommendations are generated.

Research Findings

Participants in this study were asked a series of questions in relation to what their institutions are doing in order to increase Latino enrollment and support Latino retention. They were asked about specific programming that exists either within their admissions department, their student affairs departments, or in some cases campus wide initiatives. Many of the topics and ideas revealed from the interviews were consistent throughout, creating a similar pattern to those found in the existing literature. Major themes explored in this next section are 1) Latino student trends in higher education, 2) campus environment and identity development, 3) internal and external partnerships and 4) resources for minimizing cultural barriers.

Latino Student Trends in Higher Education

Participants were asked to analyze the trends they were noticing within the Latino student population on their college campuses. As a result multiple themes were identified, including differing social identities, a focus on careers and professions, and factors impeding success. All participants saw an overall increase of minority students on their campuses. Most of the

participants saw changes within social identities, particularly in race and or ethnicity and in some cases within gender. In terms of gender, some participants noted that there are significantly more Latina women on their college campuses than there are Latino men. Several participants noticed an increase in South American students, specifically from Colombia and or Venezuela. Other institutions saw a growth in their bi-national and bi-cultural students. These are students that, as Ana stated, when “Christmas break comes they are heading back to wherever that motherland is...very much on those airplanes flying back to wherever home is for the family.” In general, the participants in this study have also seen a growth in immigrant and undocumented students at their institutions. Some noted the difference between an immigrant student who is coming from an educated background. Ana also stated,

So they are not necessarily first-generation college bound but they are first-generation in in the U.S. So their parents were schooled abroad, which the educational system is very different. So we are still having to basically instruct them and inform as if they were first-gen college bound.

Another important distinction made by participants was that international students who come from Latin American countries are not recognized as Latino students by the institution, and instead are considered solely international students, which in return can affect the way Latino students are served since many of them use the same services.

In addition to social identities, participants observed career trends for Latino students. Overall, Latino students are drawn to the helping professions and from an early stage, they reported that, many choose to remain on a vocational track. They are choosing majors such as psychology, criminal justice, business management and more recently are also choosing to study exercise health, the sciences, and nursing. Carla noted that “it’s almost slightly like there is a vocation edge to that major and its practical and the jobs are there.” This suggests that Latino students are prioritizing immediate financial security in careers where they are helping others,

similar to their familial values. Preferring a vocational career path is consistent to Santiago's (2012) report where he shows that there is a significant amount of Latino students graduating from certificate programs where many of these vocational track professions are offered. Santiago's (2012) report also shows a high number of Latino students enrolled in associate degree awarding institutions, where many of these tracks are also offered.

One trend that was consistent across all institutions was the factors that participants observed were impeding Latino student success, including the need for better resources for identity development and obstacles instilled at the institutional level. Several participants reported that there is a significant need to provide students a space to develop or maintain their Latino identity and to voice their struggles as a minority. Some participants coined this feeling as stereotype burnout, because students were constantly feeling like they represented an entire race. Gloria expressed this best when she said,

I think once being here...coming into their own identity development of what it means to be Latino in [city] because we draw a lot of our Latino students from out of the area, from California where they are surrounded by the culture and here there is no culture in regards to Latino culture, close to campus at least. You really need to speak it out and even for myself as a professional that has been hard.

In relation to their Latino identity, some participants observed how some of their Latino students are struggling with this part of their identity. Jose discusses what he has seen at his institution:

"In terms of what does it mean to be Latino, I see a mixture of students ... that come in who have very strong Latino identity and then there are others who are wow I am kind of finding this identity, I am exploring it, I am embracing it and what does that mean in terms of navigating those lines? What does it mean to be Latino? Am I Latino enough?"

Exploring and navigating their Latino identity is supported by Hernandez (2002), who finds that a Latino student experience can be impacted by the lack of access to their culture and the challenges of having to navigate between two cultures, the ones they were raised in and the

one their parents were raised in. When students arrive on campus, for many of them it is the first time they have to independently explore who they really are versus who their parents and families want them to be.

Furthermore, some participants observed that there is a slow realization by the institution about the needs of these students as noted by Laura,

It's a population that we need to think about. It's a population that has very distinct needs and values and beliefs and my overall perception is that campuses, and my campus is a good example, we are not thinking enough about what this demographic shift means for our students.

Some of the needs identified by the participants, discussed later in this section, were academic, financial, and social support specifically related to identity development. This realization was resonant with other participants who commented on the needs for proper advising with Latino students because they are not graduating in four years, are spending a lot of their financial aid packages on developmental courses, and are accumulating credits that do not necessarily count towards their actual degree. Several participants credited this trend to the first-generation status of many Latino students and their lack of access to accurate information from immediate family members. They also related this trend to the limited English proficiency of many Latino students who in return are placed in developmental courses. Their limited English proficiency is due to either recently migrating to the United States, not speaking English at home, or coming in academically underprepared for college level work.

Campus Environment and Identity Development

All participants discussed the importance of empowering, identifying, and understanding culture and cultural identity and how that relates to the environment the institution creates for students. These themes were especially evident when participants were asked about strategies that can help recruit and retain Latino students, including academics, strengthening identity, and

representation and advocacy within staff and faculty. Most participants acknowledged the importance of the students' Latino identity being represented in the literature that they read and the classes that they take. Therefore, many of them acknowledged the importance of offering Latin American or Ethnic Studies courses at the institution. Carla described her Latin American Studies department as interdisciplinary. She talked about the importance of taking this approach and describes it as a "critical thing, because if they were just a little solitary department in one place, we wouldn't have the reach and the influences that we have as faculty members in different departments." Some participants also talked about the importance of service learning and community engagement for Latino students, specifically talking about service trips to Latin American Countries, which allow for students to encounter the richness of Latin culture first hand and to experience being in the majority.

Dedicated spaces for Latino students were key components to making students feel welcomed and invited to come to and stay on campus. This strategy was referred to both in terms of an institution's recruitment and retention strategies. Participants found that creating dedicated spaces gives Latino students a voice and a community resource to develop their own Latino Identity, while educating others, including white allies. It is important to note that dedicated space does not only mean a physical space or center, because as noted by some participants, a center dedicated to Latino students might not be feasible or realistic at every institution. At some institutions, dedicated space meant programming and events that allowed Latino students to talk through some of these very relevant issues or to just be together with like-minded people and through that, building a sense of community within the Latino student population. To that point, many participants discussed the need for intentional outreach from offices who support and offer

these spaces so that students are aware that the services exist and that there are dedicated staff members there to help.

At some of the institutions in this study, that outreach started from the moment that Latino students were accepted into the college and at others it happened once the student had already starting attended. The need for these spaces is reflected in Castillo et al.'s (2006) study on the perception that Latino students had of campus. His findings similarly, reveal that in order to increase persistence, there is a need for institutions to support the existence of strong Latino student organizations. Specifically, these organizations function to provide opportunities for programs that may enable Latino students and faculty and staff member to have a positive interaction.

Maria, on the other hand, discusses the importance of dedicated spaces but for a different reason. She explains the importance of explaining and educating the rest of the college community on the differences that exist within the Latino culture. She specifically noted this when speaking on what her institutions is doing with students who are already on campus and what admission counselor can do while they are getting ready to recruit prospective students. She stated,

The [Latino Center] that we have here on campus, it really embodies that familial feel. Where when you walk in through the doors there is a sense of belonging and welcoming and provides students a place to go and experience different activities that relate to a variety of cultures within the Latino community...they recognize that there are differences, they don't clump everyone together in just one area and say ok you're Latino the end, no you're Latino, we have Puerto Ricans we have etc. and educate people about theses differences

She also explained how knowing the difference between Latino cultures can help admissions personnel when intentionally targeting Latino students:

It's important that if my territory is not Florida, but I am going down to Florida and I understand that Florida is going to consist mostly of Cubans who have, will have money to go to [institution's name], more so than those Latinos coming out of Cleveland.

Stavans (2006) echoes this need to educate the college community on the differences between Latin American cultures. He explains that Latino students who are admitted and attend institutions where they are the minority are being asked to represent an entire race, even though their traditions can be different from one another. This constant overreliance on seeing all Latino students as 'the same' relates to what Gloria described previously as stereotype burnout.

In addition to dedicated spaces and identifying the differences within the cultures, all participants talked about the importance of having the Latino population reflected within the staff and faculty in relation to both recruitment and retention. An admissions counselor is the first point of contact for many students at the institution. Many participants commented on how impactful it has been to have an admissions counselor who identifies as Latino, because they have the ability to make the process more personable and take into consideration the impact the culture and the family can have on the student. Rebecca notes, "I have to say that mostly the biggest difference when it comes to talking about Latino students is they know that I am Latina. They know that I speak the language fluently." In relation to admission, Laura asserted that

Thinking about your enrollment division and your admission division, how are Latino people represented in that division or do people in that division really understand the Latino community or do they understand how to engage Latino families.

Other participants also observed the importance and need for advocacy within the faculty at the institutions. Carla says,

Having Latino Faculty that can advocate is critical. And so we get on those committees and I'll be the token person...even though I hate being the only Latina in the committee, but if I wasn't there then there would be no one.

Some participants noted that at the very least, Latino students need to be represented within the

student body especially when prospective Latino students are seeking information about the institution. Jose states,

So as they are navigating the campus if they don't see someone that looks like them they are already feeling disconnected...So I think that when we are doing tours, we have to have our tour guides that look like the students coming in.

Even if the representation of Latino faculty, staff and students is not significant, some participants discussed the need for other faculty, staff, and administrators to be present during cultural events, because students notice their presence. Gloria summarized it best by saying,

I think the biggest thing is support. That is what we hear for our students of color and our Latino students. They are like there are no people on this campus that look like us which is ok but when people come out regardless of what they look like -- so talking about staff and faculty presence and how important that is -- they're like that's cool when I see our Vice President at [Latino student group] annual dinner.

The need for Latinos in positions of power within higher education is one that is reflected throughout the literature, but specifically in Stavans (2006) article and Oseguera et al. (2008) study on factors Latino students face before entering college and through their college experience. Stavans (2006) refers to the need for institutions to ensure there are Latinos in position of power so that they can shine light on some of the issues this population is facing within the institution. Otherwise, these students will not become a priority to the institution. Oseguera et al. (2008) also echoed these findings, noting that having a more diverse faculty will in return promote cultural awareness and they can serve as a role model or a point of contact for the student.

Internal and External Partnerships

When participants were asked about strategies to increase the Latino student population it was clear that establishing partnerships is a key component to succeeding. All participants agreed in the importance of partnering with both offices and department within the institution or

community stakeholders. Ana explained that the Latino Center on campus has not only helped in attracting Latino students but also in creating a campus culture, and noted:

The work that we do is not done in isolation. We work hand in hand with the office of admission, we reach out to financial aid, to housing, to tie all the these loose ends...for our first generation Latino families in particular.

Other participants, such as Gloria, explained that because their office needs to serve the entire student population they promote diversity by “partnering with other departments so that we’re not continuously doing programming on top of programming.” Specifically she speaks to advertising events that come out of their Multicultural Center such as courageous conversations, which provides a space for students to discuss current issues or inter-group dialogues, which engages students of colors and White students in conversation about race and privilege. She continued by saying,

We are still influencing diversity work within what we are doing, we are just not directly producing it...we are all fighting for the same customer so how can we work together to be able to do that.

Participants also identified the effect of connecting with peers and faculty members when both recruiting and retaining Latino students. Ana described how her institution connects current students with future students, by bringing them to recruiting events so that prospective students immediately feel the connection to campus. Once students who identify themselves as Latino are admitted, current Latino students and Latino faculty participate in making phone calls, welcoming them and giving them the opportunity to ask questions. Students and faculty are usually paired with students depending on declared or intended major. Similarly, Gloria described a recruiting strategy new to the admission office where they will be “recruiting (currently enrolled) students who are proficient in other languages, particularly Spanish being one of them, to be able to help students with conversations on the pre-arrival ride, the admissions

application side.” Using non-traditional students to recruit non-traditional students is found in Cortez and Cortez (2004) study where he identified this as key strategy for recruiting Latino students. However, Jose described another form of partnering within an institution when he explained his personal approach, and described it as follows:

One person or even three advisors can't do it all so what I try to do with my students is help them navigate, establishing and expanding their social capital on campus. So putting them in a position of meeting other students and other administrators who can be of service as a mentor, as a support system, identifying key players in a department that can make things happen.

Although Jose is not himself partnering with other offices, he connects students directly to people that can support them as they navigate their college experience and gain that social capital to persist.

In addition to partnering within the institution, some participants described how their institutions have engaged with the surrounding communities, including the importance of engaging Latino student's families in order to increase recruitment. In general, several participants acknowledged that these external relationships were important as noted by Jose who says, “I think it starts from establishing relationships with other non-profits, the high school, the pipeline.” Other participants gave concrete examples of what their institution is doing, such as Carla who described a pathway initiative between her institution, the local community college, and local high school. The mission of the initiative is to increase post-secondary opportunities for Latino students. Carla says,

We want to start with the seniors, get those seniors who are overwhelmingly Latino, get them to take [college] classes...so they can believe and know that they can do college level work while still in high school.

She goes on to discuss that the classes are taught by professors from the community college and that the end goal is to create a pipeline for students to be able to go from the high school to the

community college and then transfer into the four year institution. This initiative concurs with Santiago's (2008) report where he stressed that need for open communication between community college and 4-year institutions to create clear pathways for students and provide accurate information for both the student and the families.

Along with these community partners identified by the initiative at Carla's institutions, Maria recognizes the need to engage students earlier than senior year:

What are you (institution) doing with students in the 10th and 11th grade to educate them about the admission process and encouraging that it is feasible to attend this university if you do x, y, and z. So I think that it is super important that there are programs, pre-college, starting in the 10th grade where they're (university personnel) in the school and really giving information and empowering them that the pathway is possible.

These findings are reflective of Cortez and Cortez (2004) findings where he identified creating partnership with K-12 so that there is more access to accurate information as a key strategy for recruiting Latino students.

All participants agreed on the importance of engaging families in the admissions process. Laura affirmed this by stating that "going to college is not just the student's decision, it's a family decision," showing that Latino students are heavily influenced by their familial beliefs and values. Carla echoed Laura's statement by saying,

I would emphasize how the university works with that families because when you're working with Latino students, this is what they don't get, you really are working with the whole family and that is not just mom and dad, it is the whole thing.

When talking about strategies she used while recruiting Latino students, Maria described ways in which she engaged Latino parents including "making them feel comfortable, being able to understand the language and when you frame recruitment around the family you are going to be more successful than not." Rebecca specifies how she makes parents feel comfortable with this statement, "I read in the Common App that they are Spanish speakers and I will give those

families a call to let them know that I can help them out in Spanish.” The need to engage families is consistent with Smith (2008), where he finds that outreach to Latino and African-American students needs to be more family-oriented rather than student-oriented and it is important for institutions to be more present and welcoming by inviting families on campus and being more visible on weekends to make sure that Latino families are getting the information and attention needed.

A notable remark was made by Ana when explaining why the work with Latino students needs to be a collaborative one. She stated:

So the smart institutions knows what the demographic shift is and they know what the demographic growth is and they are putting things in place so that they can be prepared for that and actually benefit from it. So I would encourage institutions to make it clear, to say it loud that it is an institutional effort. Not just to support the community, no, this is to help yourself and be prepared for what the future holds. It is not about poor Latina I feel like I gotta help her, NO, it's actually the complete opposite. This is a population that will make your institution stronger. You better be ready for it and it has to be intentional. It cannot be done just by the [Latino Center], it needs to be everyone joins hands, everyone collaborates. This is a team effort, campus wide.

Ana's statement supports the need to look at this population closely and prepare for the future of higher education, by recognizing that the Latino population is the fastest growing population in the United States right now. It also supports the findings in Cortez and Cortez (2004) study which identifies the importance of collaborating with individuals and entities to help develop exposure and provide insights for the rest of the community.

Resources for Minimizing Cultural Barriers

Several resources were found to be essential to the success of Latino students including mentoring, bilingual resources, and more financial aid opportunities. Some participants described resources used at their institutions and the impact that it has had on the student's connectedness to campus and own personal growth. They particularly highlighted the effect of mentoring

programs on Latino students, whether peer mentoring, mentoring high school students or faculty to student mentoring. Gloria describes the importance of mentoring coming from faculty and staff and how it relates to the Latino culture,

I think mentorship is one of the biggest things because familia is so important and culturally looking up to our elders is also a huge part of Latino culture. I think being able to create mentoring programs, and that is one of the reason why [mentoring program] is so successful in regards to the retention of our students of color. It means students immediately have a staff person that they can look up to, not like a mother or father figure, but somebody that they can respect, a person of authority because authority again is also one of those pieces that is very engrained within the Latino culture.

Ana described a different form of mentoring program that comes out of her office where Latino students from her institution are paired with local high school students. The program targets first-generation high school students and provides them with access to activities such as SAT prep and campus navigation. Although she emphasizes that the program is not a pathway to the institution, students are expected to apply and about half of the students enroll. The high school students are not the only ones benefitting from this program because Ana also describes how the current students benefit, “the mentors are learning so much just by mentoring the younger ones, as in they are discovering their own talents and their own leadership skills.”

All participants stressed the importance of providing bilingual support services for Latino students and their parents, both in the recruitment process and in order to retain students. For many of the institutions in this study these services were provided through a bilingual website where students and parents can access the information in Spanish. At Gloria’s institutions there is even a website specifically for undocumented students that they can get all the information needed in order to understand what they are eligible for. At her institution, Rebecca provides students with tours in Spanish, making it easy for them and their families to feel at home and get the information in their own language. Once students are admitted participants described offering

a bilingual session at orientation where they are able to explain to both students and parents the expectations and challenges that may affect the student's college experience. Ana described a unique resource for Latino students once they are enrolled:

There is a great interest in maintaining or learning the Spanish language, if they haven't already. So we actually have classes that called Spanish for Bilinguals for students who may understand parts of the language but not necessarily write or read it.

Another unique resource is described by Carla, "we do a Latino graduation... we have a band and the family comes and they dance and they meet the professors and they meet the staff." Having services translated into Spanish is evident in Cortez and Cortez (2004) where they identify having public service announcements in Spanish TV stations as a key strategy specifically for recruiting students.

Although the institutions themselves are not specifically allocating money towards the Latino population, all participants discussed the importance of financial aid for Latino students. Some participants alluded to the reality that despite the resources provided by the institution, they were still going to lose Latino students to institution who offer a bigger financial aid package. Rebecca describes this exact feeling and state that "at the end, despite how hard I try it has to do with the financial aspect of the institutions." Laura also comments on the need of greater financial aid packages, specifically because of the competition that exist when recruiting the top Latino students.

To be honest every college wants the valedictorian who are students of color or at least the students that are in the top 10%...you need to show a very very good financial aid package because the truth is other people are doing that. So you are never going to get the students who say well I want to go to [institution's name] even though I have to pay 80% of the tuition versus another school who just gave me 90% of my tuition. So I think that institutions need to put their money where their mouth is.

Specifically, participants explained that it is not the top Latino student that they are losing out on, it is the student with potential, but not in the top 10% of their class because they are not awarded merit-based scholarships. Maria described:

Above all you have to attach money and unfortunately the constriction of public universities and politics and bureaucracy don't always allow for that...really pulling out the rug for them is going to be important too because if you have the high potential students they are looking at 4 other schools and those 4 other schools are probably going to find them more than you are...and then for the middle of the road student who is doubtful that they can even get into [institution's name].

Similarly, Jose also refers to these students who do not fall in the top 10% in his statement:

So if you are trying to recruit Latino students are we providing them with the upfront financial resources and how do you designate maybe some dollars to attract that population...and for our institution obviously if they are not merit-based, not ranked one or two in their high school, what other packages can you provide that is not only based on FASFA to close that gap... if that gap is not closed we are going to continue to lose more and more of these students.

The need for larger financial aid packages is indicated several times within the literature. Oseguera and his colleagues (2008), finds that finances are a major factor for Latino students forcing them to rely greatly on financial aid packages. Others such as Stavans (2006) and Smith (2008) highlight how by focusing on test scores and grades, institutions are targeting the same Latino students and are overlooking others with great academic potential.

It is important to note that although none of the institutions are allocating money towards their Latino population, Gloria described that "last year one of the reasons why we had our most diverse class...because admissions and financial aid provided more money for students of color to be able to help support their financial experience." Her institution is distributing money for all students of color, including multiracial, not just Latino students.

Through this research, the findings demonstrated that recruiting and retaining Latino students is an institutional effort and not one that can be solved by one person or one department.

There is a significant need to support Latino students as they explore and develop their Latino identity. When working with Latino students, staff and faculty need to remember that there are cultural and language barriers that might be holding these students back and not performing to their full potential. Finally, one of the greatest barriers for Latino students is their reliance on financial support to access a post-secondary education.

Recommendations

Conducting this research has allowed me to examine the needs of the Latino student population from a higher education perspective. The purpose of this study was to identify the best practices implemented by institutions across the country that aid in the enrollment and retention of Latino students. By integrating data from the interviews with knowledgeable stakeholders on the subject along with the literature, this section includes recommendations for institutions looking to also increase their Latino student population and better support their already existing Latino population.

Recommendation 1: Institutions should create a position that bridges recruitment and retention and that focuses on Latino students.

A common theme throughout the findings and literature is that work with Latino students cannot be done in isolation, including the work done within admissions, student affairs, and academic affairs. As seen throughout the findings, the needs of Latino students begin from the moment they apply and continue to the moment they graduate. Many of those needs remain the same throughout the different stages of their student life, such as the need for engaging families or having people within the institution who understand Latino students' struggles and can speak their language in order to feel welcomed and connected. In order to better support these needs, institutions should implement a program that aids in and connects all aspects of college life.

Modeling after LARES at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), the program should provide comprehensive Latino student recruitment and support services. LARES, which stands for Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services Program (LARES), is a one stop shop for Latino students that helps them navigate the college application process and once they are admitted they have Latino academic advisors who help with the transition in (University of Illinois at Chicago, n.d.). LARES is staffed by a director, two assistant directors, a math academic skill specialist, an English academic skill specialist, and four academic advisors (University of Illinois at Chicago, n.d.). Because the number of Latino students at UIC is large, the numbers of staff members and services can be adjusted depending on the Latino population at the respective institution.

Although a program like this may look different depending on the institution, the goal and mission should remain the same: to support and serve Latino students every step of the way. LARES runs independently, meaning it is its own department, however this will not be possible at every institution. In the beginning stages of the program, this office should ideally be a sub-service of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion or Multicultural Affairs, and Enrollment Services in order to ensure the success of the program. Similarly to LARES, this programs needs to include the word 'recruitment' as part of its name in order to make it clear that this is not just a program that focuses on students once they are on campus, but that it also extends into the community to support students before they enter. It can be an acronym such as LRaSS (Latino Recruitment and Support Services). This means that this office will focus on the entire Latino student experience, including engaging with Latino high school students and their families.

LRaSS needs its own space and two employee offices, separate from an overall multicultural space. The two offices will be for the Director of LRaSS and another one for an

Assistant Director. Similar to LARES, the director of LRaSS will oversee the overall success of the program and will represent the program's voice in administrative meetings. This person will also oversee and manage the tutoring portion of this program. The Assistant Director will focus on cultural programming and advising the Latino student affinity groups. Under the LRaSS program there should also be a Latino Recruiter who will focus on engaging the community and connecting students to campus. The Latino Recruiter's office, however, should be located under Enrollment Services, but they would have to report to both the Director of Admission and the Director of LRaSS. Additionally, it is crucial that all of these employees identify as Latino in order to create and foster a welcoming environment for these students and have experience working with Latino, first generation students, undocumented students and or students who are low income, first-generation, or undocumented. An admissions counselor, in most cases, is the first point of contact for students and there needs to be continuous contact with this person throughout their years at the college, especially for Latino students. Several participants in this study agreed that having someone who identifies as Latino in admissions has increased their numbers tremendously, due to the fact that they can make the experience personally relatable for students and parents.

In order to minimize the cost of having a program like this, and at the same time increase retention, LRaSS should have Latino student tutors who qualify for work-study rather than having professional instructors do the tutoring. This will provide current Latino students with leadership opportunities and get them connected to the campus, while also providing other Latino students, whether first-year or not, with a peer relationship that they might not be getting in the classroom. Similar to the LARES program, tutors need to work on a predictable and limited schedule so that they do not work more than is feasible for them or miss completing their

own assignments. Because students will provide the tutoring, LRaSS should have the flexibility to offer tutoring sessions in more than just English and Math, but also be able to tutor students in subjects such as the sciences and social sciences.

Aside from academic services, LRaSS should also provide cultural programming for their students and the overall campus. This includes educating the students and the campus on current Latino trends, facing the Latino community like the recent political climate and how it has affected the Latino population. This also includes cultural events and programming celebrating Latino cultures and educating others on the differences amongst them. These programs may be and should be mostly student-led with the supervision of the Assistant Director. These programs are important because they give students the voice and space to develop their Latino identities and to exhibit pride in their history.

In addition to student tutors, cultural awareness, and identity building, the program should provide opportunities for Latino students to work within the admissions office. Similar to the program described by the participant Ana, where current Latino students attend open houses and recruiting events in the area and are the voice and face of the institution. LRaSS should implement a similar program for admission so that current students are, again, developing their leadership skill and simultaneously recruiting prospective Latino students. These student ambassadors can also help the Latino Recruiter build a relationship and connect with the community surrounding the university, especially if the institution is bordering an urban city. This can also aid in the continuous connection that the Latino recruiter will have with students and emphasize that their relationship does not stop once admitted. This continuous connection will also help create the familial feeling that Latino students need in order to succeed in college

because students are able to build on the relationship that was started through the application process.

Assessing the success of the program should be based on increases in Latino student enrollment, especially in the beginning stages of the program. This means examining the Latino student population and seeing whether it has grown since the implementation of this program, as well as whether retention has increased since the implementation of the program. This does not mean just looking at whether students are being retained from one year to another, but rather how they are being retained. They need to look at G.P.A.'s, involvement within the campus, their full-time or part-time status, and are they on the road towards graduation. Finally, evaluating students' experience, by holding focus groups where students are asked about their involvement with the program and how it has impacted their experience on campus.

Hernandez (2002) really speaks to this need in his study about the first year experience for Latino students. He found that students felt that they did not have access to their culture, which had a huge impact on their experience on campus. A program as extensive as LRaSS will address the many needs of Latino students. Hiring employers that identify as Latino will address their need to see themselves within the staff. Having someone who identifies as Latino to recruit students will attract more students to the institution. Creating an office and space dedicated to supporting their needs will create a welcoming and foster an inclusive environment. The cultural program will aid in their Latino identity and having peer tutors will allow them to get the academic support that they need, especially if they are coming underprepared for college-level courses.

Recommendation 2: Institutions should make concrete efforts to hire more faculty and staff that identify as Latino.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), Latino faculty make up only 5% of the entire faculty population of US colleges and universities. That includes lecturers, instructors, assistant professors and professors (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Yet the Latino student population is the fastest growing population in the United States. Latino students already struggle with navigating their way around campus. It becomes even harder when they cannot find anyone on campus that looks like them or speaks their language. Institutions need to diversify their own personnel in order to create an environment where Latino students feel comfortable and welcome. The efforts to recruit more Latino staff and faculty need to be addressed from administrators and it needs to be a campus wide effort.

Ponjuan (2011), an assistant professor at the University of Florida, found that institutions who are trying to diversify their applicant pool need to educate search committees on three aspects of the search process: 1) linking positions to research on race and ethnicity issues, 2) creating a special strategy that allows you to seek to hire faculty of color, and 3) having other personnel of color as part of the search committee. Modeling after efforts made at Western Washington University, there a variety of initiatives that institutions can implement to recruit more Latino faculty and staff. One of the more popular ones being used at institutions, like Western Washington University, is creating fellowships that specifically targets students of color currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program to work in while completing their degree (Shlesinger & Ojikutu, n.d.). If the institution does not have the financial means to create positions such as fellowships, they could also increase their applicant pool by rephrasing the job description to include the ability to work with diverse programs as part of the job description (Shlesinger & Ojikutu, n.d.). Simply adding this may compel a Latino looking for a job to apply for the position because they now feel like they have more qualifications.

Hiring more Latino faculty can provide students, in general, with a different perspective in the classroom. For Latino students this could mean seeing their experiences and stories being reflected in the material, and for other students it means looking at the same material they have been taught all their lives through the Latino perspective. However, increasing the number of diverse faculty members is not the only area of higher education that needs improvement. For Latino students living on campus, the classroom is only a small portion of their college experience. What they do outside of the classroom could have a higher impact on their retention. Therefore, there also needs to be an emphasis on hiring more professional staff, such as student affairs and academic affairs administrators, who identify as Latino. This should include staff in academic advising, student involvement, career services, residence life, library services, admissions, and in administrative positions of power so that they can advocate for them at the higher level. As mentioned previously, working towards Latino student success cannot be done in isolation, so having a representative in each department and support services will ensure the success of these students. Institutions can use a similar method as the one provided for faculty in order to also increase the applicant pool to include more Latino prospective in the student affairs field.

Although institutions will not be particularly saving resources because in the end this is personnel that are needed in order for an institution to function, making these small changes can help attract a larger pool of applicants and in the future move towards having personnel that mirrors the college student population. By adopting these strategies across all departments, the campus will be a step closer to becoming truly diverse and ease the transition for Latino students in any and every department.

Recommendation 3: Institutions should provide dedicated spaces for Latino students to engage in identity development activities and cultural celebrations.

Both the literature and the findings show the importance of creating a space for Latino students to connect with other Latino students and the need to express themselves and their culture. Castillo et al. (2006) specifically found that students with a stronger ethnic identity had harder time adjusting to their college campus. Similarly to his findings, participants in the study repeatedly talked about the need for students to have a space they can call their own. Having a dedicated space for Latino students can be crucial to their retention on campus. Participants in this study suggested that creating a Latino Center may not be feasible depending on the size of the institution. However, institutions need to be more strategic in the way that they prepare for a Latino future and therefore, dedicated space needs to be created.

The space can look different at every institution as long as the outcomes remain the same: safe space for Latino students to celebrate their culture and each other, engage in dialogue about the issues affecting their community, and are able to simply speak their language. This space can come in the form of a Latino Student Office, or through a well-funded, Latino student-led organization that provides these spaces for students through programming and activities around campus. The programs and services should embody the mission and services provided by the Chicano Student Programs at University of California Riverside. The Chicano Student Programs not only provides a physical space for Latino Students, but they also provide a virtual space where students have easy access to resources on campus, including internships opportunities, events, and contact information for Latino faculty partners in different departments (UC Riverside, n.d.). Some of the programs organized by the Chicano Student Programs include a graduation banquet for Latino students and their families, Noche Cultural where students are

given a space to promote cultural differences through music, dance and spoken word, and a woman's week to celebrate Latina women and their accomplishments (UC Riverside, n.d.). All of these programs celebrate the Latino culture in a variety of ways. A graduation banquet where the family is invited onto campus can really make a difference for a student who their entire college experience had to navigate between their two cultures. Additionally, having nights dedicated to the Latino culture allows students to develop and, in some cases, make their Latino identity stronger, while educating the rest of the college community.

Because not every institution has the resources to have a physical space such as UC Riverside has, at the very least other institutions need to have student groups or organization with a Latino identity or that represents the Latino culture. Similarly to Latinas Unidas at Harvard, this group should provide a space for Latinos to come together and empower and encourage one another (Lead, 2015). Ways in which this group can do this is by holding events that discuss current issues and engages them in team-building exercises. They can also hold workshops that bring current Latino leaders within the community to share their stories, modeling after Latinas Unidas at Harvard. Latinas Unidas holds an annual conference called LEAD, which stands for Latina Empowerment and Development Conference. The mission and goal of the conference is to motivate Latina women to fulfill their professional and leadership goals (Lead, 2015). Similar to Latinas Unidas, a Latino student group should aspire to educate others while celebrating and empowering each other through a series of programs and activities that are both campus wide and on a smaller scale.

If the institution is running under a Multicultural Affairs model, then these groups or this dedicated space should operate under these services. Adopting a Latino Student Office will require additional personnel that can oversee the office, such as a director and or program

coordinator and a permanent space. This person can measure the needs of their students and the success of various programs through evaluations, surveys, and the liveliness of the office. A Latino student group however would not require a permanent space, but it will require space for their events and meetings and a faculty or staff advisor that oversees these activities. The group can measure their success by keeping track of the number of people attending their events and getting feedback from members.

Recommendation 4: Mentoring programs specifically for Latino students should be established within each institution.

Finding peers to relate to and connect with can make or break a student's college experience, especially for a Latino student. To ensure that Latino students are making that connection from their arrival on campus it is important that institutions organize and implement programs that provide students with a peer mentor who will help them navigate the campus culture and connect them with its resources. The mentoring program should be led by Latinos for Latinos and students should be paired up by interest, whether that is academic interest or social interest. Reflecting the peer-mentoring program at University of Virginia, which is specific to Latino students, this program should aspire to be completely student-led (University of Virginia, n.d).

Mentors are highly motivated Latino students who are organized and connected to campus through leadership roles and club memberships. A mentor must have a minimum G.P.A of a 3.0 to show that they are not only involved in the campus community, but also in good academic standing. Resembling the peer-mentoring program at University of Virginia, mentors should undergo a series of trainings (University of Virginia, n.d.). These trainings should relate to current trends facing the Latino community so that mentors are prepared to navigate tough

conversations with their mentees. A mentee, on the other hand, should be a first-year or transfer student who also self-identifies as Latino.

To ensure the success of a mentoring program there needs to be a one-year commitment from both the mentors and the mentees. Ways to confirm that there is commitment is to have students go through an application process, with the application for the mentors being more comprehensive and followed by in person trainings. An application can also help match mentors and mentees based on their interests and similarities. If the institution has the financial means for it, they may also incentivize the mentoring role by making it a paid position on campus.

Regardless of whether is it a paid position or not, to assess that meetings between mentors and mentees are actually happening, students need to log the hours they are meeting with their mentee followed by a summary of their meeting. Although the program should be student-led, they do need a staff member to help coordinate, advise, and oversee the success of the program.

Recommendation 5: Institutions need to allocate more money in form of financial aid and scholarships for Latino students.

The financial need of Latino students will be a determinant factor of what college they choose to attend or whether they even attend at all. Both participants in this study and the literature call attention to the low socioeconomic status of Latino students and their families. Institutions need to meet the needs of these students in order to ensure that every student has an equal opportunity to attain a higher education. An issue identified by the participants in this study is institution's focus on merit-based scholarships, which in many cases can exclude Latino students, especially the ones who may not be the top of their class but still have the potential to succeed.

Institutions can meet these needs by moving towards a similar model used at Franklin and Marshall College where they are an 100% needs based institution, meaning only students who show a need for financial support are awarded financial aid (Franklin and Marshall College, n.d.). In three years, this model has tripled their low-income and working class population (PBS Newshour, 2015). Although the model used at Franklin and Marshall is not specific to the Latino community, using a model such as this one will allow more access for low-income Latino students. It will also help Latino students focus more on applying and earning a degree rather than how they will pay for it, which in many cases can lead to a student not persisting. If institutions move to become need-based rather than merit-based, they will not be losing money they would just be allocating the resources they already have to recruit students with more needs.

Allocating resources to a specific racial population may be considered unethical because they are excluding other populations who are also in need. Therefore, to provide more funding for Latino students, institutions can partner with community organizations and individuals in order to sponsor and donate money for scholarships specifically for Latino students. This approach is modeled after University of South Florida Latino Scholarships where each year a number of sponsors award four-year scholarships to a handful of Latino students. Partnering with outside stakeholders could also help institutions not only recruit and retain a larger Latino population, but it can also help them create a presence within their community and grow their endowments.

For these relationships to be established there needs to be a committee made up of staff and faculty who have strong ties to the local community, school community, and knowledgeable of the Latino population and culture. The committee will be responsible for identifying outside

stakeholders, marketing so that these organization and individuals want to participate, and upholding the criteria of the students who qualify for the scholarship.

Conclusion

The literature shows that Latino students encounter many factors that impede their access and success to and in higher education, making them vulnerable and underrepresented. Perhaps, the biggest factor that these students must face is being misinformed and not knowing the tools necessary to acquire the right information. More specifically, the literature is divided into three major categories: recruiting strategies, how identity and campus environment can affect Latino student engagement and programs and services for Latino students. Within these three categories we find that 1) institutions need to include families in the college process and that institutions should work together instead of compete against each other to recruit more Latino students and not the same Latino students, 2) Latinos at institutions feel as if they are not only navigating the college, but they are also navigating between two culture, theirs and their parents, and 3) the need for programs, whether nationally, statewide, or locally that support Latino students and their family once in college.

Similarly, the findings in this study suggest that more work needs to be done by the institutions in order to support Latino students. The major findings identified in this study were how the campus environment can affect Latino identity development, the need to partner both internally and externally, and resources that can help minimize some cultural barriers. To support their identity development institutions can create dedicated spaces, hire more Latino faculty and staff, and offer Latin American courses. Working together as a campus and as a community is key to increasing Latino recruitment efforts and most importantly, institutions need to ensure that they are communicating with the family and distributing information in their language. Lastly,

there is a high demand for bilingual services, peer mentoring, and a big push for financial support.

As a result of conducting this study, I gained a better understanding of the Latino population and how to better support them in higher education. More specifically, I learned about the factors keeping Latinos from enrolling in college, such as financial needs, language barriers, and familial beliefs. I hope that through this project I have proven that instead of focusing on the factors, we should focus on the solutions and how to turn factors, such as strong family ties which so often is described as a deficiency, to something the institutions can use in their favor when recruiting and retaining these students. As the face of America changes, so does the population of applicants trying to access college. Providing Latino students with access to college is only the first step. Creating a campus climate that is hospitable to change and differences and that allows for students to question and think for themselves and for the good others is what campuses should aspire to be. More research on the Latino population needs to be done in order to make sure that every student is being served.

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Appendix A*Interviewee Table*

Pseudo Name	Position	Institutional Type
Maria	Education Program Director	Large, Public, Midwestern, PWI
Ana	Director of a Latino Center	Medium, Public, Mid-Atlantic, PWI
Gloria	Student Orientation and First Year Programming	Medium, Private, Religiously Affiliated, PWI, West Coast
Laura	Director of Intercultural Affairs	Small, Private, Religiously Affiliated, PWI, Northeast
Carla	Director of Latino Studies and Tenure Professor	Large, Public, Northeast
Rebecca / Jose	Admissions Counselor / Dean of Students	Small, Public, Northeast, PWI

Appendix B*Interview Protocol*

1. Tell me a little bit more about yourself
2. What type of institutions is _____ ? (religious, private, public, big, small, etc.)
3. What is your role at this institution?
4. What are some trends that you have seen with the Latino population?
5. Can you describe what the institution has done in order to increase their Latino population?
6. Has the institution implemented any specific programs that target Latino students/Community?
7. What have you found to be the most effective in terms of getting Latino students on campus? Why?

How about least effective? Why?
8. What have you found to be most effective in terms of getting students to stay on campus? Why?

How about least effective? Why?
9. What suggestions do you have for other institutions that are looking to increase their student population?
10. Is there anything else about increasing Latino enrollment and retention, that I did not already ask you?