

# CALIFORNIA POLICY OPTIONS TO **ACCELERATE** LATINO SUCCESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION



*EXCELENCIA* IN EDUCATION

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE TOMÁS RIVERA POLICY INSTITUTE  
AND THE CALIFORNIA POLICY RESEARCH CENTER





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD . . . . . 2

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS . . . . . 3

ABOUT THE AUTHOR . . . . . 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY . . . . . 4

OVERVIEW . . . . . 6

WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US . . . . . 7

    Demographics . . . . . 8

    College Enrollment . . . . . 9

    Financial Aid . . . . . 10

    Degree Attainment . . . . . 11

    Benefits to Individuals . . . . . 12

    Workforce Needs and Benefits . . . . . 12

REFRAMING THE POLICY FOCUS TO SUCCESS . . . . . 13

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . . 14

SUMMARY . . . . . 21

REFERENCES . . . . . 22

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Founded in 1985, The Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) advances informed policy on key issues affecting Latino communities through

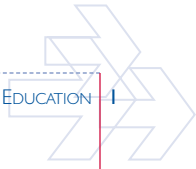
objective and timely research contributing to the betterment of the nation. TRPI is an affiliated research unit of the University of Southern California School of Policy, Planning, and Development and is associated with the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy at Columbia University. To learn more, visit [www.trpi.org](http://www.trpi.org).



Leveraging the extensive knowledge base of the University of California (UC) system for the betterment of state policy making, the California Policy Research Center (CPRC) seeks to advance public

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DECEMBER 2006





# FOREWORD

Over the next 15 years, the United States will see a profound demographic shift as the baby boomer generation retires. In California this process has already begun. Following in their footsteps in the workplace will be today's young people of high school and college age, an increasing number of whom are Latino. To ensure the high caliber of tomorrow's workforce and leadership, California and the country must act today to address the educational achievement of our fastest growing community.

In response to this challenge, *Excelencia* in Education was launched in 2004 with the aim of accelerating Latino achievement in higher education. *Excelencia's* strategy is to apply the results of research and analysis to public policy and institutional practice. This policy brief is one example of our work. It demonstrates our belief that federal, state, and institutional policy makers play a critical part in Latino students' pursuit of—and success in—higher education. Focusing on Latino students, *Excelencia* in Education is working to inform and engage those who make and implement public policy in higher education.

California Policy Options to Accelerate Latino Student Success in Higher Education is the first cooperative effort of three organizations and is supported by USA Funds. *Excelencia* in Education worked in association with the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI) and the California Policy Research Center (CPRC) to conduct the analysis and meet with California policy leaders. Over the next several months *Excelencia*, TRPI, and CPRC will continue to work cooperatively to engage California higher education policymakers to react to the ideas and recommendations offered in this brief as they develop their higher education policy plans for 2007 and beyond.

SARITA E. BROWN  
President  
*Excelencia* in Education

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Saeed Ali, Chief of Staff for Senator Richard  
Alarcón, 20th Senate District

Deborah Doty, Chief of Staff for Assembly  
Speaker Fabian Nuñez, 46th District

Juan Carlos Torres, Chief of Staff for Assembly  
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Member Lynn Daucher, 72nd District

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Jason Murphy, Higher Education Legislative  
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21st Senate District

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Deborah A. Santiago** is the Vice President for Policy and Research at *Excelencia* in Education and brings her extensive experience in education policy and research to the challenge of accelerating Latino student success. Her current research focuses on accountability, higher education policy, institutional practices, and the condition of Latinos in education. Recent publications include *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04* and *Inventing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: The Basics*. Dr. Santiago holds degrees in economics, urban affairs, and education policy.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In order to remain economically competitive, California's economy will require a more educated workforce than currently exists. In 2005, 31 percent of Californians 25 and over had a bachelor's degree or higher. A large portion of the demographic growth in California through 2040 will be Latino. Multiple research studies on California conclude that the state's economic competitiveness will be highly dependent on the educational attainment of Latinos. However, the educational attainment of Latinos in California is very low. In 2005, only 9 percent of Latinos 25 and over in California held a bachelor's degree or higher.

Many activities are taking place in California to improve educational preparation and opportunity for Californians. However, without concerted statewide efforts it will continue to be difficult to substantially expand opportunities to accelerate higher education attainment and workforce preparation. Given the policy context delineated in this brief, the following policy recommendations are focused on three goals to stimulate conversations for policy consideration. All of these goals are consistent with the spirit of the foundation agreement for modern higher education policy in the state, the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education.

**GOAL:** Ensure that all students and parents understand the long-term benefits of a higher education degree and the steps necessary to prepare for college.

- ⇒ Provide all new parents in hospital maternity wards with an informational packet on preparing, saving, and paying for college.
- ⇒ Offer an elective course for middle school students on how to prepare, apply, select, and pay for college.

- ⇒ Develop and market charts to English and Spanish media outlets that show lifetime earnings by educational attainment level and professions.
- ⇒ Identify parents who are college graduates and parents who have children enrolled in college and enlist them to assist with outreach programs to underrepresented communities.
- ⇒ Promote the establishment of K–16 partnerships that focus on student success and work directly with community-based organizations.

**GOAL:** Make college affordable for students from all economic backgrounds.

- ⇒ Create a Golden State Scholars Program linked to the Cal Grant.
- ⇒ Model a new University of California opportunity scholarship program targeting students from economically disadvantaged and underrepresented communities.
- ⇒ Create financial incentives for students to remain continuously enrolled in higher education until degree completion.

⇒ Expand state tax incentives for employers to support their employees' education.

**GOAL:** Increase the number of Californians — especially those from underrepresented groups — who have a postsecondary degree.

⇒ Develop an outreach plan to engage Californians who do not have a high school diploma and develop strategies to encourage completion of a diploma or GED.

⇒ Scale up proven institutional programs that have helped students — especially Latino students — to transfer and transition to institutions of higher education.

⇒ Increase state support of colleges and universities that enroll large percentages of students from underrepresented groups.

⇒ Provide incentives for community colleges to increase the number of students who transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions in California.

⇒ Encourage institutions to set degree-attainment goals based on existing baseline data, and create institutional incentives for meeting or exceeding these goals.

⇒ Gather and disseminate examples of institutional practices that have been successful in providing college opportunities and graduating students in a timely manner.

⇒ Encourage institutions to conduct an internal evaluation of student access, persistence, and completion that focuses on the performance of Latino and other underrepresented students.

⇒ Charge leaders of the three public higher education systems in California to develop a coordinated action plan to improve the degree attainment for all Californians—especially underrepresented groups.





# OVERVIEW

California policy makers and institutional leaders are making critical policy, programmatic, and budgetary decisions affecting segments of the state’s population that lack sufficient levels of formal training and education. These decisions are occurring at a time when five critical trends are converging in the state.

1. Economic competition increasingly requires more “knowledge workers” for California to continue its high level of global competitiveness.
2. A higher education degree is increasingly becoming the education level necessary for a competitive workforce in California.
3. The Latino population is projected to experience the largest growth of all segments of California’s population.
4. Educational attainment levels for Latinos in California are substantially and significantly lower than those of other ethnic groups.
5. Increasing numbers of low-income and first-generation potential college students, many of whom are Latino, are preparing for a higher education.

The purpose of this brief is to offer policy recommendations, based on recent research and discussions, to improve the educational attainment of California’s workforce, especially Latinos. Understanding the California context is fundamental to drafting appropriate recommendations for addressing the state’s and the nation’s vital need for human capital. In the last three years alone, more than 20 studies have been released that detail these five converging trends in California, and these studies are referenced throughout the brief. They provide solid research and broad recommendations for action.

Although this brief summarizes the most salient findings from these studies, the

emphasis is less on the research and more on specific policy recommendations for higher education that can foster conversations with state legislators, public officials, education stakeholders, and college/university leaders to improve the educational attainment of all Californians. The policy recommendations in this brief were also informed by conversations with several state legislators and their staff, institutional leaders, students in focus groups, and the author’s participation in the Chicano/Latino Intersegmental Convocation Policy Summit held in October 2006 entitled, “Higher Education for Latinos: Rescuing California from Separate and Unequal Education.”



# WHAT RESEARCH TELLS US

Research has shown that higher levels of educational attainment improve civic engagement, personal earnings, and business competitiveness in communities (IHEP, 2005). Recent studies from diverse sources have also made the case that in this “knowledge” economy, California’s competitive ability will decrease if more residents do not get a college education. Even more specifically, these studies have highlighted the need to increase the rate at which Latinos and other underrepresented groups in California attain higher education—so that California’s economy and competitiveness will not deteriorate. The following are findings from recent studies that summarize the converging trends of demographic shifts, workforce needs, and educational attainment in California. These findings lay the groundwork for policy action.

*California is being reshaped by a changing population, a globalizing economy, and fantastic new technologies that are redefining our relationships and our sense of geography. One of the most threatening trends is the potential mismatch between the education requirements of the new economy and the amount of education its future population is likely to have.*

- Baldassare and Hanak. *California 2025: It’s Your Choice.*

*If California fails to provide an adequate workforce of highly educated workers, it risks negative economic impacts far beyond the immediate effects on those workers and their employers.*

- Fountain, Cosgrove, and Abraham. *Keeping California’s Edge: The Growing Demand for Highly Educated Workers.*

...[[Investments in higher education will not only increase people’s incomes, they will also be cost-effective for the state because of the increased taxes and lower governmental program costs which result when Californians have higher incomes.

- Brady, Hout, Stiles, Gleeson, and Hu. *Return on Investment: Education Choices and Demographic Changes in California’s Future.*

*Improving the education and skills of low-educated workers can help to reverse the trend in falling wages of low-earning workers, reduce income inequality, lower wage gaps between racial and ethnic groups, reduce poverty, and improve child well-being.*

- Reed. *The Growing Importance of Education in California.*

*Increasing the rates of high school graduation, college participation, and degree completion among the black and Latino populations is essential to California’s social and economic health.*

- Moore and Shulock. *Variations on a Theme: Higher Education Performance in California by Region and Race.*

*Despite increases in educational attainment for the entire population in California, educational attainment among Hispanic males has actually declined over the past 20 years.*

- Kelly. *As America Becomes More Diverse: The Impact of State Higher Education Inequality. California State Profile.*

*Young Latinos have lower levels of schooling than the white, baby-boom population that makes up a large share of the college-educated workforce. Thus, how will they fare in the future labor market?*

- *Getting to 2025: Can California Meet the Challenges?*

*Latinos lag behind other racial/ethnic groups in levels of college preparation, participation, and completion, which is particularly troubling as the Latino share of the state's working-age population reaches 36 percent by 2010, and nearly 50 percent 10 years later.*

– The Campaign for College Opportunity. *Variations on a Theme Fast Facts.*

*A high number of qualified, potential Latino college students will continue to miss out on the opportunity to pursue higher education due to misinformation and misperceptions about financial aid eligibility and college costs. Unless action is taken to address these issues, the existing low*

*trend of college achievement among Latinos will remain unchanged.*

– Zarate and Pachon. *Perceptions of College Financial Aid Among California Latino Youth.*

The demographic, educational, and economic trends identified in these studies will have a profound impact on California's economic competitiveness and social prosperity. What follows is a brief overview of some of the most recent and relevant data on California's demographics, college enrollment, financial aid, degree attainment, and workforce needs—with a focus on Latinos—that provides additional context for the proposed statewide policy options.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Among California's school-age and college-age populations, the number of Latinos is large and growing, and that growth is expected to continue.

⇒ Latinos represented 46 percent of California's school-age children (age 5–17) in 2004. By 2015, Latinos are projected to represent over 50 percent of school-age children (State of California, 2004 and 2006).

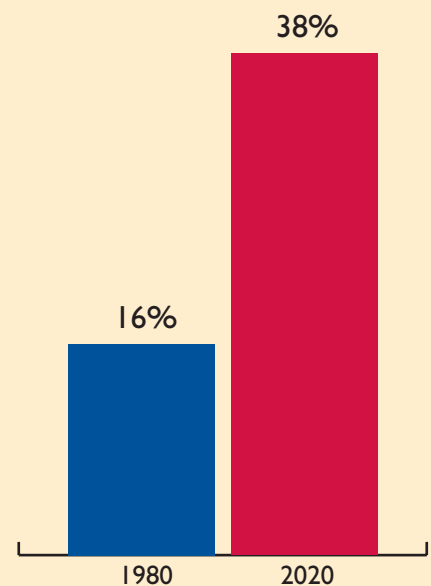
⇒ Latinos represented 48 percent of California's public K-12 enrollment in the 2005-2006 academic year and 37 percent of public high school graduates (California Department of Education, 2006).

⇒ Although California's high school graduating class is projected to stabilize and even decline slightly in the years to come, by 2013–14 Latino representation among the graduates is still projected to increase by almost 50 percent (WICHE, 2003).

⇒ The total college-age population in California is projected to increase by 27 percent by 2014, with the number of Latinos within this age group increasing by 42 percent and the number of whites increasing by only 2 percent (Brady, 2005).

⇒ By 2020, the share of the California workforce that is Latino is expected to jump to 38 percent. In 1980, Latinos represented 16 percent of California's workforce (Kelly, 2005). See Figure 1.

**FIGURE 1. Latino Representation in California's Workforce, 1980 and 2020 (projected)**



Source: Kelly, 2005

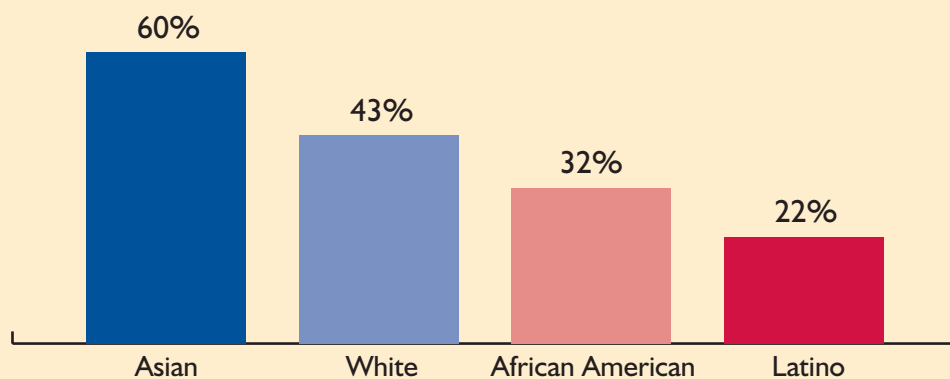
## COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

The percentage of college-age Latinos in California who are enrolled in the state's system of public higher education is the lowest among all racial/ethnic groups.

- ⇒ California ranked 49th among the 50 states in the percentage of high school seniors who enroll in baccalaureate-granting colleges (Brown, 2006).
- ⇒ In 2003-04, 60 percent of Asian young adults were enrolled in higher education, compared to 43 percent of white youth, 32 percent of African American youth, and 22 percent of Latino youth (Moore, 2005). See Figure 2.
- ⇒ In 2005, only 24 percent of Latino women (Latinas) 18-24 years old were enrolled in a public college or university, compared with 30 percent of African American women, 35 percent of white women, and 57 percent of Asian women (CPEC, 2006).

- ⇒ Only 17 percent of Latino men (Latinos) 18-24 years old were enrolled in college, compared with 21 percent of African American men, 29 percent of white men and 51 percent of Asian men (CPEC, 2006).
- ⇒ In 2005, Latinos represented 29 percent of students entering California community colleges, 8 percent of students entering the CSU system, and 3 percent of students entering the UC system.<sup>1</sup>
- ⇒ The percentage of Latino high school graduates entering public baccalaureate-granting colleges has not changed much over the last 25 years; it has hovered between 8 and 10 percent (CPEC, 2005).
- ⇒ In 2003-04, 60 percent of Latinos enrolled in higher education in California were enrolled part time (IPEDS, 2003-04).

**FIGURE 2. College Enrollment in California, by Race/Ethnicity: 2003-04**



Source, Moore, 2005

<sup>1</sup> The college entry rates for 2005 were calculated using data from CPEC online data system ("Enrollment of First-Time Freshmen Age 19 and Younger in Public Institutions") with the methodology as described in the CPEC 2005 publication *Are they Going? University Enrollment and Eligibility for African-Americans and Latinos FS 05-03*. Analysis was limited to graduates of the state's comprehensive, alternative, and continuation schools.

## FINANCIAL AID

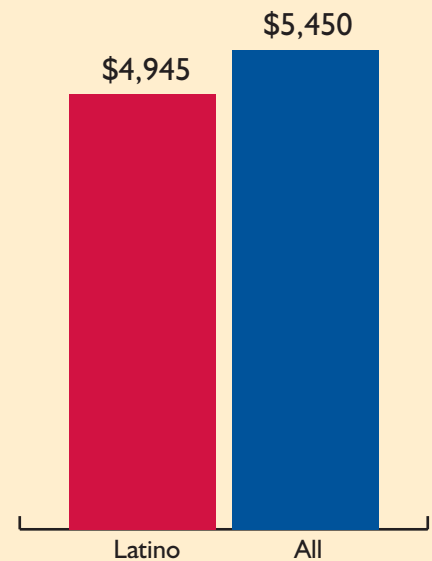
Latinos' knowledge of financial aid options to pay for college is low, a fact that affects their college choices, persistence, and degree completion.

- ⇒ Knowledge about college was low among Latino parents surveyed, especially among parents with lower incomes and educational backgrounds as well as among first-generation immigrants (Tornatzky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002).
- ⇒ Three-fourths of young adults not enrolled in college would have been more likely to attend college had they been exposed to better information about financial aid, especially during their K–12 education (TRPI, 2004).
- ⇒ More than half of all Latino parents and 43 percent of Latino young adults could not name a single source of financial aid to pay for college (TRPI, 2004).
- ⇒ In a recent survey of California Latino youth, few respondents could accurately estimate the cost of attending either the University of California or the California State University (Zarate & Pachon, 2006).
- ⇒ Latinos received lower average amounts of financial aid to pay for college than any other ethnic group in California. In 2003–04, Latino undergraduates received an average aid award of \$4,945 compared

to the average award of \$5,450 for all ethnic groups in the state (Santiago, 2005). See Figure 3.

- ⇒ Latinos in California are less likely to receive federal aid than Latinos in other states or nationally. Less than one-third of Latinos in California received federal aid to pay for college. Nationally, 50 percent of Latinos received federal aid (Santiago, 2005).

**FIGURE 3. Average Undergraduate Financial Aid Awarded in California: 2003-04**



Source: Santiago, 2005

## DEGREE ATTAINMENT

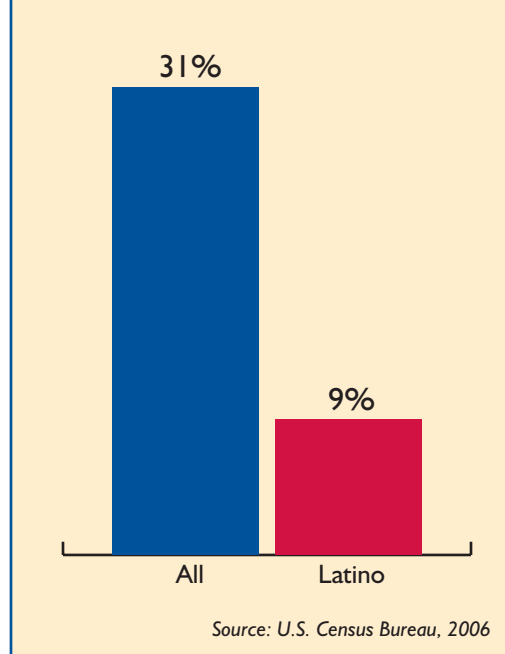
Latinos are the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in California, but they have the lowest levels of educational attainment in the state.

- ⇒ California ranks 46th among the 50 states in the percentage of college-age population earning bachelor's degrees (Brown et al., 2006).
- ⇒ California ranks last among the 50 states in the percentage of college-age Latinos and African Americans earning bachelor's degrees (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2005).
- ⇒ In 2005, only 53 percent of Latinos 25 and over in California had earned a high school diploma or more (Census Bureau, 2006).
- ⇒ While a majority of Latinos who have not completed high school are immigrants (about 62 percent), the percentage of U.S.-born Latinos without a high school diploma is still high (about 18 percent) (Reed, 2003).
- ⇒ In comparison, in California 94 percent of Non-Hispanic whites, 86 percent of African Americans, and 88 percent of Asians 25 and over held a high school diploma or more in 2005 (Census Bureau, 2006).
- ⇒ In 2005, 31 percent of Californians, but less than 10 percent of Latinos 25 and over, had earned a bachelor's degree or more (Census Bureau, 2006). See Figure 4.
- ⇒ The percentage of the workforce with a college degree is projected to decline by 2020 (Kelly, 2005).

Less than one-third of Latino 18-year-olds will go to college in California, and few will complete a baccalaureate degree compared to other groups in the state.

- ⇒ Over 70 percent of all Latinos enrolled in college in 2003-04 were at a California community college (NCES, 2003-04).

**FIGURE 4. Californians With a Bachelor's Degree or More, 25 and Over: 2005**



- ⇒ According to a snapshot of Latinos from the Campaign for College Opportunity,
  - About one-third of Latino 18-year-olds will go to college in California.
  - Of Latino high school graduates, 26 percent will enroll at a community college, 5 percent will enroll at a CSU campus, and 2 percent at a UC campus.
  - Only 15 percent of Latino students will ever enroll in a baccalaureate-granting college, and, of those, only 63 percent will earn a bachelor's degree from a CSU or UC campus. This estimate of bachelor's degree attainment from a public institution is similar for African Americans; the percentage is much higher for Asians and whites. (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2005)



## BENEFITS TO INDIVIDUALS

The benefits to individuals of higher education are both monetary and intrinsic. Studies have shown that individuals with bachelor's degrees generally have better health, are more likely to be employed, and have more life opportunities (IHEP, 2005). More obvious are the monetary benefits of higher education for all Californians, including Latinos.

- ⇒ Among full-time U.S.-born workers in California, Latinos earn about 80 cents per dollar earned by whites. If Latino workers were to have the same distribution of education as white workers, they would earn about 93 cents per dollar (Reed, 2003).
- ⇒ Lifetime earnings for a Latino with a bachelor's degree is about double that of a Latino with a high school diploma and three times that of one who failed to finish high school (Brady, 2005).
- ⇒ For a native-born Latino, lifetime earnings range from \$535,500 for an individual who did not finish high school to \$1,764,000 for one who earned a bachelor's degree. This represents more than double the difference in salary over their lifetime (Brady, 2005).

## WORKFORCE NEEDS AND BENEFITS

Studies have repeatedly found that California's industries will require a workforce with higher levels of education in order to remain competitive.

- ⇒ In California today, one job in four requires an associate degree or higher, but in the near future, one new job in three will require this level of education (Fountain, 2006).
- ⇒ The demand for highly educated workers, combined with the retirement of highly educated baby boomers in California, means that the workforce will require more than three million new workers (Fountain, 2006).
- ⇒ Latinos lag behind other racial/ethnic groups in levels of college preparation, participation, and completion, which is particularly troubling as the Latino share of the state's working-age population is projected to represent between 40 and 50 percent by 2020 (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2005).
- ⇒ When compared internationally, the report *Measuring Up* found that California ranks behind such low-performing nations as the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Spain in the number of certificates and degrees produced relative to the number of students enrolled (NCPPE, 2006).
- ⇒ In order for California to retain its economic competitiveness, the educational attainment of Latinos and other underserved groups must rise.
- ⇒ The income of California's residents is projected to decline over the next two decades unless the state can increase the number of Latinos earning college degrees (Kelly, 2005).
- ⇒ If the average educational level of the state workforce declines, California's personal income per capita is projected to drop over 10 percent—from \$22,728 in 2000 to \$20,252 in 2020—and result in a decrease in the state's tax base (Kelly, 2005).
- ⇒ A slight increase in the share of the population with a college degree will have a positive impact on the economy. For example, a 1 percent increase in the share of California's workforce with a bachelor's degree, combined with a 2 percent increase in workers with an associate degree or some college, results in \$20 billion in additional economic output, \$1.2 billion more in state and local tax revenues annually, and over 170,000 new jobs (Fountain, 2006).
- ⇒ For every dollar invested to increase the number of students attending college and completing degrees, California gets three dollars in net return (Brady, 2005).



# REFRAMING THE POLICY FOCUS TO SUCCESS

**D**espite compelling research indicating the negative effects of a population with low levels of degree attainment, under current policies and practices significant segments of California's population, especially Latinos, are struggling to enter and succeed in post-secondary education. The focus of legislative and most institutional policies regarding higher education in California is to ensure equal opportunity for Californians to access higher education. These policies translate into efforts to improve academic preparation, restrain college costs, and increase financial aid. While these policy goals are critical to addressing California's educational workforce needs, they are not sufficient.

Although not every Californian wants or needs a college education, the state's primary education policy objective should be to provide the education and resources needed to complete a higher degree. By meeting this objective, California would ensure the state's workforce competitiveness and also provide Californians with the means to derive the individual and societal benefits of a higher education—both intrinsic and economic.

Policy actions that support degree attainment, such as college preparation, access, and

retention, are not mutually exclusive objectives. Indeed, clarity of purpose strengthens the drive needed for policy actions. Setting goals beyond preparation and access will encourage policies of retention and completion that can help reach the ultimate goal of degree attainment. Emphasizing degree attainment does not minimize the need for policy to improve access; rather, it broadens the explicit expectations so that policy makers and institutional leaders can also focus on retention and on degree attainment.

# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

**W**ith so many studies that paint the picture of California's economic and educational future, what can policy makers do to address these converging trends? They must be willing and able to talk about disparities in higher education attainment by ethnicity, gender, national origin, and race. The changing demographics in California show that the impact of the Latino population on California's workforce and economic prosperity will continue to grow in importance and must be addressed.

Providing clear access and effective educational programs to Latinos and other underrepresented communities is paramount for creating an educated and skilled workforce. Meeting this need does not exclude any group from statewide policies supporting increased degree attainment. Quite the contrary, in order for California to remain economically competitive, all Californians must have access to similar programs. Policy recommendations that benefit Latinos in California also benefit other Californians. And all Californians benefit from education policies that seek to increase degree attainment and address the specific strengths and needs of the most underrepresented groups.

Many activities are taking place in California to improve educational preparation and opportunity for Californians. However, without concerted statewide efforts, it will continue to be difficult to substantially expand opportunities to accelerate higher education attainment and workforce preparation. Given the policy context delineated in this brief, the following policy recommendations are focused on three goals, all of which are consistent with the spirit of the foundation agreement for modern higher education policy in the state — the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education.

1. Ensure that all Californians understand the long-term benefits of higher education and steps to prepare for college.
2. Make college affordable.
3. Increase the degree attainment of all Californians.

The recommendations offered in this brief are designed to stimulate discussion and deliberation over the next several months and lead to policy actions by elected officials and institutional leaders of higher education in 2007. The recommendations are diverse in their focus and strategy and provide a variety of areas for intervention and action to meet the educational needs of California's growing future workforce. Some of the recommendations use existing structures in new ways; others require investing funds in new ways. Before proposing policy actions based on these recommendations, a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted. This analysis and others should be added to the statewide deliberations, which may also address tactical issues such as who is best positioned to advance the policy actions (e.g., state elected officials or leaders of higher education institutions).



## Ensure that all students and parents understand the long-term benefits of a higher education degree and the steps necessary to prepare for college.

While it is never too late to share information about college opportunities, providing that information early in a student's life is critical to their families' educational planning and goals. Therefore, the first two policy recommendations that follow include information-sharing at different points early in a student's life.

While sharing early knowledge about college information is important, it is also critical to engage parents and community members in efforts to improve educational attainment for Latinos and others in California. Strategies that target all students are generally more successful in garnering public support. However, market research has shown that African Americans and Latinos often do not hear/recognize messages as information or opportunities available specifically for them unless the message is overtly "speaking" to them (Lake, 2004). Therefore, the following policy recommendations encourage identifying ways to directly reach these underserved communities by engaging parents as well as community partners and by disseminating specific information linking educational attainment with workforce benefits.

### **Provide all new parents in hospital maternity wards with an informational packet on preparing, saving, and paying for college.**

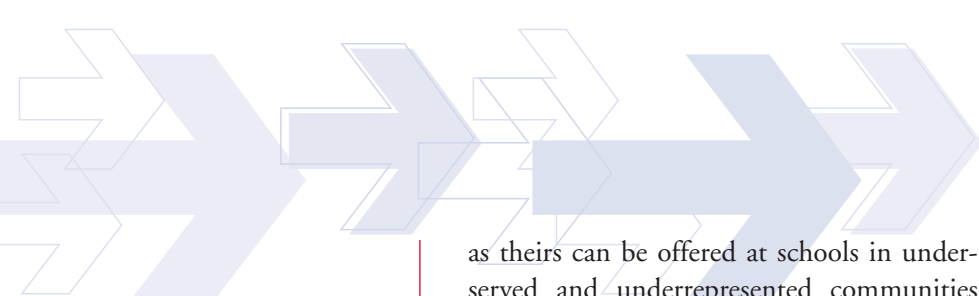
This approach would help parents begin early college planning by increasing their awareness of college as an option for their children and suggesting practical ways to prepare and save for their children's education. This would be most helpful for parents who were not educated in the U.S. system and thus are unfamiliar with many college choices and methods of financing offered. In 2004, over 50 percent of births in California were to Latino mothers, and close to 50 percent of all new mothers were foreign born (California Department of Health Services, 2006).

Public hospitals and statewide programs, such as Medicaid and Healthy Family Programs, can help develop materials, working with the California Department of Public Health and Department of Health Services, county health departments, community-based health clinics, and First Five county and state programs. Following the birth of a child, families could continue to receive this information in their primary family language by way of the private sector—particularly print and broadcast media, the Mexican and Central American consulates, and the hometown associations—and the public sector, particularly First Five organizations, county offices of education, and school districts.

### **Offer an elective course for middle school students on how to prepare for, apply to, select, and pay for college.**

The sooner Latino students learn about their college options, the more likely they are to be appropriately prepared. One approach would be the widespread offering of a middle school elective course that provides college information that goes beyond the traditional two-hour evening workshops. Initially, these course offerings could be targeted to school districts with a high enrollment of Latino and other low-income and first-generation potential college-goers, as well as schools with low API rankings.

Such curricula currently exist on a small scale. For example, the Tomás Rivera Policy Institute (TRPI), in partnership with the California State University (CSU) System Chancellor's Office and The Sallie Mae Fund, is conducting a pilot program entitled "Kids to College," which includes a six-session curriculum for sixth graders focused on information about college preparation and opportunities in communities near CSU-Los Angeles and CSU-Fullerton. Curricula such



as theirs can be offered at schools in underserved and underrepresented communities across the state in collaboration with nearby colleges and universities.

**Identify parents who are college graduates and parents who have children enrolled in college and enlist them to assist with outreach programs to underrepresented communities.** Even if parents have not attended college, they can play a major role in encouraging students.

Further, in the Latino community, information on any number of issues is often spread through informal and social networks, rather than formal networks traditionally used by institutions of higher education. For example, Latino students who participated in several focus groups held in California reported that their sources of information about college choices were mainly friends or other community members who had attended college.

One effort to use this policy strategy is the recent partnership between the California State University system and the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE), a community-based organization. In this partnership, PIQE will offer its training programs at schools near CSU campuses where parents, particularly those who did not attend college themselves, will learn how to improve their children's education and put them on a path to college. In this way, parents and communities are playing a more involved role in informing and reaching out to the Latino community about college opportunities.

**Promote the establishment of K–16 partnerships that focus on student success and work directly with community-based organizations.** Research has consistently shown that educational attainment is improved both by concerted community engagement in education and by aligning elementary and secondary education with higher education. A few communities in California with strong educa-

tional partnerships could serve as models for this policy recommendation. For example, the California ENLACE is a multiyear initiative co-sponsored by public-private partnerships based in Santa Ana and the UC Santa Barbara Academic Preparation and Early Outreach Programs. The goal is to strengthen the educational pipeline and increase opportunities for Latinos to enter and complete college. The initiative involves a coalition of partnerships between universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, community-based organizations, students, and parents. These partnerships are focused on developing and implementing changes to current policies, structures, and institutions that will substantially improve the educational achievement and rate of college attendance of all students, but particularly of Latino students. The ENLACE partnership is grounded in the culture and assets of Latino students at all levels of the educational pipeline, but especially in secondary and post-secondary education.

**Develop and market charts to English and Spanish media outlets that show lifetime earnings by educational attainment level and professions.** Latinos in the workforce are heavily concentrated in manual labor and unskilled professions. Sharing information on the monetary benefits of a higher education degree can encourage individuals who are debating whether to invest in furthering their education and incur the opportunity costs. For example, a recent Census Bureau report determined that, at the national level, the average earnings gap between adults with a bachelor's degree and those with only a high school diploma is about \$23,000 per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Working with local and national media outlets that reach underrepresented communities to disseminate information on such earnings and degree attainment can inform and raise the educational planning and goals of Latino students.

## Make college affordable for students from all economic backgrounds.


The cost of college is a well-known barrier to accessing and completing higher education. The following policy recommendations focus on creating incentives for students to prepare for college early and enroll continuously. In addition, the recommendations include incentives for employers to support the education of their employees.

**Create a Golden State Scholars Program linked to the Cal Grant.** The Cal Grant has been very successful in providing needed aid to low-income students to attend college. However, the program could have an even greater impact on the college plans and opportunities available to low-income and underrepresented students. For example, the program could be modified so that middle school students who would be eligible for the Cal Grant (based on their eligibility for the federal school-lunch program or a similar means-tested state aid program) are informed of their eligibility early enough to influence their educational decisions. This information could create a critical incentive for students, who would realize that college is an affordable option and could then better plan for their future.

This idea is similar to Indiana's 21st Century Scholars Program. Students can enroll in the Scholars Program as early as the seventh grade, and the state agrees to pay the student's tuition at any public institution in Indiana, or an equal amount at a private institution, as long as the student agrees (1) to graduate from high school with at least a 2.0 grade point average, (2) not to use drugs or alcohol or commit a crime, and (3) to apply for federal and other state aid when he/she is a senior in high school (State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana, 2006). The program also provides academic support and other services to help students prepare for college. This program has

been in existence since 1990, and an evaluation in 2002 showed that students who participated were much more likely to enroll in college than those who did not take part. (Indiana Education Policy Center, 2002).

**Model a new University of California opportunity scholarship program targeting students from economically disadvantaged and underrepresented communities.** For many low-income and first-generation students in California and throughout the nation, baccalaureate-granting institutions do not seem affordable. While community colleges provide more affordable access to higher education, data show that the persistence and completion rates of students from all backgrounds is higher at baccalaureate-granting institutions in California. One example of a strategy to address college affordability is the University of Texas at Austin (UT-Austin) Longhorn Opportunity Scholarship. This program was created in 1999 to provide financial support to students enrolled at a select number of high schools in economically disadvantaged and historically underserved Texas communities. Economic conditions and community participation levels are used to identify those high schools most in need of University assistance. This approach has the benefit of targeting aid to communities who most need it and is thus based on the community rather than on the individual. For students enrolled at these schools, the University guarantees that a specific number of scholarships to UT-Austin will be awarded to graduating seniors. These scholarships are \$5,000 per year for up to four years of study, thus providing a major source of funds to cover a large portion of mandatory tuition and fees (UT-Austin, 2006). The number of scholarships, which varies per high school, is based on the level of the school's underrepresentation at The University of Texas.



**Create financial incentives for students to remain continuously enrolled in higher education until degree completion.**

Research shows that students who are continuously enrolled are more likely to complete their college education. Yet many Latinos tend to stop out or enroll part time in order to work and save money to pay for their education—in other words, “pay as they go.” This approach contributes to the length of time it takes them to complete a degree and also increases the probability that they will not complete any degree. Financial incentives to encourage continuous enrollment could include a modest tuition discount for each semester students are continuously enrolled, or raising the amount of institutional grants and financial aid by a nominal percentage for each semester they are continuously enrolled.

**Expand state tax incentives for employers to support their employees’ education.**

A recent study found that not being able to work and incurring debt to attend college were very real opportunity costs for Latino students in California (Zarate & Pachon, 2006). This is especially true for Latino males and may actively limit their college options and success. The educational attainment for Latino males in California has actually decreased over the last 20 years. Since the opportunity cost for attending college can be so high for many low-income Latino students, one way to encourage continued education is to provide state tax incentives to employers of students (or their parents) who are interested in continuing their education. This may help to offset some of the opportunity costs for students attending college and would ensure their employer’s support to continue their education while working.

**Increase the number of Californians—especially those from underrepresented groups—who have a postsecondary degree.**

Institutions have a critical role in higher education policy in regard to access and degree attainment. The following policy recommendations focus on increasing institutional support and outreach, establishing degree attainment goals, increasing and disseminating promising practices, and using data-driven guidance to improve the educational attainment of California’s current and future workforce.

**Develop an accelerated outreach plan to engage Californians who do not have a high school diploma, and develop strategies to encourage completion of a diploma or GED.**

In 2005, almost half (47 percent) of Latinos 25 and over in California did not have a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). This has a double-edged impact. Not only does this mean that many Latinos in the workforce do not have the educational preparation for higher education, it also means that about half of Latino students have parents who have not

successfully navigated the U.S. education system. The California Department of Education, community colleges, individual school districts, private industry councils, Mexican consulates (via plazas comunitarias), and community-based organizations all manage adult education programs throughout the state. They could work with national and local television (e.g., Univision and Telemundo), radio stations, and newspapers (e.g., La Opinión), as well as community-based organizations in an effort to encourage more adults to complete their high school education or GED.

**Scale up proven institutional programs that have helped students—especially Latino students—to transfer and transition to institutions of higher education.**

It is important to facilitate, coordinate, and broaden all effective existing programs that transition Latino and other underserved students from community colleges to baccalau-

reate-granting colleges and universities and to ensure that the baccalaureate-granting institutions engage in retention activities that lead to graduation and to the fullest academic achievement for these transfer students.

Several programs across California have demonstrated success in preparing Latino and other underserved students to attain degrees. For example, a report for the California Research Bureau recommends the Puente Project as a successful model that moves Latino students through the academic pipeline (Lopez et al, 2000). The Puente Project was established in 1981 to serve Latino students as a “bridge” to baccalaureate-granting colleges. Over 55 community colleges and 35 high schools have the program, and Puente estimates that it has served 40,000 students directly and 10 times as many indirectly. Solid program evaluations show that it has made a positive impact on Latino and other students who have participated (Puente, 2006).

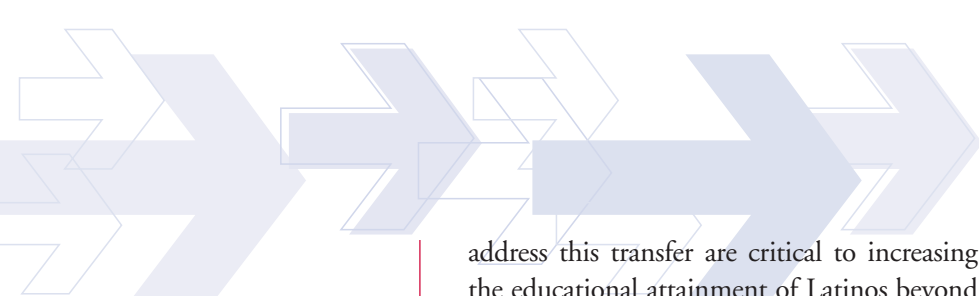
While Puente does not exclude students from other backgrounds, its focus on Latino culture and student experiences to prepare students academically sends a supportive and critical message that their history is also engaging them in their education. This award-winning program boasts a 19 percent UC eligibility rate and an 83 percent college entry rate among its high school participants, as well as a high success rate in community college courses and a 47 percent transfer rate among participants over a two-year period (Puente, 2006). Still, it is generally understood that programs such as Puente reach too few students across California.

**Increase state support to colleges and universities that enroll large percentages of students from underrepresented groups.** Low-income and first-generation college students, many of whom are Latino, are concentrated in a small number of institutions in California. This provides an opportunity to target limited resources to institutions enrolling the highest

concentration of otherwise underserved students. For example, in 2003-04, 55 percent of all Latino undergraduates were enrolled in the 10 percent of all postsecondary institutions in California (68) that are known by federal classification as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). HSIs are defined in federal law as accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent student enrollment (Higher Education Act, as amended in 1998). In California, 68 percent of HSIs (46) are community colleges, and only 15 percent are public baccalaureate-granting institutions (10). The remaining 17 percent are private institutions. In 2003-04, 56 percent of associate degrees awarded to Latinos in California were earned at these institutions (IPEDS, 2003-04). The 10 baccalaureate-granting HSIs granted 32 percent of bachelor’s degrees awarded to Latinos in California, with the remaining universities awarding more than two-thirds of these degrees.

Given the current practices of implementing Proposition 209, it might be a problem in California to fund institutions based on the federal HSI classification, but examining where low-income and first-generation students are concentrated, particularly at community colleges, and investing in improving the quality of education and support services at those institutions will lead to improved educational attainment by those underserved groups. Baccalaureate-granting institutions can be provided incentives based on their success at sustaining the highest graduation rates for Latinos and producing the largest absolute numbers of Latino graduates.

**Provide incentives for community colleges to increase the number of students who transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions in California.** Given that 70 percent of Latinos in higher education in California are enrolled at community colleges, policies that



address this transfer are critical to increasing the educational attainment of Latinos beyond a certificate or an associate degree. Currently, funding for community colleges is based generally on headcount/enrollment. Therefore, institutions have much more incentive to focus on enrolling students than on graduating and transferring their students. Adding a funding component based on the percentage of the college's degree-seeking students who transfer to a baccalaureate-granting institution might provide a critical financial incentive for institutions to increase those numbers. In the same vein, a baccalaureate-granting institution might receive financial incentives based on the number of transfer students it admits into its programs. For students, the incentives for transferring might include tuition discounts or deferrals for the first year of enrollment at a baccalaureate-granting institution.

**Encourage institutions to set degree attainment goals based on existing baseline data, and create institutional incentives for meeting or exceeding these goals.**

Currently, most institutional funding is based on headcount/enrollment and not on degree completion. Shifting the goal from access to higher education to completing a higher education degree requires institutional change to align with these goals. Similar to the policy recommendation for transfers, these institutional incentives for change might include additional funding support based on meeting or exceeding degree attainment goals.

When institutions set degree attainment goals, it is important to recognize that setting a meaningful graduation rate must take into account the large numbers of low-income, first-generation, and other nontraditional students enrolled. Given that many of these students are enrolled part time and are working, or that they stop out and return, it may not be appropriate or useful to measure institutional effectiveness by simply comparing graduation rates with

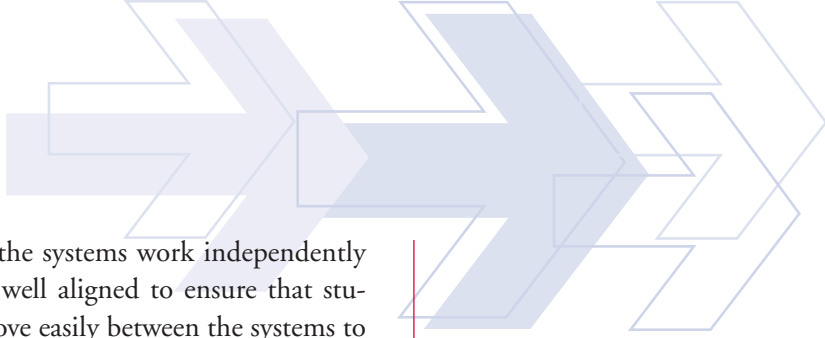
institutions that have a higher concentration of second-generation or traditional students.

**Gather and disseminate examples of institutional practices that have been successful in providing college opportunities and graduating their students in a timely manner (three or six years).**

Currently, institutional leaders in California do not have a central repository of information about programs that are improving the educational persistence or attainment of underrepresented students. At the national level, a recent effort entitled “Examples of *Excelexencia*” has been created to (1) identify and honor the success of higher education programs and departments throughout the country that are making a positive difference in accelerating access and success for Latinos in higher education and (2) collect and disseminate information on what is working to those interested in serving Latinos. In California, the Campaign for College Opportunity has begun a similar effort entitled “Practices with Promise” to recognize effective practices that are improving college access and success and to disseminate them to other educators, the media, and state policy makers.

**Encourage institutions to conduct an internal evaluation of student access, persistence, and completion that focuses on the performance of Latino and other underrepresented students.**

Too often, institutions do not disaggregate their institutional data to determine the performance and persistence of their students by race or ethnicity for internal decision making. Yet, without this disaggregation, targeted and meaningful interventions are limited. One example to consider is the Latino Student Success framework created by *Excelexencia* in Education. Institutions can use this framework to develop an institutional profile of their Latino students or of any other racial/ethnic group using existing data. Another useful tool to consider is the Equity



Scorecard developed by the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California. Each of these tools works with institution leaders to examine their existing data to identify the strengths and needs of their students' performance. Findings can be used in internal decision making aimed at increasing student retention and success.

**Charge leaders of the three public higher education systems in California to develop a coordinated action plan to improve the rate of degree attainment for all Californians—especially underrepresented groups.** One main objective of California's Master Plan for Higher Education was to increase efficiency in the state's higher education system by reducing system redundancies while providing low-cost access to more students. Although the Master Plan delineates the different educational responsibilities of the University of California, California State University, and California Community College systems, it seems that, from a policy

perspective, the systems work independently and are not well aligned to ensure that students can move easily between the systems to continue their education. While numerous efforts have been undertaken by the state's colleges and universities, disparities in attainment by underrepresented groups remain.

During a listening tour, The Campaign for College Opportunity found that Californians from every region of the state agreed that the state must develop a plan to ensure equal opportunity for current and future generations (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2005). The three higher education systems in California do not have a unified plan of action that reflects their uniform goal (educating Californians and maximizing degree attainment for those seeking to complete baccalaureate studies). A coordinated action plan would include ways the three systems might coordinate their outreach, preparation, and transfer activities to improve alignment that supports and simplifies the transition between the systems for all students.

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## SUMMARY

In order to remain economically competitive, California's economy will require a more educated workforce than currently exists. Multiple research studies on California conclude that the state's economic competitiveness will be highly dependent on the educational attainment of Latinos. A concerted statewide effort is needed to expand substantially the activities that are accelerating higher-education attainment for the current and future workforce — especially Latino achievement in higher education. Discussions about the ideas provided in this brief can jumpstart the development of a statewide effort.

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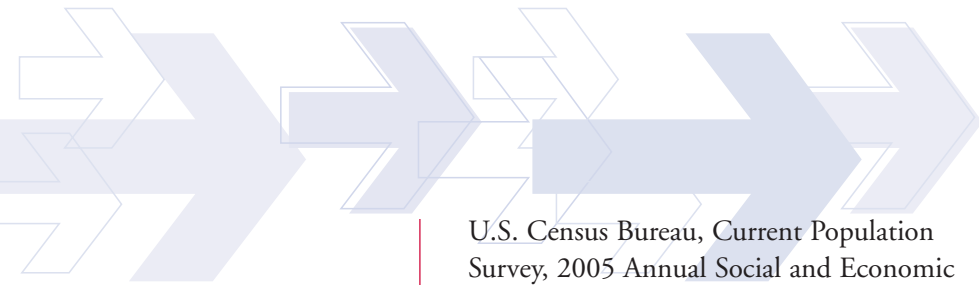
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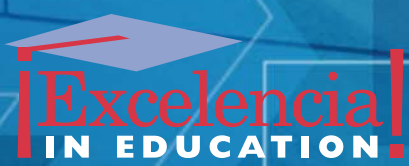
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