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# HELPING OR HINDERING?

STATE POLICIES & LATINO  
COLLEGE COMPLETION



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## STATE POLICIES AND LATINO COLLEGE COMPLETION

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# OVERVIEW

Everyone deserves a shot at the American Dream — where everyone has the opportunity for success and upward social mobility derived from hard work in a society with few barriers. More than ever, earning a college education is the prerequisite to individual pursuit of long term success and to the collective development of the country’s workforce and civic leadership.

We are making progress. Latinos’ college degree attainment has increased over the last ten years, but gaps in educational attainment with other groups remain. Over the last 10 years, the percentage of Latino adults with an associate degree or higher increased from 17 to 22 percent. During this same time, the percentage of White, non-Hispanic adults with an associate degree or higher increased from 40 to 46 percent.<sup>1</sup> These national gaps in educational attainment are reflective of gaps at institutional and state levels.

At a time when the U.S. job market requires education beyond a high school degree, and the Latino is growing, increasing educational attainment among Latinos is imperative. We can do something about this and states play a critical role.

*Excelencia* in Education conducted a preliminary audit of public policy in three states — California, Colorado and Texas — and their potential impact on closing equity gaps between Latinos and others in these states and nationally. The results are described in this brief, *Helping or Hindering? State Policies and Latino College Completion*.

*Excelencia* in Education has worked with partners in states including California, Colorado, and Texas for several years as part of our national initiative, **Ensuring America’s Future by Increasing Latino College Completion**, to examine what we are doing, and still need to do, in policy and practice to meet our state and national goals. Our partners, in turn, lead efforts in their states to improve policy and practice in postsecondary education and increase the degree attainment of Latinos and all others.

Through *Ensuring America’s Future*, *Excelencia* in Education established a baseline for informing, benchmarking and organizing stakeholder

efforts to increase Latino college completion at the national and state levels.<sup>2</sup> This work was complimented with a preliminary analysis of federal policy supporting Latino college completion and a potential policy roadmap to meet the national goals. In 2014, *Excelencia* updated the national profile of Latinos and college completion and added the top five institutions enrolling and graduating Latinos nationally, and by state.

Our partners include The Campaign for College Opportunity (CA), Metropolitan State University of Denver and the Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Latinos (CoCEAL) (CO), and Educate Texas (TX). Their efforts informed the audits and analysis of state policies and their potential to close equity gaps in attainment that warrant further consideration within each state. The review of state policy was framed with three basic considerations:

- What is the current education profile of Latinos in the state?
- What is the current context of postsecondary education in the state overall?
- What state policies might be helping, hindering, or are worth reconsidering to accelerate Latino student success?

This brief expands the consideration of public policy from national to state governance levels where the majority of efforts and resources exist to support and improve college completion. The following provides a quick profile of Latinos in the three states included in this brief and a profile of Latino and other post-traditional students. The remainder of this brief provides a high level review of state policies in California, Colorado, and Texas that may be helping, hindering, or warrant reconsideration to improve Latino college completion.

# PROFILE OF THREE STATES



Combined, California, Colorado and Texas enroll over half of all Latinos in K-12 and postsecondary education in the nation today. Latinos also represent over 20 percent of the population in each state and Latinos have an average age of 27, compared to over 40 years of age for White, non-Hispanics in each state. Further, about 17 percent of Latino adults had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to more than 32 percent of all adults in each state.

## SNAPSHOT OF LATINOS IN THREE STATES

CALIFORNIA	COLORADO	TEXAS
<b>State Ranking</b>	<b>State Ranking</b>	<b>State Ranking</b>
CA had the largest Latino population in the US	CO had the 8th largest Latino population in the US	TX had the 2nd largest Latino population in the US
<b>Latino Population</b>	<b>Latino Population</b>	<b>Latino Population</b>
K-12 Population – 51%	K-12 Population – 30%	K-12 Population – 48%
State Population – 38%	State Population – 21%	State Population – 38%
<b>Median Age</b>	<b>Median Age</b>	<b>Median Age</b>
Latino – 27	Latino – 26	Latino – 27
White – 44	White – 40	White – 41
<b>Degree Attainment</b>	<b>Degree Attainment</b>	<b>Degree Attainment</b>
Latino – 16%	Latino – 18%	Latino – 16%
Total – 38%	Total – 44%	Total – 32%

Source: *Excellencia in Education. 2014. Latino College Completion: United States.*  
 Available at: [www.edexcelencia.org/research/college-completion/united-states](http://www.edexcelencia.org/research/college-completion/united-states)

# PROFILE OF LATINO AND OTHER POST-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Some people are uncomfortable talking about race/ethnicity in public policy and practice and would rather emphasize “educating all students,” without disaggregating by race/ethnicity. While race/ethnicity is never the sole characteristic to consider for public policy or postsecondary education, data show persistent educational attainment gaps between racial/ethnic groups.

Equity gaps in educational attainment are evidence that while broad goals of educating all students are inclusive in tone, this generic goal has not been implemented in ways that have resulted in equal levels of educational attainment. Considering race/ethnicity among factors can increase awareness of more specific strengths and needs of students, resulting in more intentional and equitable efforts to increase educational attainment. To be clear, intentionally considering the strengths and needs of Latino students in public policy does not require a lack of attention to other students; but addressing the strengths and needs of Latino students might help other students with similar strengths and needs. Policy makers have an opportunity to ensure their efforts accelerate the educational attainment of the students in our educational pipeline today, and increasingly, these students are Latino.

Whereas the term “nontraditional” is used to describe students that do not fit into a traditional profile, *Excelencia* in Education uses the term “post-traditional” to describe a growing majority of students who have evolved beyond the traditional profile. Latino and other post-traditional students are the majority of students in postsecondary education today, and have a profile distinct from traditional students. However, too often federal and state policies addressing postsecondary education focus on meeting the needs of traditional students, who represent less than 20 percent of students today. The post-traditional college-going population is projected to continue growing and public policy that more aptly addresses their strengths and needs can more effectively accelerate their postsecondary degree attainment.

 <b>TRADITIONAL STUDENT PROFILE</b>	 <b>POST-TRADITIONAL STUDENT PROFILE</b>
College-ready	May need academic prep or remediation
Enroll in a college or university full-time	Enroll at a community college and/or part-time
Enroll the fall after high school graduation	Delay initial college enrollment while entering the workforce
Live on-campus	Live off-campus with their parents or own dependents
Complete a bachelor degree in four years	Take more than four years to complete a degree
Parents have college degree	First in family to enroll in college
White, non-Hispanic	Latino, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander
Do not work while enrolled	Work 30 hours or more a week
Make college choices based on financial aid, academic programs offered, & institutional prestige	Make college choices based on cost of attendance, location, & accessibility

Focusing on Latino students, as representative of post-traditional students more broadly, provides an opportunity to be intentional in including them in a policy context where too often Latinos are either considered as a footnote, or an aside, if considered at all. *Excelencia* in Education believes acknowledging racial and ethnic trends describes our society in constructive ways, and thus helps us to understand it. The use of data and analysis to identify factors affecting the success of specific student populations establishes a base of information from which to develop more effective policies, engage diverse stakeholders, and, enhance tactical responses to better target limited resources to meet the nation's education goals. Given this recognition, it is worth articulating the profile of Latinos in order to shape the policies and practices that can better serve these and other students.



- While the majority of the U.S. population is still White, non-Hispanic, Latinos are the youngest and among the fastest growing racial/ethnic groups in the United States.
- The median age for Latinos in the U.S. is 27 compared to 42 for White, non-Hispanics.<sup>3</sup>
- Latinos already represent a growing segment of those in secondary and postsecondary institutions across the country. In fact, Hispanics are currently the second largest racial/ethnic group in the U.S. overall (17 percent) as well as in early childhood, K-12 education, and postsecondary education. Hispanics represented 25 percent of children under 9 years of age,<sup>4</sup> 22 percent of students in K-12, and 16 percent of students in postsecondary education.<sup>5</sup>
- The Hispanic population is projected to continue growing.
- The majority of Latino students were concentrated in a small number of institutions. In 2012-13, almost 60 percent of Latino undergraduates were enrolled in the 11 percent of institutions of higher education identified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs).<sup>6</sup>
- Latinos were more likely to enroll in community colleges than all other groups. In 2012, 46 percent of Latinos in higher education were enrolled

- in community colleges, compared to African American (34 percent), Asian (32 percent), and White (31 percent) students in higher education.<sup>7</sup>
- Studies have shown between 30 and 47 percent of Latino students need remediation in postsecondary education.
- While a relatively small number of Latino students are undocumented, the majority of undocumented students in the U.S are Latino.
- The enrollment of Latinos along the educational pipeline is significant, but, as noted earlier, their educational attainment is lower than adults overall.

There is a clear opportunity for state public policy to improve the educational attainment for Latinos as a critical component of improving educational attainment for all in the state. The following section provides an overview of the Latino population in each state along with a primer of some state policies that might be helping, hindering, or warrant reconsideration to improve Latino college completion.



# CALIFORNIA

The following educational profile of Latinos in California provides context for reviewing public policy related to accessing and completing postsecondary education in the state:

*Excelencia* in Education has partnered with the Campaign for College Opportunity to address Latino student success in California. The Campaign’s mission is to ensure that the next generation of California students has the chance to attend college and succeed in order to keep California’s workforce and economy strong.

California has **the largest Latino population** in the nation.<sup>8</sup>

Latinos are the fastest-growing segment of the population, accounting for **65%** of the state’s **population growth**, and are projected to become the state’s **majority ethnic group by 2020**.

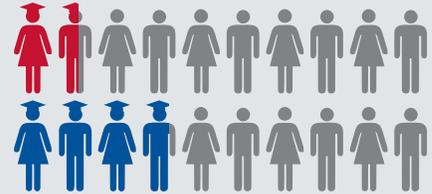
Approximately **40%** of California residents are projected to be of **Hispanic origin in 2020**, up from 25 percent in 1990.<sup>9</sup>



**Over half (51%)** of the K-12 population is **Latino**, second nationally only to New Mexico.

Of degree attainment, 16 percent of Latino adults (25 and older) had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 38 percent of all adults in California.<sup>11</sup>

**Latino Adults = 1.6 of 10**



**All Adults = 3.8 of 10**

In terms of equity gaps in college completion, California has a **10% equity gap** between **Latinos and Whites** when considering graduation rates;<sup>12</sup> the largest of the three states in this analysis.

The following sections provide a primer of state policies with a Latino lens that may help, hinder, or be worth reconsidering to increase access and completion of postsecondary education in California.

## **POLICIES THAT MAY HELP**

California has state policies that span the higher education pipeline to help increase Latinos’ higher education access and completion. While all of these policies have the potential to help, the participation, implementation, outreach, or funding of these policies may limit how state policy is helping. For the purposes of this primer, the following three public policy strategies may be helping increase Latino college completion:

- **College preparation activities** — Curriculum and school-based college

readiness counseling ensures students receive individualized review of their education and career goals.

- **Student support services funds for community colleges** — Services to support completion include student orientation, education planning services, and success scorecards.
- **Transfer reform** — Simplifying the transfer pathway between community colleges and colleges/universities helps advance education.

## **COLLEGE PREPARATION ACTIVITIES** —

college preparation includes academic support through curriculum as well as knowledge of opportunities and options through counseling.

### **Curriculum**

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Too few students in California are graduating from high school academically prepared for college. In 2011-12, only 28 percent of Latino students completed a college prep curriculum, compared to 62 percent of Asian students, 45 percent of White students, and 29 percent of Black students.<sup>13</sup> This completion means about two-thirds of high school graduates in California are not eligible to apply to a university in California.

**STATE POLICY:** The California Education Code (EC) establishes a minimum set of requirements for graduation from California high schools, generally known as the college prep (A-G) curriculum to be eligible for the state's public universities. The intent of the curriculum is to ensure students have a body of general knowledge to prepare for more advanced study in college. This was a critical attempt to create a clear default curriculum for all students to be academically college ready.

### **Counseling**

**POLICY CONTEXT:** School-based college readiness counseling ensures students receive individualized review of their education and career goals. The high school counselor ratio in California is 945 to 1, compared to the national average of 477 to 1.<sup>14</sup> This places California last in the nation in terms of the student/counselor ratio. Given this high ratio, counselors are too often limited to mitigating personal and social issues rather than providing college preparation and selection options. Considering over half of the K-12 population in California is Latino, there is a need for increased focus on college advising.

**STATE POLICY:** The Schools Curriculum: Opportunities for Pupils (Chapter 732, Statutes of 2007) reforms middle and high school counseling programs to ensure that students receive individ-

ualized review of their career goals, and that they are informed about high school graduation requirements and career technical opportunities in their schools. Further, the California Department of Education and California's P-16 Council launched "Achieving Success for All Students," a multiagency initiative focused on closing the achievement gap between recognized subgroups in the state and federal accountability systems by providing school-based college readiness counseling.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES** —

At community colleges, support services to completion include orientation and education planning services and reporting progress in student completion.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Community colleges are generally open admission institutions (enroll all who apply). In California, 70 percent of postsecondary students are enrolled in community colleges. Similarly, 68 percent of Latinos enrolled in college in California are at a community college.<sup>15</sup> However, completion rates for community college students continue to be low. Per 100 overall undergraduate students enrolled, there are only 9 degrees awarded. For Latinos, the numbers are even lower with only 7 degrees awarded per 100 students enrolled.<sup>16</sup>

**STATE POLICY:** In recognition of this disconnect between those who enroll and graduate, the California Community Colleges Student Success Act of 2012 (SB1456) restructured the way student support services were delivered to improve the assistance that students receive at the beginning of their educational experience, specifically student orientation, assessment and education planning services. It also requires colleges receiving student support service funds to post a student success scorecard to clearly communicate progress in improving completion rates for all students and closing the achievement gap among historically under-represented students.<sup>17</sup>

**TRANSFER REFORM** — Simplifies the transfer pathway between community colleges and colleges/universities.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Community colleges are seen as a gateway to higher education for the vast majority (70 percent) of students in California. While enrollment has increased, the numbers of transfers to four-year colleges and universities has not seen the same growth. Many Latinos start their college education at a community college (68 percent); yet, for students who are interested in continuing their education at a four-year institution, the overall transfer rate is low. Currently, California has an overall community college transfer rate of 23 percent overall<sup>18</sup> and just four out of ten Latino community college students either completed their associate degree

or transferred to a four-year institution after six years, with rates continuing to decline.<sup>19</sup>

**STATE POLICY:** California passed higher education transfer reform in 2010 (SB 1440) to simplify the transfer pathway between community college and colleges/universities. The policy created a transfer path for all California community college students, regardless of which college they originally attend. According to SB 1440, students who successfully complete 60 units of transferable coursework at a community college will receive an associate degree and guaranteed admission with upper-division junior standing to a California State University system institution. However, as of 2012, those tracking the policy have seen implementation throughout the state has been uneven.

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## **POLICIES THAT MAY HINDER**

Along with policies that might help increase Latino college completion in California, there are also public policies that may hinder their access to and success in higher education. For the purposes of this primer, the following three public policy strategies may be hindering Latino college completion:

- **Lack of a centralized postsecondary education database** — As Latino representation in higher education is increasing, these data can inform policy to improve student outcomes.
- **“Master Plan” eligibility/capacity limits** — Student access has been reduced at a time when student applications are increasing, resulting in a buildup of students at institutions unable to enroll all eligible students due to lack of space and resources.
- **Lack of support for race-conscious efforts** — Limitation of using race/ethnicity has led to a perception that institutions cannot be inclusive and intentional about serving Latino students.

## **LACK OF A CENTRALIZED POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION DATABASE**

and easy access for institutions and the public limits the data and information that can inform policy to improve student outcomes.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Without a central location for student data and benchmarks for college-going completion, monitors towards these benchmarks cannot be tracked. Lack of data on access and completion rates by race/ethnicity will hinder the state’s progress in improving student outcomes and meeting workforce needs. These data can also help inform legislative policies and budget strategies to achieve these goals. At a time when Latinos are the majority in K-12 having access to a centralized location for data is important to inform public policy about what is or is not working, as these data can help inform policy discussions.

**STATE POLICY:** The California Legislature initially created the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) in 1973 to coordinate and develop plans for public higher education. It was later expanded to include private colleges and universities within the planning process. CPEC was closed in November 2011 due to perceived ineffectiveness and state budget cuts. The data housed at CPEC has now been transferred to the Chancellor’s Office of the California Community Colleges.<sup>20</sup> However, much of that data has not been updated since CPEC’s closure and is not as easily accessible. In 2013, the California Assembly passed SB 195, which created goals for California higher education policy; however, it did not establish metrics to monitor goals.

## **“MASTER PLAN” ELIGIBILITY/**

**CAPACITY LIMITS** — The limited growth of college campuses and “seats” has decreased capacity, with eligible students being turned away or unable to enroll in any classes they need, or the raising of admissions standards to constrain eligibility.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Due to decreases in state funding for higher education, institutions have needed to make large cuts in expenditures, which have impacted institutional capacity and reduced student access to higher education, at a time when student applications are increasing. The University of California (UC) system has limited the number of students enrolled, resulting in increased numbers of students staying within the California State University (CSU) system. With 70 percent of California postsecondary students attending community colleges, the CSU schools are also unable to enroll all eligible community college students due to lack of space and resources. Combined with increased tuition and fees at all three school systems, higher education completion is becoming more difficult for students who have to bear the burden of these costs and strategize how to complete their education. As a result of these budget cuts, enrollment at all three California systems has decreased by more than half a million students.<sup>21</sup>

Latinos are going to college at higher rates than ever before, and this trend is likely to continue.<sup>22</sup> However, the majority of Latinos (68 percent) are enrolled at California community colleges, followed by 14 percent at the CSU institutions.<sup>23</sup> For high school students who graduated in 2010, 34 percent went straight to a California community college, 10 percent to a CSU school and just 4 percent to a UC school.<sup>24</sup> These “master plan” eligibility limits will negatively impact students’ college completion goals, which will also have an impact on both the students’ and the state’s bottom line. Students will either have to enroll at multiple institutions, transfer to private institutions that have higher tuition costs, or put their education plans on hold until there is space at the institution they want to attend. The state will lose out on the opportunity to have a more educated populace.

**STATE POLICY:** In 1960, California created a “master plan” for postsecondary education to provide access to education. This plan created three public university systems, the University of California (UC) system, the California State University (CSU) system and the California Community College (CCC) system, and aligned their missions to different segments. According to the plan, the top 12.5 percent of California high school students are eligible for admission to UC schools, which are considered the primary research universities; the top 33.3 percent are eligible for admission to CSU schools; and the community colleges are charged with providing academic and vocational instruction.<sup>25</sup>

**LACK OF SUPPORT FOR RACE-CONSCIOUS EFFORTS** — the perception has remained that institutions cannot overtly target their efforts by race/ethnicity.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** In recent years, the college-going rate for Latinos has increased; however, this is also due to an increase in the overall Latino population, and less so on proclivity. Almost half (47 percent) of the college-going age population (18-24 years) is Latino; yet, they continue to be underrepresented at each of the higher education systems in the state. The lack of institutional support for race conscious efforts has led to a less diverse student body that does not have parity. Latino students currently make up 20 percent of the student population in the UC system, 33 percent within the CSU system, and 39 percent in the community colleges.<sup>26</sup>

**STATE POLICY:** In 1996, California voters approved an initiative that abolished the state’s public affirmative action program. The California Civil Rights Initiative (also known as Proposition 209) prohibits preferential treatment based on “race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin”<sup>27</sup> by the State in public employment, education and public contracting. Immediately after the passage of Proposition 209, higher education enrollment rates for Latinos and African American students dropped, with the admission rates of Latinos dropping 8 percent from 1997 to 1998.<sup>28</sup>

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## **POLICIES TO REEXAMINE**

According to the Campaign, significantly improving college attendance and completion rates among Latinos is directly linked to the future economic success of California. Public policy can either improve or accept the status quo when it comes to improving college opportunity and student success. The following are public policy areas that the Campaign proposes be reexamined to accelerate college completion in California.

**CREATE A STATEWIDE PLAN FOR EDUCATION:** California lacks a plan that articulates how many college educated residents it needs to meet workforce demands and to grow our economic strength. California needs a plan that increases college-going rates, improves graduation rates, maintains college affordability, and closes the gap amongst underrepresented students. Without a path to improve college attainment, California will never get better results than it currently has.

**EXPAND A-G COMPLETION:** Successful completion of the college preparatory curriculum is a requirement for admission to the CSU and University of California (UC) systems. Two-thirds of Latino high school students do not complete A-G courses in high school and are ineligible to even apply to the public four-year colleges. High Schools should increase the availability of A-G course offerings, support students to succeed in these courses, and close any gaps by race. Until more high schools see their role as graduating students prepared for college, we will not have enough Latinos able to succeed in higher education. Just as important would be an appropriate review of whether these continue to be the right requirements for students and whether or not we should be directing more students directly into our four year universities, where currently only the top third of high school graduates are expected to have a spot.

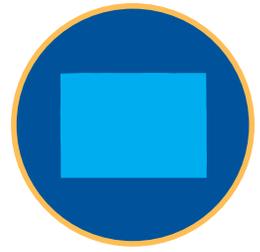
**MODIFY PROPOSITION 209:** The 1996 voter-approved initiative bans the use of race in college admissions at our public universities. We support modifying Proposition 209 to permit the use of race/ethnicity as one of many factors in weighing a candidate's qualifications, a position consistent with federal rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, and essential to increasing the diversity of our student body in our four year public universities, especially at the University of California (UC).

**IMPROVE REMEDIATION AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES:** Remedial classes are where many Latinos start in higher education and where they are lost. Only 1 out of 5 students in pre-college level courses will earn a degree or transfer within six years. By accelerating curriculum and improving placement methods, community colleges can vastly improve the number of students who go on to receive degrees. Community colleges should expand alternative placement programs, which use high school GPA to place students in college level courses and truly enact multiple measures, not just assessment tests that may understate competency, in order to ensure that we place students properly and improve their time and success in remedial courses when they do need them.

**EXPAND TRANSFER:** In order to significantly increase transfer rates a streamlined transfer pathway was legislated in 2010 creating an Associate Degree for transfer pathway between community colleges and the California State University (CSU) campuses which ensures students earn a degree and are guaranteed admission with junior status into the CSU. While the transfer legislation is helping, there is still no clear pathway into the University of California that guarantees students a spot. Ensuring full implementation of this transfer pathway AND expanding this program to the UC system would be a tremendous boost for Latino students.

# COLORADO

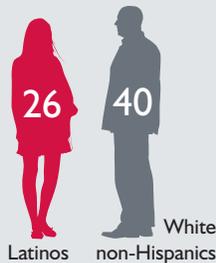
The following educational profile of Latinos in Colorado provides context for reviewing the public policy related to accessing and completing postsecondary education in the state:



Colorado has the **8th largest Latino population** in the country.<sup>29</sup>

Currently, **21%** of the population is **Latino**, with projections showing a continued increase.<sup>30</sup>

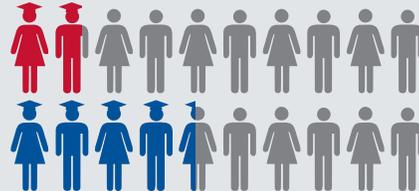
As is the case nationally, Latinos in Colorado are a young population with the median age of Latinos being 26, compared to 40 for White non-Hispanics.<sup>31</sup>



**30%** of the K-12 population is **Latino**.

In terms of degree attainment, 18 percent of Latino adults (25 and older) had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 44 percent of all adults.<sup>32</sup>

**Latino Adults = 1.8 of 10**



**All Adults = 4.4 of 10**

In terms of equity gaps in college completion, Colorado has an **8% equity gap** between **Latinos and Whites** when it comes to graduation rates.<sup>33</sup>

*Excelencia in Education* has partnered with Metropolitan State University of Denver and CoCEAL in the past to address Latino student success in Colorado. Metropolitan State University of Denver provides students with a transformative academic experience and serves the community as a courageous change agent and a gateway to opportunity. Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Latinos (CoCEAL) is a coalition of post-secondary and professional educators devoted to the educational success of the state's Latino/Hispanic population.

The following sections provide a primer of state policies with a Latino lens that may help, hinder, or be worth reconsidering to increase access and completion of postsecondary education in Colorado.

## POLICIES THAT MAY HELP

Colorado has state policies that span the higher education pipeline to help increase Latinos' higher education access and completion. While all of these policies have the potential to help, the participation, implementation, outreach, or funding of these policies may limit how state policy is helping. For the purposes of this primer, the following three public policy strategies may be helping increase Latino college completion:

■ **State funding for higher education** — state financial support for institutions and students include tuition and student support services.

■ **Alternatives to remedial education** —

Allow students to enroll in credit bearing courses while in remedial courses, resulting in increased progress towards a degree.

■ **In-state tuition for undocumented students** — Provides Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students an

opportunity to continue their education at a more reasonable cost.

## STATE FUNDING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

**POLICY CONTEXT:** In Colorado state funding appropriations for higher education have varied greatly, and Latino students have endured resultant inequitable opportunities. While “Colorado ranks third in the nation in the percentage of citizens between the ages of 25 and 64 who hold a college degree,” (Colorado Competes Higher Education Master Plan, 2010), education for Latinos fares poorly: “Colorado has the second largest degree attainment gap in the country—that is, the gap between the educational attainment of White students and the attainment of the next largest ethnic group, which in Colorado is Hispanic/Latino.” Recent information shows Colorado has the largest attainment gap in the U.S. between Whites and, combined, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, a gap of 35 percent, compared with the U.S. average of 23 percent.<sup>34</sup>

Several organizations have addressed inequities in funding for underrepresented minorities, including the Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Latinos (CoCEAL). Since its inception in 2007, CoCEAL has worked to improve the achievement gap including as early as 2008 by addressing the development of Colorado’s Higher Education Master Plan. In 2014 CoCEAL addressed committees from CCHE about HB-1319 concerning the needs of Colorado’s Latino youth in funding and other educational policies. Also, a coalition of African American and Latino community organizations advocated for increased funding. The organizations included the Colorado Latino Leadership, Advocacy, and Research Organization (CLLARO), Colorado Black Round Table, and the NAACP Denver Chapter.

**STATE POLICY:** To begin to address this situation, the State Legislature in 2014 passed House Bill 14–1319 (HB-1319), “Concerning the Creation of an Outcomes-Based Funding Model for Higher Education.” Ultimately a “carveout” amount of 5% extra of the College Opportunity Fund (COF), which helps offset tuition, was set

for institutions to provide services for African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, as well as a 10% extra amount for Pell Grant recipients. The Latino and African American organizations continue to engage the political process to ensure HB 14-1319 fulfills its promise as the State Legislature finalizes the funding, with the additional “carveout” funding an important precedent upon which to build, as such funding is still being debated during the 2015 legislative session.

## DEVELOPING ALTERNATIVES TO REMEDIATION

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Nationally, almost half (45 percent) of Latinos are required to take remedial English and math courses. In Colorado, almost 78 percent of Latinos enrolled at two-year colleges require some sort of remedial education, compared to 38 percent at four-year institutions. These classes are typically non-credit courses that may not be covered by a student’s financial aid. Therefore, by allowing students to enroll in credit bearing courses while receiving this additional assistance, they are progressing towards their degree, and closing the completion gaps. A recent report showed that Denver’s overall remediation rates have dropped down to 37 percent in 2012-13, an improvement from 40 percent the previous year.<sup>35</sup> The Colorado Community College System (CCCS) implemented developmental education strategies statewide, including accelerated course sequencing, developing learning communities, combining courses and allowing students to enroll in credit bearing courses. These strategies have also decreased remedial rates at the community college levels and increased retention rates.

**STATE POLICY:** Colorado has begun to reconfigure “remedial education.” The Colorado Legislature in 2012 passed the Massey Bill (named after its sponsor) to allow 4-year institutions to create courses for students who earlier would have been directed to community colleges for remedial education. Previously

students tested into either College Ready or into the Remedial Level. Students placed into Remedial English would be directed to a community college, for courses not transferable to a 4-year institution. Now there is a third, intermediate, level. Under the Massey Bill, courses can be “stretched” across two semesters, with the same professor and cohort of students, to create a learning community. Students receive 6 credits (3 elective and 3 General Studies), while also enrolling in additional college or university courses, for a 4-year college experience.

### **IN-STATE TUITION FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS**

For undocumented youth, the promise of college affordability appears to be a positive factor in high school graduation. Colorado is one of 13 states that currently offers in-state tuition for undocumented students.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** The majority of Latino students in Colorado colleges are U.S.-born or legal residents and many families have been U.S. citizens for generations. However, there is a small proportion of college age Latinos (as well as students from other racial/ethnic groups) who have been educated in public high schools and have graduated college ready, and are undocumented. These students are considered foreign/international students for college enrollment and federal financial aid purposes resulting in higher tuition costs. Allowing for in-state tuition for undocumented students provides them an opportunity continue their higher education at a more reasonable cost.

At Metropolitan State University (MSU) of Denver, the Faculty Senate was the first higher education body in Colorado to support this legislation upon its introduction in 2003, and MSU Denver continually supported it through its successful passage. MSU Denver in 2011 began developing its own institutional tuition rate for undocumented students. Through an analysis of Federal and State laws, University



personnel considered how such laws would intersect with undocumented students in ways unique to Colorado. MSU Denver personnel developed a separate institutional tuition program, the Colorado High School/GED Non-Resident Tuition Rate, neither entirely out-of-state nor in-state, consisting of the student share of tuition and fees, the student share of the College Opportunity Fund (COF), and a 10% Capital Contribution for the physical plant (a strategy that might be followed in non-DREAM Act states).

**STATE POLICY:** Colorado finally passed an in-state tuition bill for undocumented students in 2013, Senate Bill 13-033, Colorado ASSET—Advancing Students for a Stronger Economy Tomorrow (The DREAM Act in other states). Such legislation was first introduced in the Legislature in 2003 through 2012 and had failed to pass five times. In 2006, the Legislature passed HB-1023, to prohibit Federal or State public benefits to undocumented immigrants, at the time one of the most anti-immigrant laws in the country.

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## POLICIES THAT MAY HINDER

Along with policies that might help increase Latino college completion in Colorado, there are also public policies that may hinder their access to and success in higher education. For the purposes of this primer, the following two policy areas may be hindering Latino college completion:

- **Lack of Latino-specific programs** — Scarcity of programs developed to intentionally serve Latino students and their access and success in higher education or funding where many enroll.
- **State funding for higher education** — Institutions enter into negotiated performance contracts with the state legislature or its appointed representative body in exchange for state funding, but decreases in overall funding may limit effectiveness.

### LACK OF LATINO-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

— By taking into account diversity, income, and preparation characteristics Latinos and others can be better served.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Education programs that are specifically Latino-focused can be of great benefit to students as it helps transmit the culture, history, and contributions of those who are directing education. One example in higher education is Ethnic Studies, also known as Multicultural Studies, with discrete areas such as Chicana and Chicano Studies, Africana Studies, Native American Studies, and Asian American Studies. Most major colleges and universities in the country not only have programs or departments of such studies but also have graduation requirements in Multicultural Studies, for which a student must enroll in one of these or similar such areas of study. Intentionality within policy and practice to serve Latino students, not

solely by default, can proactively support Latino college completion. Latino students are the fastest growing population in Colorado public schools and their access to and success in higher education is important to its economic growth.

**STATE POLICY:** In Colorado, Colorado School Laws [22-1-104, (Title 22, Article 1, Section 104)] requires similar curriculum in history and civil government of the United States, which includes the history, culture, and contributions of minorities, including but not limited to, the American Indians, the Hispanic Americans, and the African Americans, shall be taught in all the public schools of the state. However, the degree to which this law has been implemented in Colorado is open to debate. Denver Public Schools engaged in the development of The Alma Project: A Cultural Curriculum Infusion Model, developing “multicultural curriculum for early childhood education (ECE) through 12th grade... [which] broadens the teacher’s ability to teach a more inclusive accurate curriculum through a literacy-based approach. More importantly, it honors the cultural and historical contributions of various ethnicities represented in Denver Public Schools – which is 80 percent minority.” The project developed more than 80 curriculum units about Latinos, African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, with the units intended to be integrated into the existing curriculum. While the units may not be implemented as much as originally intended or expected, The Alma Project may provide other school districts with examples of curriculum units they can develop on their own to improve Multicultural Education. Denver Public Schools also has stand-alone courses in Chicana/o Studies and African American Studies curricula.

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## STATE FUNDING HIGHER EDUCATION

— Increase transparency to gauge how well all students are being served with an emphasis on traditionally underserved students, as opposed to a main focus on graduation rates.

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Rewarding institutions simply for higher persistence levels could reduce campus diversity because it encourages institutions to recruit and admit only students with a greater probability of persistence based on traditional indicators, such as college preparedness, family support, and ability to incur tuition costs. One of the primary challenges that institutions face in entering into such contracts is that state funding for the higher education institutions has declined in the last several years. In Colorado, the study, “Some Basic Facts about Colorado Higher Education,” published in 2013 by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems for the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, reveals that in 2000-01, the state provided 68 percent of a resident student’s share of college cost, while the student provided 32 percent. By 2011-12, the situation had reversed: The state provided only 34 percent, while the student provided 66 percent. Since higher education institutions must now secure their funding from various sources because of diminished state aid, state mandates of oversight on institutions to provide improved education may be vulnerable.

**STATE POLICY:** In 2011, the Colorado Legislature passed the “Goals for Higher Education System Act” (Senate Bill 11-052), which provided for the use of “Performance Contracts” for higher education institutions in Colorado. Performance measures (retention,

persistence & graduation rates) to be assessed take into account student preparation levels, such as the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CHHE) index, standardized test scores, socioeconomic status, first generation status and membership to a specific ethnic/racial or underrepresented group.<sup>36</sup> Higher education institutions enter into negotiated performance contracts with the state legislature or its appointed representative body in exchange for state funding. Performance contracts could establish accountability measures for institutions to better serve underrepresented minority students, but they now experience mixed results.

Further, the future of low state funding to the institutions with the largest numbers of racial and ethnic minorities is of major concern in addressing their college completion. Data show more state funding goes to where there are less numbers of ethnic minority students, and less state funding goes to where there are more ethnic minority students.

Further, additional information about recent recommended changes to HB-1319 (noted earlier as potentially helping with Latino college completion) shows possible dramatic changes to the original intent of HB 1319. A CCHE recommended allocation in 2014 to begin in 2015 would remove over \$120 million from the total state funding for higher education before the COF stipend and Fee for Service would be allocated. This would result in a reduction in COF funding, negatively affecting institutions that rely more heavily on these funds. This potential change to HB 14-1319 may exacerbate the educational achievement gaps for ethnic minorities in Colorado.



# TEXAS

The following educational profile of Latinos in Texas provides context for reviewing the public policy related to accessing and completing postsecondary education in the state:

*Excelencia in Education* has partnered with Educate Texas to address Latino student success in Texas. Educate Texas is a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas focused on a common goal: Improving the public education system so that every Texas student is prepared for success in school, in the workforce, and in life.

Texas has the **2nd largest Latino population** in the country.<sup>37</sup>

It is estimated that between 2000 and 2040, Texas' population will grow from **20 million to 50 million**, and 96 percent of the net increase will be non-Anglo, with **59%** of those being **Latino**.<sup>38</sup>

**Latinos** currently make up **38%** of the Texas **population** with the greatest area of growth along the Texas-Mexico border.<sup>39</sup>

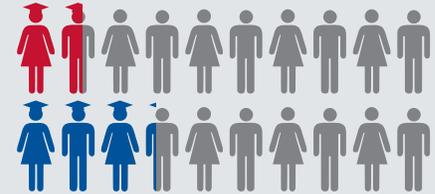
As is the case nationally, Latinos in Texas are a young population with the median age of Latinos being 27, compared to 41 for White non-Hispanics.<sup>40</sup>



**Almost half (48%)** of the K-12 population is **Latino**, third largest in the country.

In terms of degree attainment, 16 percent of Latino adults (25 and older) had earned an associate degree or higher, compared to 32 percent of all adults.<sup>41</sup>

**Latino Adults = 1.6 of 10**



**All Adults = 3.2 of 10**

In terms of equity gaps in college completion, Texas has a **4% equity gap between Latinos and Whites** when considering graduation rates<sup>42</sup>; the smallest of the three states in this analysis.

The following sections provide a primer of state policies with a Latino lens that may help, hinder, or be worth reconsidering to increase access and completion of postsecondary education in Texas.

## POLICIES THAT MAY HELP

Texas has state policies that span the higher education pipeline to help increase Latinos' higher education access and completion. While all of these policies have the potential to help, the participation, implementation, outreach, or funding of these policies may limit how state policy is helping. For the purposes of this primer, the following three public policy strategies may be seen as helping increase Latino college completion:

- **P-16 Curriculum Alignment** — Programs developed to assist students enrolling and completing a higher education credential via partnerships along P-16 pipeline.
- **TEXAS (Towards Excellence, Access and Success) Grant** — Financial support for students attending public institutions in the state.
- **In-state tuition for undocumented students** — Provides students an opportunity to continue their education at a more reasonable cost.

## P-16 CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

**POLICY CONTEXT:** College readiness is facilitated by a rigorous and aligned curriculum provided to students throughout the educational pipeline. However, in Texas and other states, it has been a challenge to align K-12 curriculum with the college readiness institutions expect of entering students. Given Latino youth represent about half of all students in K-12 education in Texas, there are opportunities to prepare them for success in college through curriculum alignment. Via partnerships between K-12 and postsecondary institutions, curriculum alignment is improved through data collection, analysis, and student services. Increased awareness and parental outreach have increased college participation and completion rates.

**STATE POLICY:** The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) has developed various programs to assist students in enrolling and completing a higher education credential:

- **GenerationTX** — community based movement to create a culture of college and career readiness through a series of grassroots initiatives;
- **AdviseTX** — recent college graduates serve as near-peer college advisors to low income and first generation students;
- **TransitionTX** — first-year experience program that includes a First-Year Seminar (FYS) course, FYS instructor certificate model, peer tutoring and a peer calling program; and
- **AccelerateTX** — short-term, accelerated academic instruction and support to assist in transition to college, persistence and success to students at-risk of dropping out of college; provide career/technical training courses concurrently with basic education.

GenerationTX, AdviseTX, and TransitionTX are geared towards a more traditional student profile, that of a recent high school graduate, of which increasing numbers in Texas are Latinos. Pilot programs for GenerationTX began in 2010 in San Antonio and Fort Worth, due to their high numbers of Latino and Black students, and are now located in 10 areas across the state. Its focus is to work with school districts and provide a social media blitz to encourage students to pursue postsecondary education. The AdviseTX College Advising Corps is currently located in

5 areas across the state. The student advisers live within their service areas, involving themselves in the communities they serve. AdviseTX focuses on best-fit colleges, encouraging students to attend schools that will serve them well both academically and socially. TransitionTX is designed to help first-generation, low-income, Latino and Black students navigate their first year at participating public two-year community colleges. The program is intended to better enable students to complete a certificate or degree within three years, or successfully transfer to a four-year institution. AccelerateTX was created in response to the growing demand for adult basic education services to assist these students to transition from earning a GED to college-level degree and certificate programs. Currently 14 community colleges throughout the state are participating in this program. The program provides intensive advising, support skills classes, and selected workforce certificates that move students through education to employment within a few months.

## TEXAS (TOWARDS EXCELLENCE, ACCESS AND SUCCESS) GRANT

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Financial support and an institution's ability to provide such support are very important to students, especially Latinos. In fact, Latino and Black undergraduates are more likely to apply for financial aid to pay for college than all undergraduates; however, they receive lower amounts of aid than other groups, on average.<sup>43</sup> An institution that focuses on ensuring financial support for its students has a positive effect on recruitment, retention, and degree completion.<sup>44</sup> When institutions offer students the opportunity to attend college with limited financial burden, that is one less thing for the students to worry about. Undocumented students who graduate from a Texas high school and meet the criteria for the grant are also eligible to receive it and help fund their higher education degrees.

**STATE POLICY:** The Texas Legislature created the TEXAS Grant in 1999 in order to provide financial support for students attending public institutions within the state. This program can be used by recent high school graduates, or by

recent community college students who are continuing their education. Students entering the program from high school can receive awards for up to 150 semester credit hours, until they receive a bachelor's degree. Students, who enter the program after completing their associate's degree, can receive awards for up to 90 semester credit hours, until they receive a bachelor's degree. Award amounts vary depending on the type of postsecondary institution the student attends.

## IN-STATE TUITION FOR UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

**POLICY CONTEXT:** The majority of Latino students in college are U.S-born or legal residents (98 percent).<sup>45</sup> Further, many families have been U.S. citizens for generations. However, there is a small proportion of college age Latinos in Texas who have been educated in public high schools and have graduated college ready, and are undocumented. Other states

consider these students foreign/international students for college enrollment and federal financial aid purposes resulting in higher tuition costs. Allowing for in-state tuition for undocumented students in Texas provides them an opportunity to continue their higher education at a more reasonable cost.

**STATE POLICY:** For undocumented youth, the promise of college affordability appears to be a positive factor in high school graduation. Texas is one of 13 states that currently offers in-state tuition for undocumented students. Texas is also one of two states (the other is New Mexico) that take this one step further by allowing undocumented students the opportunity to participate in state financial aid programs. These state aid programs consist of state-funded grants and loan programs to encourage timely degree completion.

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## POLICIES THAT MAY HINDER

It is important to also provide information about public policies that serve as a hindrance to Latinos and their access to and success in higher education. These policies include a less rigorous high school graduation plan and decreased state support of higher education.

■ **Reduced rigor in high school curriculum** — Students interested in career and technical fields may receive less rigorous plans and less preparation if they decide to pursue a college credential. Potentially negative impact on students should they change their minds and decide to pursue a postsecondary credential.

■ **Decreased state funding of higher education** — Increased college costs due to tuition deregulation have resulted in low-income students being hit the hardest.

## REDUCED RIGOR IN HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

**POLICY CONTEXT:** A recent study<sup>46</sup> found that HB 5 might lead school counselors to set historically disadvantaged students on a less rigorous degree plan designed for students who do not want to go to college. Researchers say this is because school administrators often have low academic expectation for students who come from lower-income households. Those opposed to HB 5 have stated that students need college ready skills to be successful in life, even though they may not want to go to college. They also believe the less rigorous plan will have a negative impact on the numbers of Latino and Black students, should they change their mind and decide to pursue a postsecondary credential in the future.

**STATE POLICY:** In 2013, the Texas Legislature passed HB 5, which reduced high school testing and changed graduation requirements. These changes went into effect during the 2014-15 school year. The new curriculum dropped Algebra 2 from standard high school curriculum and created a three-tiered high school diploma system depending on a student's goals for after high school. Two of the graduation plans allow students to earn the credits they need to get into most state colleges and universities, while one plan would not. The less rigorous plan was crafted to give students who want to go into career and technical fields more flexibility to take more classes catered to their interests instead of taking college preparation classes.

## STATE FUNDING OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**POLICY CONTEXT:** Increased costs of higher education, coupled with stagnant financial aid, and less state and federal funding, have made college less affordable for many families and have hampered the efforts to increase access to higher education, especially among low-income and residents of color. Institutions along the Texas-Mexico border share a history of limited state financial support to help improve the access and quality education.

In addition to inequitable funding for higher education, Texas public school finance policies continue to disadvantage those students who have been historically underserved, Latinos and Blacks. The pipeline from the public school system (K-12) to college is leaking as a result of funding inequalities

in the public education system, making academic access and preparation for college more difficult. It is critical to understand that although the funding to improve higher education in Texas has increased, the public education system producing academically prepared children of color continues to be flawed.

**STATE POLICY:** Higher education has been confronted by a decline of state and federal government funding, resulting in increased tuition costs for the students. In 2003, the Texas Legislature passed HB 3015, allowing the deregulation of tuition at public colleges and universities. As a result, Texas tuition costs have increased, on average, 40 percent since 2003.

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## POLICIES TO REEXAMINE

- **Closing the Gaps by 2015 Initiative** — Funding of programs designed to help attract and retain students, especially those who have been historically underserved to close the gaps in student participation, success, excellence and research.
- **Top 10 percent plan** — Race-neutral college admissions plan that has resulted in fewer students of color admitted to flagship institutions, outside of the top 10 percent.

### CLOSING THE GAPS BY 2015 (HB 400)

In 2000, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), with strong support from the state's educational, business and political leaders, passed a plan for higher education called *Closing the Gaps by 2015*. This plan aimed to close the gaps in higher education, both within Texas and between Texas and other states, in four key areas: 1) student participation, 2) student success, 3) student excellence, and 4) research. The THECB has concluded that in order to accomplish these goals, the state must fund programs designed to help attract and retain students, especially those who have been historically underserved. Additionally, through the common college application, the state has simplified the application process by allowing students to complete one application that can be submitted to any Texas public university. Instructions on completing the application are printed in both English and Spanish.

In order to close these gaps, increased participation from Latinos and Blacks is needed at all levels of higher education. However, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has noted that although Latinos accounted for the most enrollment growth from 2000 to 2007, the target for Latino enrollment in higher education was not met. Community colleges in Texas enroll 56 percent of all students, and more than 60 percent of all Latino and Black students.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, community colleges are well-positioned to educate and train the regional workforce.

In Texas, as in other states across the country, the majority of Latino students enrolled in postsecondary education are enrolled in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). HSIs are defined in federal law (the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), Title V, 2008) as accredited, degree-granting, public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment. To achieve the goals of *Closing the Gaps* and to ensure an educated workforce that is prepared to meet the demands of the 21st Century, Texas must take a variety of actions to increase access and completion rates of graduate students of color. These actions should include keeping higher education affordable and capitalizing on the strengths and locations of Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

### TOP 10 PERCENT PLAN

In response to a 1996 judicial ban on the use of race in college admissions decisions<sup>48</sup>, the Texas legislature passed House Bill 588, more commonly known as the "Top 10 percent Law" in 1997. This law guarantees admissions to any public university in the state to students who graduate in the top ten percent of their high school class. The law was developed as a method to address issues of diversity, particularly at the two state flagship institutions.

This shift from race-conscious admissions to a percentage plan has had an effect on admission rates on Latino undergraduate students. Studies have found that the percent plan is an ineffective proxy for race-specific criteria in college admissions, since admission rates have not bounced back to their pre-*Hopwood* levels.<sup>49</sup> Although the numbers of Latino students applying and enrolling at the two state flagship institutions have increased, this is also a result of change in composition of the state's increasing Latino K-12 population.

# SUMMARY

The goal of this primer was to explore state policies that either helped or hindered Latino student success in higher education. Although many of these policies are not Latino-specific, analysis showed certain policies are critical for Latino college completion and effective strategies can increase access and retention to completion.

This primer builds on findings in previous research on policies and practices to increase student retention to completion by examining them through a Latino lens that uses the Latino student profile to accelerate retention and completion in higher education for all students.

The link between education and prosperity is undisputed. Preparing students to earn postsecondary credentials and degrees is vital for the nation's economic future. Higher education should once again be considered a public good. Studies have shown that for every \$1 invested in higher education, a state can expect to gain \$4 in returns.<sup>50</sup>

Why should we be intentional in ensuring Latinos are included? How do state policies address this post-traditional student profile? Do current state policies help or hinder these students' college degree attainment? Going forward, a much more

in-depth discussion of public policy is warranted, but this primer lays out some obvious policies to initiate this discussion in a much more intentional way. *Excelencia* in Education and our partners in the Ensuring America's Future initiative will continue these discussions in institutional, state, and federal public policy.

*Excelencia* believes institutions and communities intentionally acting and measuring their postsecondary success are agents of change in expanding opportunities at institutions and public policy. We have witnessed the unintended impact of public policy that ignores the strengths and needs of the evolving student population and the institutions that serve these students. Therefore, developing and strengthening networks of institutions and communities that actively pursue effective change and link with other effective practices is needed to graduate more students and provide our future workforce.



# PARTNERS

**The Campaign for College Opportunity** is focused on a single mission: to ensure that the next generation of California students has the chance to attend college and succeed in order to keep our workforce and economy strong.

([www.collegecampaign.org](http://www.collegecampaign.org))



**Educate Texas** is a public-private initiative of Communities Foundation of Texas focused on a common goal: Improving the public education system so that every Texas student is prepared for success in school, in the workforce, and in life.

([www.edtx.org](http://www.edtx.org))



**Metropolitan State University of Denver** provides students with a transformative academic experience and serves the community as a courageous change agent and a gateway to opportunity. The University's broad access, affordable tuition, quality academic experience and excellent outcomes add up to a high-value education.

([www.msudenver.edu](http://www.msudenver.edu))



**Colorado Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Latinos (CoCEAL)** is a coalition of post-secondary and professional educators devoted to the educational success of the state's Latino/Hispanic population. ([www.cocel.org](http://www.cocel.org))



Analysis and Roundtable are part of *Excelencia* in Education's national initiative, **Ensuring America's Future by Increasing Latino College Completion**. The initiative started in 2010 by linking *Excelencia*'s mission and actions with key policy interests of selected national foundations and political leaders who shared a commitment to Latino student success in higher education. In 2015, Ensuring America's Future is using national and state data and actions to emphasize the U.S. must increase Latino higher educational attainment levels to meet the country's civic and workforce needs.

For the U.S. to regain the top ranking in the world for college degree attainment, Latinos will need to earn 5.5 million more degrees by 2020. Learn more by visiting [www.edexcelencia.org/research/college-completion/united-states](http://www.edexcelencia.org/research/college-completion/united-states)



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