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## ***Excelencia* in Education Spotlights Mercy College and the University at Albany for Advancing Latino Student Success**

*These Institutions are the First in New York and the Northeast to Earn the Prestigious Seal of Excelencia*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** (April 12, 2023) – *Excelencia* in Education, the premiere authority in accelerating Latino student success in higher education, hosted a special event in New York City on April 4, 2023 to showcase Mercy College and the University at Albany SUNY as the first college and university in New York, and the entire Northeast, to earn the prestigious Seal of *Excelencia*, a national certification for intentionally serving Latino students.

At the invitation-only Midtown reception with more than 150 guests, *Excelencia* was joined by New York Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez, New York State Higher Education Services Corporation President Guillermo Linares, New York Commissioner of Transportation and *Excelencia* Board Member Marie Therese Dominguez, as well as representatives of the national network of Presidents for Latino Student Success from Connecticut, New York and New Jersey, and leaders in higher education, business, philanthropy, government, and policy.

*Excelencia* Co-founder and President Sarita Brown said, “At this moment in New York and throughout the country, it is vital to engage and propel the vibrant and growing Latino community to meet America’s workforce and civic leader needs and ensure our country’s bright future. We want people to know the colleges and universities exhibiting national leadership through their work with *Excelencia* and each other in common cause to enroll and graduate more Latinos students and all students.”

“Seal of *Excelencia* certified colleges and universities are not just enrolling Latino students, they are intentionally SERVING them,” said Deborah Santiago, Co-founder and CEO of *Excelencia* in Education. “The University at Albany and Mercy College are holding themselves to a higher standard for accelerating Latino, and all, students’ educational success, and are thus at the forefront of transforming higher education.”

New York Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez said, “For almost 20 years, *Excelencia* in Education has taken the responsibility of chronicling the impact of higher education for Latinos in American universities and colleges. Institutions now face the reality of having a high number of Latino students looking for a college degree. Our Latino community knows that higher education is a way to learn and move up in a society in which a career allows people to support a family and live a better life. Education provides a different perspective on how to approach our way in society, and to contribute to our state and nation – the leadership at *Excelencia* in Education knows this.”

The event brought positive attention to Mercy College and the University at Albany for being the first Northeast institutions to earn the Seal of *Excelencia* certification. In his remarks, Sec. Rodriguez said Seal of *Excelencia* certification is "becoming the 'Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval' for Latino student success in higher education."

President Tim Hall of Mercy College and President Havidán Rodríguez of the University at Albany also addressed the crowd and spoke about the impact and importance of the Seal certification, which has assisted them to more intentionally serve their Latino students.

"Mercy College is proud to be the first private college in the country, and the first Hispanic-Serving Institution in New York State, to receive the prestigious Seal of *Excelencia*," President Hall said. "We are committed to serving and supporting our students intentionally, by creating the conditions that maximize their educational success and their flourishing as human beings."

"Being certified with the Seal of *Excelencia* represents a highly significant validation of UAAlbany's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion," President Rodríguez said. "This prestigious designation is powerful evidence that we are not only successfully serving students from underrepresented backgrounds — we are also accelerating our progress toward our vision to be the nation's leading diverse public research university."

Both institutional leaders are part of *Excelencia*'s national network of Presidents for Latino Student Success, which represents 4% of America's colleges and universities yet, in 2022, enrolled 31% and graduated 33% of all Latinos students in the United States.

Within this network, 30 institutions have earned the [Seal of \*Excelencia\*](#) for demonstrating, through data, practice, and leadership, how they intentionally serve Latino students while serving all. The Seal institutions, which now include Mercy College and the University at Albany, are trendsetters in higher education.

The following day, *Excelencia* convened with leadership teams from Presidents for Latino Student Success from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut for a closed-door Policy Forum. *Excelencia* facilitated a frank discussion with institutional leaders on key issues for Latino student success in higher education including:

- Workforce
- Affordability
- Leadership and the future of higher education
- Intentionality in serving Latino students

Going forward, *Excelencia* in Education will incorporate input from the New York Policy Forum with input from similar forums with Presidents for Latino Students Success in other regions of the country. The perspectives of the Presidents and Chancellors in the network will inform *Excelencia* as it continues to advance Latino student success and shape the agenda for a National Policy Forum to be held in Washington, DC in conjunction with the organization's annual Fall Convening, September 28-29, 2023.

**About *Excelencia* in Education**

*Excelencia* in Education accelerates Latino student success in higher education by promoting Latino student achievement, conducting analysis to inform educational policies, advancing institutional practices, and collaborating with those committed and ready to meet the mission. It has published more than 100 analyses, highlighted over 385 programs from across the country to advance effective, evidence-based practices, and distributed more than \$2 million to promote programs producing results for Latino students. Launched in 2004 in the nation's capital, *Excelencia* has established a network of results-oriented educators and policymakers to address the U.S. economy's needs for a highly educated workforce and engaged civic leaders. For more information, visit: [www.EdExcelencia.org](http://www.EdExcelencia.org).