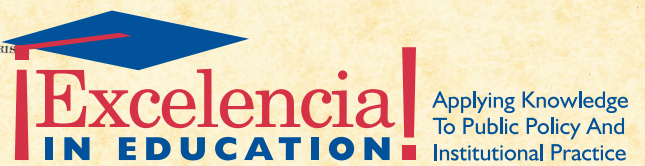




# ACCELERATING LATINO STUDENT SUCCESS AT TEXAS BORDER INSTITUTIONS: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Neither Texas nor the United States can reach its human capital needs without accelerating Hispanic educational attainment. At the national level, the numbers of Hispanics enrolling and completing college degrees are still too low to meet the growing workforce needs of our country. Therefore, the contributions made by the institutions that have been most successful in enrolling and graduating Hispanics are particularly noteworthy. In analyses of national and state data, the institutions on the U.S./Mexico border in Texas rank among the top institutions enrolling and graduating Hispanics in higher education.

*Excelencia in Education's* project, *Accelerating Latino Student Success (ALASS) at Texas Border Institutions* examined the data, strategies and acceleration plans at eight public institutions on the U.S./Mexican border to determine their progress in attaining the participation and success goals in *Closing the Gaps by 2015: The Texas Higher Education Plan*. Despite their significant contributions, these eight institutions are rarely recognized in Texas, or nationally, for their major role in enrolling and graduating Hispanic students.



### Accelerating Latino Student Success (ALASS) at Texas Border Institutions — Participating Institutions

Public Universities	Community Colleges
Texas A&M International University	Laredo Community College
The University of Texas at Brownsville	Texas Southmost College
The University of Texas at El Paso	El Paso County Community College District
The University of Texas-Pan American	South Texas College

## Need to Accelerate Progress

Leaders of the eight border institutions recognize the need to accelerate progress to serve their communities, meet the state's ambitious goals, and increase their efficiency. These leaders also recognize that the collective commitment of their institutions is necessary, but not sufficient, to reach the state's goals. These institutions have designed acceleration plans to continue their leadership in enrolling and graduating Hispanic students. Other institutions and regions must do the same.

- ★ Border institutions have targeted participation growth to increase over 50 percent from 2005 to 2015. This is more than three times the national enrollment growth projected and twice the projected growth in Texas in that same period.
- ★ The border institutions have committed to increasing their overall certificate and degrees awarded by over 90 percent from 2005 to 2015. In comparison, statewide public institutions are projected to increase their degrees awarded by 40 percent.

The strategies in their acceleration plans address the numerous challenges the institutions face in providing a quality higher education in their respective regions: college readiness, access, retention and academic progress, affordability, and timely completion.

## Recommendations — A Meaningful Hispanic Initiative

As bold as Texas' higher education plan has been in setting meaningful targets, the state must recommit to meeting the statewide needs of educational attainment for all, and specifically for Hispanics. Using the efforts of the border institutions as an example, the state should support a meaningful initiative specifically aimed at Hispanics that is inclusive of all the goals and strategies of the *Closing the Gaps Plan*, and other statewide plans such as the *Uniform Recruitment and Retention Strategy Plan*. Intentionality matters. This initiative would build from the strengths of investments and practices at institutions like those on the U.S./Mexico border to design a cohesive and intentional strategy that acknowledges the need to accelerate Hispanic participation and success beyond current investments and activities.

**Create a statewide acceleration plan specifically for Hispanic participation and success.** Just as the eight border institutions have developed their own acceleration plans focused on Hispanic students, so too can Texas. The state can develop a more proactive and even more specific plan to accelerate attainment of both goals by building on the successes and strategies of those institutions that enroll and graduate the largest number of Hispanics in the state.

**Increase support to border institutions.** These border institutions have taken responsibility for educating the communities in their service areas, and have made a compelling case for the returns to their community that result from investing in their efforts. Given the history of limited financial support to border institutions, and the projected population growth in this region, the State has the opportunity and obligation to meet the institutions' efforts to serve a large and fast growing segment of the Texas community with significant additional support.

**Replicate or expand institutional practices that are working for Hispanic students.** The community colleges and public universities on the U.S./Mexico border have become effective laboratories evaluating what works to enroll and graduate the nontraditional and Hispanic population of Texas. There are practices that have proven to be effective in serving Hispanic students that can be expanded or replicated in other institutions in the state in an effort to accelerate participation and success of Hispanic students.

**Expand need-based financial aid.** By providing financial aid for low-income students, the state helps to develop economic mobility for its residents and to support the economic competitiveness of the state. Given the low income of many Hispanics in Texas and the high poverty rates along the U.S./Mexico border specifically, the best way to achieve the preparation and success goals in *Closing the Gaps* is to provide financial aid to increase the educational opportunities of those who may not be the best prepared academically, but who will see a large value-added to their skills and abilities through higher education.

**Engage other regions of the state.** The largest growth in the population is projected to occur in urban areas, such as Dallas and Houston, and along the Texas border. The work of the border institutions alone will not be sufficient to meet the participation and success goals in *Closing the Gaps*. Texas will have to increase the scale of its efforts at the border and beyond if the State is to meet those goals.

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**Accelerating Latino Student Success at Texas Border Institutions: Possibilities and Challenges.**  
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