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***Excelencia* in Education Receives Important Grant by Ascendium Education Group to Expand Work**

Investment Will Facilitate Analysis of Institutional Resiliency and Strategies for Serving Rural Learners in Puerto Rico

WASHINGTON, D.C. (January 14, 2021) – *Excelencia* in Education is starting the new year with increased support for its national leadership in understanding and advancing Latino student success through an important grant from Ascendium Education Group.

The grant will support identifying strategies for institutional resiliency in Puerto Rico dealing with multiple calamities and promote student success for rural and Latino learners. The island of Puerto Rico has experienced several natural, economic, demographic, and governance challenges in recent years that have impacted day-to-day life for students, communities, and institutions of higher education. Resilience has been an important characteristic for the capacity of students and institutions there. *Excelencia's* leaders have said on numerous occasions that the issues in Puerto Rico can be a bellwether of what mainland institutions may also experience and need to address if they are to more intentionally serve Latino and rural learners.

Excelencia will analyze and report on the status of higher education in Puerto Rico and produce up to five accompanying case studies about institutional transformation to address the demographic, economic, social, and leadership challenges of the island over the last 5 years. *Excelencia* will conduct the project in partnership with the Puerto Rico Endowment for the Humanities (*La Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades*) (<https://www.fhpr.org/en/>) led by its Executive Director, Margarita Benitez.

About Ascendium Education Group

Ascendium Education Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping people reach the education and career goals that matter to them. Ascendium invests in initiatives designed to increase the number of students from low-income backgrounds who complete postsecondary degrees, certificates and workforce training programs, with an emphasis on first-generation students, incarcerated adults, rural community members, students of color and veterans. Ascendium's work identifies, validates and expands best practices to promote large-scale change at the institutional, system and state levels, with the intention of elevating opportunity for all. For more information, visit: <https://www.ascendiumphilanthropy.org/>.

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, and advancing institutional practices while collaborating with those committed and ready to meet the mission. 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: <https://www.edexcelencia.org/>.