This chapter highlights the role of Hispanic-Serving Institutions in promoting the academic success of minority students and discusses successful strategies used by several Hispanic-Serving community colleges.

Realizing Student Success at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Margarita Benítez, Jessie DeAro

Students of color remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of educational attainment, despite numerous efforts by education and government leaders to facilitate student success along educational pathways (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). Given the increasingly diverse population in the United States, and the national interest in fostering a skilled workforce and an educated and engaged citizenry, all educators must work to support these students; minority student success is no longer a minority issue.

As noted in Chapter One, community colleges are key entrance points to higher education for students from underrepresented groups. Financially disadvantaged students are often drawn to two-year colleges’ low cost, geographical proximity, wide range of study options, and general flexibility. Open-door policies and remedial education programs for underprepared high school graduates are typical of community colleges, and these characteristics help enroll and educate racially diverse students. Unfortunately, whereas significant numbers of these students enroll in community colleges, the numbers who graduate are much smaller, especially when seen through the prism of federally set timelines of three years for associate degrees and six years for baccalaureate degrees. This is a matter of ongoing concern, discussion, and research within the higher education community.

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Community colleges are driven by missions to serve their local communities, and adapting services and programs to changing local demographics and workforce needs is key to the survival and success of two-year colleges. Consequently, they are often rich with lessons on how to address the needs and promote the success of low-income and racially diverse students.

Approximately 17 percent of all nonprofit institutions of higher education enroll a disproportionately high number of minority students in comparison to mainstream institutions and are therefore recognized by the federal government as Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). MSIs are entitled to receive federal funds set aside for their institutional development (U.S. Department of Education, 2003b). After a brief discussion of MSIs in general, this chapter looks to the largest, most diverse, and fastest-growing sector of MSIs—Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)—for lessons on enhancing academic success for Hispanics and other students of color. Because some HSI achievements in promoting student success were made possible by funding through Title V of the Higher Education Act, the chapter will also describe this relatively new funding stream. This chapter concludes with a look at the Latino Student Success project, a collaborative effort among six HSIs, and examines the strategies and challenges related to attaining and documenting Latino student success in higher education.

Profiles of Minority-Serving Institutions

The Higher Education Act (HEA) defines six categories of MSIs, as summarized in Table 3.1. Title III and, more recently, Title V of the HEA form the main legislation for MSIs as well as for other institutions of higher education that meet Title III eligibility criteria. Basic eligibility requirements shared by all Title III and Title V institutions include low average educational expenditures per student, high enrollment of financially needy students, not-for-profit status, accreditation, and awarding of associate or higher degrees.

Whereas HSIs, Alaska Native–Serving Institutions (ANSIs), and Native Hawaiian–Serving Institutions (NHSIs) are primarily defined by student enrollment, qualification as Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) is based on an acknowledgment by the federal government of a historical institutional mission to serve African Americans and American Indians, respectively. Most HBCUs have over a hundred years of experience educating African Americans, and serve a primarily African American student body. TCUs are usually about thirty years old and are primarily based on Indian reservations, whence they draw most of their student body. Unlike these types of MSIs, HSIs can come into existence rather quickly, without a mission statement or overt institutional commitment to serve Hispanic students. The following paragraphs discuss each of these types in more detail.
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Only 12.5 percent of the 104 HBCUs are community colleges (13 institutions); 47 percent have graduate programs, and another 13 percent offer professional degrees. However, 39 percent of all HBCUs have open enrollment admissions policies, including all of the Historically Black community colleges. Ten Historically Black community colleges are located in urban locations or near urban centers (76 percent), and three are found in small towns. HBCUs are located in twenty-two states; roughly a third are concentrated in North Carolina, Alabama, and Georgia. Half of all HBCUs are public institutions, and ten of the thirteen Historically Black community colleges are public.

Historically Black community colleges range from very small institutions with seventy-five students to large community colleges enrolling approximately nine thousand students. All together, Historically Black community colleges enroll approximately twenty-eight thousand students (9 percent of total HBCU enrollment); 49 percent are African American, 32 percent are white, 16 percent are Hispanic, and 3 percent are classified as Other. African American enrollment at Historically Black community colleges ranges from 16 to 100 percent and averages 73 percent. In 2002, African American students made up 70 percent of the students who completed their degrees within three years at Historically Black two-year colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Eighty percent of TCUs (twenty-five of thirty-two) are two-year institutions. Only five Tribal Colleges are found in urban locations or near urban centers, whereas the
remaining twenty-seven are located in rural areas. TCUs exist in twelve states, and half are located in Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Eight of the two-year Tribal Colleges are private, and all have open admissions policies. Enrollment in two-year Tribal Colleges ranges from forty to two thousand students, and total enrollment in two-year Tribal Colleges is approximately ten thousand students (67 percent of total TCU enrollment); 78 percent are Native American, 19 percent are white, 1 percent are Hispanic, and 2 percent are classified as Other. The Native American enrollment at each of these institutions ranges from 33 to 100 percent and averages 81 percent. Annual institutional expenditures range from $0.5 to $28 million. In 2002, Native American students made up 82 percent of the students who completed their degrees within three years at two-year Tribal Colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). According to the federal government, HSIs are defined as having an enrollment of more than 25 percent Hispanic full-time-equivalent students. Scores of community colleges have become HSIs because of their mission to serve their local area and the growth of the Hispanic population in the United States from fourteen to thirty-five million over the last twenty years (Guzmán, 2001; Laden, 1999, 2004).

There are approximately 242 HSIs located in fourteen states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; 128 of these are community colleges. Although HSIs make up only 7 percent of all nonprofit colleges and universities in the United States, they account for 54 percent of the total Latino student enrollment in higher education. Approximately 800,000 of 1.5 million Latinos currently enrolled in institutions of higher education attend HSIs, and 500,000 of these students are enrolled in Hispanic-Serving community colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). Excluding the forty-four four-year institutions in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, community colleges make up 65 percent of HSIs in the continental United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

Roughly 80 percent of Hispanic-Serving community colleges are found in urban locations or near urban centers; the rest are located in rural areas and small towns. Sixty percent of all Hispanic-Serving community colleges are in California and Texas, the two states that account for nearly 50 percent of the Hispanic population in the United States. Eighty-seven percent of Hispanic-Serving community colleges are public, and most have open admission policies. Hispanic-Serving community colleges range from very small institutions with fewer than one hundred students to large multicampus systems with more than fifty thousand students. Annual expenditures of Hispanic-Serving community colleges and community college systems range from $1 million to $300 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

Latino student success has become an issue that transcends Hispanic communities and HSIs. Hispanics are the youngest and fastest-growing group in the United States; they have increased by 58 percent over the last ten years compared to 13 percent for the rest of the U.S. population (Guzmán, 2001).
Hispanics currently constitute 17.5 percent (4.7 million) of the traditional college-age population (between eighteen and twenty-four years of age), yet they make up less than 10 percent (1.5 million) of the total student enrollment in higher education in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 2002a). At present, Hispanics have the lowest college enrollment rate of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-old high school graduates (35 percent) as well as low high school graduation rates (64 percent) (U.S. Department of Education, 2001, 2002a). In addition, nearly 60 percent of Hispanic students enrolled in higher education are in two-year institutions, compared to only 36 percent of white students and 42 percent of African American students (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a).

Approximately 31 percent of Hispanic students in elementary and secondary schools are Limited English Proficient (LEP) (U.S. Department of Education, 2003a). Consequently, most Hispanic-Serving community colleges have an appreciation for bilingual skills and typically provide support services for students in LEP or ESL programs. Hispanic-Serving community colleges also have flexible course schedules for part-time students who are working or have family responsibilities.

Among MSIs, Hispanic-Serving community colleges serve the most diverse student populations. In addition to 42 percent Hispanic enrollment, 10 percent of students enrolled in Hispanic-Serving community colleges are African American, 9 percent are Asian American, 1 percent are Native American, 30 percent are white, and 8 percent are classified as Other. Therefore, student success at HSIs is not exclusively a Hispanic matter. Presidents and deans at institutions that receive funds set aside for HSIs are quick to point out that these funds serve to strengthen the entire institution and also benefit students who are not Latino (Santiago, Andrade, and Brown, 2004). Indeed, unlike that of mainstream community colleges, the racial distribution of Hispanic-Serving community college completers is similar to the racial distribution of enrollees; at these institutions, students of all races and ethnicities graduate or complete their degree at the same rates (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b).

Given the broad diversity of Hispanic-Serving community colleges—in terms of location, size, student population, and resource base—student success initiatives at these colleges can provide concrete and valuable blueprints for many other institutions. Because many of the initiatives to enhance student success at HSIs have been funded through Title V of the Higher Education Act, the following section provides more detail on this legislation.

**Title V of the Higher Education Act**

The creation of the Title V program in the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act provided a new funding stream specifically for HSIs. Although still rather small by federal funding standards, the program has grown swiftly, both in funds and in participants, as shown in Table 3.2. Title
Serving Minority Populations

V invests in many different areas of institutional capacity. The most common include student services and curriculum development, as well as infrastructure development, especially in the area of information technology.

**Student Services and Curriculum Development.** Improving student retention is a priority for most institutions, and many strategies for doing so are crafted around the profile of the “traditional” college student. Traditional college students enroll right after high school, are financially dependent on their parents, attend college full time, live on campus, and have few work or family obligations. Nowadays, only about 40 percent of college students in the United States fit that definition, yet many federal, state, and institutional measures and policies continue to be based on it (Choy, 2002). Student retention strategies based on the traditional student are especially inappropriate at Hispanic-Serving community colleges, as 69 percent of students enrolled in these institutions attend part time (U.S. Department of Education, 2002b). Because these students have obligations other than their education, retention strategies must be tailored to their needs and realities. These strategies include “on-demand” student services, such as mentoring, tutoring, and counseling, which are often supported by technology for the largely commuter student population.

Some HSIs that are showing promising results in improving student retention are deliberately aligning student support services with academic programs in order to provide effective support environments for students who juggle competing obligations of work, school, and family. One program of this type, developed with Title V funds, is the LifeMap approach in use at Valencia Community College (VCC) in Orlando, Florida. LifeMap is an individualized guide to help students determine when and how to take specific steps to complete degree requirements and attain career goals. LifeMap links all the components of the college—its faculty, staff, academic programs, technology, and services—in an effort to support students from admission through graduation and beyond. LifeMap works at three levels: as a student’s action plan for utilizing institutional resources at each stage of his or her academic career; as a student’s guide, with step-by-step instructions for making

**Table 3.2. Title V Funding History of Hispanic-Serving Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Appropriation</th>
<th>New Awards</th>
<th>Total Awards</th>
<th>Average Yearly Award (Thousands per Award)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>$12 M</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>$325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$28 M</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>$368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$42.5 M</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>$394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$68 M</td>
<td>49</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34</td>
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<td>$450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$92.4 M</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>$420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$93.9 M</td>
<td>42 (expected)</td>
<td>223 (expected)</td>
<td>$421 (expected)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: U.S. Department of Education, Title V program Web site (http://www.ed.gov/hsi).*
progress toward academic goals; and as a master plan for VCC to articulate its various functions and focus them toward student success. One important component of LifeMap is the Student Success course. VCC has found that graduates of this course average completion and reenrollment rates that are 20 percent higher than those of degree-seeking and college prep students not enrolled in the class (“LifeMap,” 2003).

Another Title V–funded comprehensive approach to improving student learning outcomes and increasing persistence is the multistrand student retention program at Cañada College in San Mateo, California. Cañada’s ambitious project integrates curricular transformation, development and implementation of new teaching and learning strategies, online career assessment, improvement of students’ technological and other key skills, and strengthening of the institution’s K–16 pipeline.

After researching model programs, Cañada implemented a freshman experience learning communities program that coordinated “gatekeeper” English and math courses with appropriate counseling and studying. The college purchased PLATO and academic.com supplemental instruction software programs, and the faculty created course modules in reading and essay writing to strengthen students’ basic skills. Ongoing faculty development in overall curricular transformation and in particular research strategies was also emphasized. Eight faculty members per year were trained to improve their competence, awareness, and commitment to curricular transformation, and a broader range of faculty received training in designing successful research assignments, in the use of Cañada’s online library, and in basic principles of Web research. In the second year, the curricular transformation, skills enhancement, and pedagogy strands combined to focus on encouraging student research and writing.

The results of Cañada’s project, now in its third year, have been extremely promising, and the college is using second-year outcomes as baseline data for monitoring the project’s success. The various strands of Cañada’s project work together toward the goal of increasing the number of students who are ready to transfer to a four-year institution. It is important to note that a major change is already evident in the renewed institution-wide focus on student success. Although not immediately quantifiable, this cultural change will perhaps be the key to Cañada’s overall achievements. Cañada’s experience suggests that ambitious and transformative projects generate synergies that create more profound changes than the sum of their parts alone (Phyllis Lucas-Woods, personal communication, Oct. 2003).

The preceding examples illustrate how a sustained focus on student success will eventually have an impact on many dimensions of the college experience, including curricular reform and development. Miami Dade College (Florida) is an example of how Title V funding can be applied specifically to curriculum development. In response to local needs, Miami Dade College used Title V funding to establish a new Hospitality Management Program (HMP). The program provides career opportunities for students
who aspire to work as managers and supervisors in hotels, restaurants, resorts, cruise lines, and health and geriatric facilities in southern Florida. Collegewide support services and strong community links enhance student success. The program includes internships and mentoring opportunities at area hotels and cruise lines, and meetings with resort, hotel, hospital, and trade show managers. As well, students develop their own personalized education program together with academic advisers. Projected enrollment in HMP under Title V has been achieved four times over, and stands currently at 850 students (David Countin, personal communication, Oct. 2003).

**Information Technology and Infrastructure Development.** Infrastructure development, in particular information technology (IT) development, is another area in which significant Title V funds have been allocated. Technology has emerged as an important and often critical component in the cost-effective expansion of the scope and flexibility of key services. However, in light of the limited resources of most community colleges and MSIs, educators must implement creative solutions to enable the full development and deployment of technological capacity.

One promising solution lies in the establishment of collaborative partnerships among institutions with similar goals and challenges. In 2001, five HSIs (California State University, Los Angeles; California Polytechnic State University, Pomona; California State University, San Bernardino; and two community colleges, Mount San Antonio College and Oxnard College) received Title V funding to pool their IT resources in order to improve access to information systems and devise solutions to such common problems as vulnerabilities in network security, asset protection, and campus awareness; and lack of qualified human resources, policies, and procedures. The goals of the project, now in its third year, address a broad range of academic technology issues, from network capacity to curriculum development in the booming field of IT security. Staff at all five institutions have benefited from each other’s skills and talents by working together to perform network assessments, train IT staff, develop student internship programs, devise policies and procedures regarding network and data security, and support curriculum development activities.

The first step for this partnership was to create a multicampus team of information system security liaisons, with two representatives from each institution. Team members receive frequent training in network assessment tools and procedures, which they apply to their institutions in order to promptly correct critical vulnerabilities, protect their assets, and share best practices. Student internship programs in IT security, as well as a series of security awareness events, involve students, faculty, and staff from every participating campus. An information security training laboratory is under development at California State University, Los Angeles, and will begin to offer courses in 2004. As a result of the Title V grant, each campus has deployed intrusion detection systems, increased IT security awareness, and provided faculty, staff, and students with protection as well as with training...

Technologies that assist articulation of academic requirements and credits between two- and four-year institutions are very helpful in facilitating and encouraging students to transfer and continue their education. Such technologies enable community college students to quickly determine their transfer status to four-year institutions and to chart progress toward career goals. Mercy College, a private four-year HSI in the New York metropolitan area, has leveraged lessons learned from its original Title V project in order to secure funding from the Ford Foundation to create a regional partnership among two- and four-year colleges. These include the Borough of Manhattan Community College, LaGuardia Community College, Medgar Evers College, Westchester Community College, and Pace University. The immediate project goal is the development of seamless articulation to four-year universities for students enrolling at any of the participating community colleges.

Through this project, Mercy College will purchase an Internet articulation system that will allow students to see, in an instant, how their current coursework matches degree requirements at any participating institution, all of which will have already assessed students’ course transferability. Two state university systems, in Maryland and in New Jersey, have already implemented online articulation programs to facilitate transfers among and between the two- and four-year institutions within their respective systems. Mercy College hopes to make a similar system available among public and private institutions in the New York metropolitan area.

This kind of program will become increasingly essential in providing students with clear pathways toward their goals, in helping community college students choose courses that will count toward their two- and four-year degree requirements, and in serving the many college students who attain academic credits in three or more academic institutions. The Title V grant helped Mercy become more able to respond to the needs of an at-risk student population. This new articulation effort is the next step in providing appropriate levels of service to students who require greater advice and support in order to complete their academic degrees (Joanne Passaro, personal communication, Jan. 2004).

Another important use of technology to enhance student development and success is the electronic portfolio, which has the potential to empower students to share responsibility for and actively engage in the teaching and learning process. Portfolios can also be an extremely effective means of assessing institutional learning outcomes and progress toward goals. The electronic portfolio project at LaGuardia Community College of the City University of New York, funded by both Title V and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), is an unusually comprehensive program designed to maximize the development and assessment potential of portfolios. The project uses portfolios to document student learning, assess program outcomes, and evaluate institutional effectiveness.
After extensive research and planning spearheaded by a collegewide team, a yearlong process of development and classroom testing was launched at LaGuardia in 2001–2002, with the active involvement of twenty-two faculty members. A faculty summer institute was followed by a yearlong seminar that combined training, classroom-based research, and discussion sessions. In 2003–2004, ePortfolio was made a central element of the First Year Academies—technology, business, allied health, and liberal arts—where incoming students are introduced to LaGuardia’s academic offerings. Students are encouraged to “collect, select, reflect, connect”—that is, to collect electronic examples of their academic and creative work such as papers, presentations, videos, and graphics; to select those pieces that are most indicative of their accomplishments, capacities, and interests; to reflect on the evolution of their body of work; and to connect it to the larger community and to their academic and professional goals.

Portfolio assignments in three different courses allow for “snapshots” of the student’s development at various stages of his or her college career. Student development is then assessed by evaluating achievement in two broad categories: program competencies and core competencies. To assess program competencies, faculty compare statements of overall goals developed by each academic program with student portfolio assignments from the introductory and advanced portfolio courses. Attainment of LaGuardia’s seven core competencies is assessed collegewide; the assessment plan embeds competency development and assessment into all major programs. Like Valencia’s LifeMap, LaGuardia’s student portfolios make up a comprehensive assessment plan that will ultimately be used to inform institutional planning and assess institutional effectiveness and goal achievement (“ePortfolio: Welcome,” 2003).

Federal Title V funding has had a significant impact on the HSIs’ ability to address the broad range of academic and support needs of first-generation and at-risk students. Both Title V and the outcomes of grantee institutions merit increased national attention in coming years, given that the higher education market will increasingly consist of first-generation and racially diverse students. These students will enter college with varying levels of academic preparation, and they will carry a range of competing family and work obligations. Public and private colleges, many already facing serious budgetary cutbacks, expect to admit increasing numbers of students who will require greater shares of institutional resources to succeed.

Title V institutions have served as lab schools for comprehensive, coordinated programs and practices that will help other institutions develop effective and efficient solutions for ensuring student success. The Title V grantee community has developed an extensive network of formal and informal partnerships and collaborations across institutions, some of which are highlighted in this chapter. These collaborations have proven to be of significant value in focusing institutional commitment and in enhancing institutional capacity by leveraging the resources and strengths of partner
schools. The promise of these partnerships, and their ability to affect educational policy debates, are also evident in the work of the Latino Student Success project, a collaborative effort of six HSIs.

**The Latino Student Success Project**

In 2002, FIPSE supported a twelve-month demonstration project titled Latino Student Success at Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The project involved six public four-year Title V grantees from states with large Latino populations—California, New York, and Texas. Four of these HSIs have cooperative Title V grants with Hispanic-Serving community colleges that focus on assisting transfer students to enroll in baccalaureate programs (California State University, Dominguez Hills, and El Camino Community College; Lehman College, City University of New York, and Bronx Community College; New York City College of Technology and LaGuardia Community College; University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College). All of the four-year Latino Student Success (LSS) institutions draw a large percentage of their student body from community colleges (over 40 percent), and they all make a deliberate effort to cultivate and strengthen their links to these institutions. LSS presidents agree that building links with community colleges is a matter of enlightened self-interest and necessary to maintain and increase their own enrollments.

The presidents of the six institutions appointed representatives from the offices of institutional research, academic affairs, and student life to examine institutional data, resources, and practices related to Latino student success. They describe this as a holistic approach that cut across traditional institutional divisions and enabled all participants to look at issues from each other’s perspectives, to focus on the needs of the whole student, and to document and validate their data from the start. This experience was augmented by the interaction among the six teams, which included site visits and frequent exchanges of information.

The following areas of inquiry were at the center of the Latino Student Success project: What does it mean to be an HSI? How does an institution demonstrate its commitment to serve Hispanics? What is the definition of Latino student success? What are useful, appropriate, and substantive indicators of Latino student success?

Among the best practices identified in the LSS report was to “Partner with ‘feeder’ high schools, community colleges, and community-based organizations to increase Latino student access and their preparation for transition to a baccalaureate-granting institution” (Santiago, Andrade, and Brown, 2004, p. 3). This reinforces the importance of establishing transparent articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions. The recruitment of community college students also supports the assertion that many community college graduates are sought-after scholars who often outperform students who began their education at four-year institutions.
The LSS final report also makes an important contribution to the debate about measures of student success: “While the six HSIs concurred that one important element of Latino student success is the completion of a baccalaureate degree, other elements of success, such as student engagement in campus activities, continuous enrollment, employment beyond graduation, and enrollment in graduate education should also be considered in defining student success” (Santiago, Andrade, and Brown, 2004, p. 3). The report underscores the importance of diversifying the measures of student success and redefining federal timelines for time to degree in view of the growing segment of nontraditional part-time students that cannot achieve their education goals without sustained federal student aid. It also highlights the value of collecting disaggregated data on student performance to gauge the effectiveness of institutional programs and services on diverse student populations. The next stage of the LSS project is to identify community college practices that enhance Latino student success. Additional funding is being sought to analyze the persistence of Latino students at selected community colleges, to identify and examine student success factors at participating institutions, and to engage community college presidents in a dialogue about achieving student success. A key tenet of the LSS project, borne out by the experience of the institutions discussed in this chapter, is that presidential leadership is indispensable in attaining the pervasive levels of focus and commitment to student success that bring about institutional transformations.

Conclusions

As the first Title V grantees near the end of their five-year institutional strengthening projects, this reflection on the challenges and achievements of Hispanic-Serving community colleges may serve to identify future priorities for federal support and might help to improve the Title V program. At the same time, the important strategies and methodologies for serving diverse student populations described in this chapter may be useful to the broader education community in order to support the seven hundred thousand Latino students, as well as other underrepresented students, that are enrolled in institutions that are not HSIs but that share their commitment to Latino student success.

Community colleges must collect more data on student outcomes that will enable them to present their achievements compellingly and transcend the specifics of their own institutional circumstances. The paucity of student outcomes data and the scarcity of institutional research at a number of community colleges impede the documentation and validation of many promising practices. Concerted and deliberate efforts are needed to address this serious limitation.

In addition, an issue raised by the LSS project—also a serious concern for community colleges—is the need to diversify measures of student
success, particularly time to degree. Given federal guidelines in this area, when a student takes more than three years to graduate, he or she cannot be counted as a success in the community college. A reevaluation of this standard need not mean a departure from high standards of academic excellence for racially diverse students, but should recognize the reality that the majority of students enrolled in community colleges are nontraditional, part-time students.

Enhancing the academic success of racially diverse students requires a purposeful and integrated approach that often results in institutional transformation as well as greater support for students. Minority students are often the first in their families to attend college, and often confront a range of obstacles and challenges in their efforts to persist to a degree. In the past, these challenges were characterized as deficits, and the programs designed to remediate them had goals that fell far short of substantive success. Recently, however, educators have begun to realize that minority students’ experiences and range of responsibilities represent significant strengths that can be used in the achievement of academic success.

Developing programs and practices that can promote minority student success requires a reconceptualization of the college experience from recruitment through graduation and beyond. Community colleges were among the first institutions of higher education to recognize the necessity of continuously adapting to local needs and changing circumstances. Consequently, a number of them have become models of promoting the success of racially diverse students. In so doing, they have redefined the boundaries of the individual institution and have realized the fundamental importance of partnerships in achieving a significant and sustainable impact on student success. It is now increasingly common for community colleges to have robust student success enrichment programs that begin in the K–12 system and extend into four-year and graduate programs. These efforts are bound to gain momentum, as higher education trends indicate that the college-going population of the next few decades will increasingly consist of older, working, and more diverse students. Efforts to enhance minority student success will transform the landscape of higher education, and many community colleges are in the forefront of those efforts.

References


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