Understanding Minority-Serving Institutions

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Foreword by
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Equitable Outcomes for Latino Students

CLOSED IDENTITIES AND THE PRODUCTION OF HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS

CHAPTER 6
and prominence and that their positive impact is attributed to these institutions’ special mission, sense of purpose, and strong identity as colleges for women and for African American students (Drewry & Doerrmann, 2001; Kim & Alvarez, 1995; Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002).

We conducted an exploratory study of ten two- and four-year HSIs in five states. All of the 10 institutions examined are among the 242 institutions eligible to apply for federal funding under the U.S. Department of Education Title V grant program. Specifically, we examined the incorporation of the HSI identity in their mission statement and their websites; we assessed the status of equity among Latinos/as using data on enrollment and degrees granted, and undergraduate major data. The study of these 10 institutions, it needs to be pointed out, is only intended to demonstrate alternative ways of examining the role and outcomes of HSIs for Latino/a students and to encourage more empirical research on this institutional sector. We start the chapter with an overview of HSIs in terms of types of institutions, various categories of HSI status, and their geographic distribution.

ASSUMING A HISPANIC IDENTITY

While the label “Hispanic-Serving” makes these institutions appear as the Hispanic equivalent of HBCUs or women’s colleges, they are not a vestige of de jure segregation nor of that period when a woman’s place was thought to be at home rather than in college. To become an HSI and qualify for Title V funding an institution has to meet three criteria: (1) it must be accredited and nonprofit; (2) have at least 25 percent Latinos/as undergraduate full-time equivalent enrollment; and (3) at least 50 percent of the Latino/a students are low-income. Federal funding earmarked for HSIs has increased substantially since the first appropriation of $12 million in FY1995 (HACU, n.d.). In FY2005, over $95 million has been appropriated for distribution under Title V (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Title V funds are distributed through an annual grant competition. The grant competition consists of two application processes: first, institutions must be designated as an HSI in accordance with Title V criteria. After an institution is determined to be eligible, it may submit a grant proposal to be considered for funding. Institutions apply for Title V funds for a variety of initiatives, including technology, improving retention, and so forth, all intended to better serve the needs of their students.

Although institutional-aid appropriations under Title V have increased over the past decade, HSIs remain underfunded compared to other degree-granting institutions (HACU, n.d.). This is due in part to the fact that so many of HSIs are two-year institutions, an already underfunded segment of postsecondary education.

Table 6.1 provides the number and geographic distribution of two- and four-year HSIs. The data on table 6.1 underscore well-known trends on the college participation of Latinos/as, namely, their high concentration in community colleges and their growing presence in California and the southwest.

First, the majority of HSIs, 53 percent, are community colleges, which is not surprising. In view of the overrepresentation of Latinos/as in the community college sector of higher education, it makes sense that these institutions would be the most likely to meet the criteria to acquire the HSI designation and become eligible for Title V funding. Second, the majority of the four-year colleges that have earned the designation, 40 percent, are located in Puerto Rico. These institutions are not comparable to Hispanic-Serving Institutions on the U.S. mainland. The identity of Puerto Rico’s colleges is Puerto Rican, the language of instruction is Spanish, their leadership and faculty is Puerto Rican as are their students. Third, HSIs are spread over 13 states but more than half (54 percent) are in California, Texas, and New Mexico. Not shown in the table is that two-thirds of the HSIs are public institutions.

Curiously, in addition to these 242 formally designated HSIs, there is a much larger group of institutions that have assumed the designation according to a different definition used by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR), or that have assumed it voluntarily by becoming members of HACU. The OCR keeps its own list of HSIs, which includes the 242 that are certified by

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<tr>
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<td>Arizona</td>
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statements labeled “mission statement” were included in the analysis. We conducted the mission statement analysis on multiple levels. First, we searched for keywords related to HSI status (e.g., Hispanic-Serving Institution, Hispanic, diversity, equity, underrepresented minorities). Following this first-order analysis, we examined the mission statements in greater detail noting how these keywords were used and in what context. We then categorized each institution's mission statement by the salience of the HSI status and the manner in which the status was discussed.

THE SALIENCE OF HSI IDENTITY IN INSTITUTIONAL MISSION STATEMENTS

The most surprising and unexpected finding was that none of the 10 institutions explicitly mentioned their designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution in their mission statement. Instead, three keywords emerged from our analysis: “diversity/diverse,” “culture/multicultural,” and “access.” The mission statements of all 10 institutions examined include at least one of the aforementioned keywords. In some cases, however, it is not apparent that the keywords are used in a context related to racial or ethnic characteristics of their student body, and in some cases it was not clear if these words were used in relation to students. For example, CA-4 states that the university aims to prepare students for a “changing, multicultural world,” but does not specifically make reference to the importance of a diverse student body to accomplish this goal. CO-4’s mission states that the institution “offers programs that preserve and promote the diverse and multicultural history and culture of the region,” but there is no indication of what that culture is, nor any mention of the composition of the student body. And the mission statement of NM-4 refers to faculty, staff, and students’ advancement of “understanding of the world, its peoples, and cultures,” but does not make reference to, or identify the culture or diversity of faculty, staff, or students.

Six institutions use the keywords “diverse/diversity,” and/or “cultural” in relation to students or the entire campus population. The mission statements of CA-2, NY-4, NY-2, TX-4, TX-2 and NM-2 include statements about the importance of a “culturally diverse environment,” “diverse population,” or “diverse student body.” In all but one case, these institutions referred to responding to the needs of a diverse student body or providing services and support to a diverse student body. Excerpts from each institutional mission statement are shown in table 6.2.

The final keyword identified in our analysis was “access.” The missions of two institutions included this keyword; the mission statement of CO-2 refers to the institution’s role to provide access to “underserved students,”
students. The results of these studies provide evidence of the effectiveness of the interventions implemented in these programs. Students who participated in these programs showed significant improvements in their academic performance and overall well-being. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the educational needs of underrepresented groups and the potential benefits of tailored interventions. Further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of these programs and to develop strategies that can be implemented on a broader scale.

**Equitable Outcomes for Latino Students**

The equitable outcomes for Latino students highlight the importance of addressing the systemic barriers that prevent them from achieving academic success. The programs implemented in these studies have demonstrated the potential for creating a more inclusive educational environment. Addressing these barriers requires a multi-faceted approach that includes interventions focused on improving access, retention, and graduation rates for Latino students. The success of these programs underscores the importance of supporting students from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

**Educational Outcomes**

The educational outcomes from these studies provide insights into the effectiveness of the interventions implemented in these programs. The studies showed that students who participated in these programs experienced significant improvements in their academic performance and overall well-being. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the educational needs of underrepresented groups and the potential benefits of tailored interventions. Further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of these programs and to develop strategies that can be implemented on a broader scale.

**Conclusion**

The results of these studies provide evidence of the effectiveness of the interventions implemented in these programs. Students who participated in these programs showed significant improvements in their academic performance and overall well-being. These findings highlight the importance of addressing the educational needs of underrepresented groups and the potential benefits of tailored interventions. Further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of these programs and to develop strategies that can be implemented on a broader scale.

**Implications for Practice**

The results of these studies have important implications for educational practice and policy. Educators and policymakers can use these findings to inform the development of interventions and programs aimed at promoting equity in education. The success of these programs underscores the importance of supporting students from diverse backgrounds and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to succeed. Further research is needed to understand the long-term impact of these programs and to develop strategies that can be implemented on a broader scale.
The analysis for assessing equity at the four-year institutions that we conducted is largely exploratory. For this analysis we applied an Equity Index method (Hao, 2005), a measure of proportionality to establish how far or how close a particular group (e.g., Latinos, Latinos, African American males, White women, etc.) is from reaching representation on a particular indicator of attainment that is equal to their representation in a specified population pool. The index does not assess cohorts, but rather proportionality at a single point in time. Hao’s equity index method has been used to assess the state of equity in college readiness and participation for Latinos in California and Texas (Hao, 2003); Perna and colleagues (2005) have used a similar index to measure the equity for African American students in admission and BA degree attainment in the southern states; Contreras (2003, 2005) utilized a parity index to assess the level of representation of minority students post 209 in select California UC institutions (as applicants and admits), compared to their composition in California high schools, graduation rates, and percent of those UC eligible for admission; and Bensimon, Hao, and Bustillos (2006) have used it to construct an academic equity scorecard for California’s postsecondary education system. The Equity Index formula is depicted in Figure 6.1.

The percentage in the numerator consists of the share of Latino/a students who have achieved a particular educational outcome, such as earning the BA degree. The denominator consists of the share of Latino/a students who make up the reference population for the particular educational outcome, such as the Latinos’ share in the freshman cohort four years prior to the year BA degree attainment was examined. Equity is achieved when the value of the numerator equals the value of the denominator, which means the value of the index equals “1.0.” A number below 1.0 indicates inequity.

DO HSIS PRODUCE EQUALLY ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION FOR LATINOS/AS?

The enrollment tables provided earlier in the chapter revealed that the 10 HSIs enroll very large percentages of Latinos/as. For our analysis we examined whether the enrollment of Latinos/as was proportional to Latino/a high school graduates in the state where each institution is located, using the formula in Figure 6.2:

\[
\text{Target group undergraduate enrollment/Total undergraduate enrollment} = \frac{\text{Target group with the educational outcome \times Total students with the educational outcome}}{\text{Target group in the reference population \times Total students in the reference population}}
\]

Our analysis revealed that three of the four-year colleges are performing extremely well in terms providing access to Latinos/as in proportion to their representation among high school graduates in their respective states. Notably, Latinos/as do not have equitable levels of access to the two most selective four-year institutions in the sample. The important role these institutions play in serving minorities is evident in the equity scores for Asian Americans and Blacks; both groups are above equity in all institutions except one. On the other hand, Whites are below equity in all but one institution. Detailed results of the equity index for enrollment versus the composition of high school graduates in each of the five states are provided in Table 6.3a-g.

Similar to the accessibility that four-year Hispanic-Serving Institutions provided for Latino/a students, the two-year institutions played a greater role in access. Given that the majority of Latinos/as are enrolled in community
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students were found to be below equity in terms of access at four of the five institutions, they are earning a disproportionately higher share of BA degrees earned. These results suggest that Latinos/as may be experiencing unequal outcomes compared to Whites even at Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Admittedly, this analysis has limitations in that we are comparing two different populations, and it is possible that the same analysis applied to a cohort of students to assess BA attainment four and six years after first enrolling may have produced different results. Although IPEDS does not permit a cohort analysis of equity in BA attainment, HSIIs have access to their own institutional data and could easily assess themselves on this indicator.

Even more surprising, the equity index results for AA attainment for Latinos/as in two-year HSIIs were not much different from the findings for BA attainment. We found that Latinos/as achieved equity in AA degree attainment at only one community college. In contrast, Whites achieved equity at three of the two-year HSIIs. The outcomes for the AA equity index suggest that starting postsecondary education in two-year colleges may not yield optimal returns for Latino/a community college students and concurs with the research on Latinos/as in the community colleges, which suggests high attrition rates (Contreras & Gandara, 2005; Saenz, 2002).

DO HSIS PRODUCE EQUITABLE ATTAINMENT OF DEGREES IN FIELDS IN WHICH THERE IS AN UNDERREPRESENTATION OF LATINOS/AS?

The Hispanic-Serving Institutions reviewed also had higher levels of access to science, technology, engineering, and math majors in which students of color are severely underrepresented. What appeared unclear is whether access to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors translates into equitable results in degrees earned by Latinos/as. We therefore examined equity in BA degrees granted in mathematics, engineering and biology/life sciences by comparing them to the number of students who declared themselves as mathematics, engineering, or biology/life science majors. The equity index results for mathematics degree attainment revealed Whites as achieving equity in all five HSIIs, whereas Latinos/as achieved equity in only two of the HSI institutions examined. Even though Latinos/as comprised over 20 percent of the math majors at three of the Hispanic-Serving Institutions, they were still below equity in earned degrees, and White students constituted the majority of mathematics degree recipients. In addition, Latinos/as were found to be below equity among engineering degree recipients in three institutions for which data were available.

Finally, of the Latinos/as enrolled in STEM majors, our analysis of IPEDS data revealed that the majority are likely to be enrolled in the biological/life sciences. In our review of the percentage of students enrolled in the biology/life science major at the five HSI institutions, we found that four of the five institutions had at least 25 percent of Latinos/as. However, our analysis revealed that at all five HSIIs, Latino/a students fell below this proportion in terms of degree attainment in biological and life sciences. Conversely, White students experienced inequity in this major in only one of the HSI institutions.

In sum, the exploratory study showed that the websites of HSIIs contain almost no symbolic representations that call attention to their Hispanic-Serving identity and make it immediately recognizable to the outside world. The search of the 10 institutions' websites revealed that the HSI identity was typically acknowledged in descriptions of programs and special initiatives supported by Title V. The assessment of access and success through the analytical lenses of the Equity Index revealed that four- and two-year HSIs produce equitable access for Latinos/as but unequal attainment of degrees generally, particularly in high-income fields from which Latinos/as are locked out (Davis, 2001). These findings underscore the fact that access is hardly sufficient to close the educational opportunity gaps in higher education.

Even though these findings are exploratory and applicable to 10 representative institutions, they bring to light questions about the purpose, role, and outcomes of Hispanic-Serving Institutions that merit further in-depth study and analysis. In the next section, we consider some of these questions and the implications of the findings in relation to the educational condition of Latino/a students.

CONCLUSION

Why is the Hispanic identity of HSIs invisible? There are several plausible answers to this question. First, institutions are transformed into Hispanic-Serving purely on the basis of changing demographics. Their conversion seems to be accidental and evolutionary rather than strategically planned, which may explain the silence about being Hispanic-Serving. It is possible that the Hispanic identity is so new that for most institutions there has not been enough time to reconsider their mission in light of their newly acquired identity. We have no way of knowing whether the institutions have had strategic planning processes since becoming HSIs and what role, if any, the HSI status played in deliberations about future direction and mission implementation. Another possibility is that the absence of symbols signifying the Latinization of institutional identity is symptomatic of internalized
EQUATEABLE OUTCOMES FOR PATIENTS/STUDENTS

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS, AND PLENARIES

society for research, technology, and application of sustainable technologies for energy and sustainability.

The challenge is not whether to embrace sustainability, but how. In tackling this challenge, we must foster a culture that values innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement. By doing so, we can ensure the development of sustainable solutions that are not only effective but also economically viable.

In conclusion, sustainability is not just an option; it is a necessity. We must all work together to create a future that is sustainable and equitable for all. Let us embrace the challenge and build a better tomorrow.

References:


colleges, majors and degree recipients in STEM fields, GPA for graduating students, postbaccalaureate enrollment in professional and graduate programs. Second, HSI s could be required to provide benchmarks to monitor institutional effectiveness in producing equitable educational outcomes for Latinos/as such as the methods and processes of the Equity Scorecard pioneered by the Center for Urban Education at the University of Southern California (Bensimon, 2004; Bensimon et. al., 2004; Dowd, 2005). Related to the above recommendations regarding institutions that accept Title V funding, accrediting associations can ensure that these HSI s fulfill their obligation to serve Latino/a students by requiring Title V recipients to include the HSI designation in the institutional mission statement and evaluating these institutions along the metric of equity in educational outcomes for Latinos/as during the accreditation process. The evaluation approach should also include an examination of the academic support that exists within the infrastructure of the institution.

Lastly, it has been observed that while there is a considerable body of research on the collegiate experience of Latino/a students, actual empirical work that is specific to HSIs is practically nonexistent (Laird, et al., 2004, p. 4). Indeed, as we mentioned earlier, the only two studies we located were a paper by Laird and several of his colleagues which compared student engagement at predominantly White and HSIs and HBCUs (Laird, et al., 2004) and a paper by Stage and Hubbard that explored attitudes and practices of faculty at HSIs (Stage & Hubbard, 2005). In light of the very large concentration of Latino/a students at HSIs (48 percent of all undergraduates, including Puerto Rico), particularly in the two-year college sector, there is an urgent need to develop an agenda for qualitative and quantitative studies to address topics such as: the academic culture of HSIs; the attitudes, values, and commitments of HSI faculty members; faculty members' awareness of the HSI status and the meanings they ascribe to it; the academic outcomes HSIs produce for Latino/a students (cohort analyses); and the role of HSIs in increasing college enrollment and degree attainment for Latinos/as.

We are cognizant that leaders of Hispanic-Serving Institutions may view our analysis as a critique coming from outsiders who have limited experience with these institutions. In anticipation of this criticism, we conclude that it is precisely because we value the critical role that HSIs play in increasing the numbers of college educated Latinos/as that we chose to test the meaning of Hispanic-Serving in relation to identity and equity in student outcomes. We have attempted to make unexamined aspects of these institutions visible, and hope to contribute to the discussion of the increasingly important purpose Hispanic-Serving institutions might play within the Latino community, specifically the potential for maximizing their impact on raising the levels of Latino/a postsecondary attainment.

REFERENCES


Understanding Minority-Serving Institutions explores these important institutions while also highlighting their interconnectedness, with the hope of sparking collaboration among the various types. Minority-serving institutions (MSIs) enroll and graduate the majority of students of color in the United States and traditionally include historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, tribal colleges, and more recently Asian American- and Pacific Islander-serving institutions. The book's contributors focus on several issues, including institutional mission, faculty governance, student engagement, social justice, federal policy, and accreditation. They critically analyze the scholarship on MSIs, not only describing the existing research and stressing what is missing, but also providing new lines of thought for additional research.

"This book is a much-needed contribution to the literature about minority issues in higher education and MSIs in particular. It adds to our understanding about where MSIs have been and where they are likely to go, and will be enormously useful to the national dialogue about improving both the quality and accessibility of American higher education in the coming years."

— Jamie P. Merisotis, President, Institute for Higher Education Policy

"This robust collection provides an exemplary introduction to MSIs. With passion and scholarly acumen, this diverse and engaging book offers multiple perspectives on the contributions as well as challenges and opportunities facing these institutions—and brings attention to institutions that have often remained largely invisible on the landscape of higher education."

— Clifton Conrad, University of Wisconsin at Madison

"This is an engaging, insightful, and masterfully crafted book. The editors deserve praise for assembling such a respectable cast of scholars and producing a book that will surely become the seminal text on MSIs. This book adds tremendous value, illuminates critical trends and issues, and dispels several faulty assumptions regarding MSIs."

— Shaun R. Harper, Director, Research Division, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators

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