

Executive Brief: Latino/a Students

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Overview of Latino/a Students in Higher Education

- In the United States, 21.% of undergraduate college students were Latino/a, the second largest ethnic group enrolled at the undergraduate level in 2020 (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2022).
 - Over the course of 20 years, there has been an increase of 131% in Latino/a undergraduate enrollment (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2022).
- Although there is growing enrollment of Latino/a students, there is a persistent gap in degree completion for Latino/a students compared to other student populations due to barriers and challenges Latinos/as face (Clayton et al., 2017).

Relevant Terms and Definitions

- *Latino/a* - Any person with roots in Latin America (Campos, 2021).
- *First Generation* - Individuals who are the first in their family to attend college (Suwinyattichaiorn & Johnson., 2020)
- *Familial Capital* - Skills or tools a student acquires from their family that influences their behavior, emotions, processes, and values. Familial capital is one of the tools that Latino/a students draw on to confront personal and educational challenges (Shapiro, 2019).
- *Sense of Belonging* - Social support that a student has that contributes to their academic success. Latino/a students may struggle to find sense of belonging due to underrepresentation (Mishra, 2020).
- *Navigational Capital*- A set of skills student has or gains that helps them navigate higher education more effectively (Shiparo, 2019).
- *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)* - A policy that protects eligible immigrants who came to the United States as children. DACA provides protection from deportation and work permits for eligible people (Macías, 2022).

Historical Background (trends, statistics, context/things that happened in the past)

- “51% of Latino students complete bachelor’s degrees in six years compared to 59% of White students across all institutional selectivity levels” (Clayton et al., 2017).
- Many Latino/a students enroll in college as low-income students. As a result, 59% of Latino students work more than 30 hours weekly to finance their education. (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2022).
- Undocumented Latinos/as may face financial barriers to affording college due to being ineligible to apply for financial aid and in-state tuition based on citizenship status (Macías, 2022).
- DACA was established in 2012, granting immigrants access to work and education (Macías, 2022).
 - 48% of Latinos/as in Higher Education are undocumented. 69.7% of undocumented Latinos/as are eligible for DACA (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, 2021).
- “Latino completion rates have not kept pace with rising enrollment.” (Flores et al., 2021)
 - “As of 2018, only a tenth of bachelor’s degree holders ages 25 to 34 are Latino/a, despite constituting nearly a fifth of the similarly aged population.”

Issues of Development (concerns, challenges, current issues)

- First-generation Latino/a students are more prone to depression due to academic and financial challenges (Suwinyattichaiorn & Johnson, 2020).
- Many Latinos/as experience social isolation from a lack of familiarity with college and navigational capital (Suwinyattichaiorn & Johnson, 2020).
- Incoming Latino/as students often encounter challenges accessing information on colleges, navigating the college environment, and understanding academic expectations and family support (Clayton et al., 2017).
- Gaps between Latino/a and dominant culture are linked to inequities, alienation, or hostile and unwelcoming environments, which contribute to a lack of sense of belonging, resulting in smaller retention rates (Clayton et al., 2017).

Collegiate Experiences

- Participation in organizations gives Latina/o college students social and communal activities crucial in developing a sense of belonging to the campus community and building a home away from home. (Montelongo, 2019)
- Cultural spaces on campus provide Latino/a students with a space to receive social support from other Latino/as and experiences where cultural values can be expressed, empowering, and educational.

Diversity within the population

- Central American students have been the population with the least enrolled in colleges when compared to other Latino subgroups (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2020)

- According to the Ed Trust analysis of the United States Census Bureau's 2018 American Community Survey, 26.6% of Latina women and 20.7% of Latino men had a college degree (Anthony et al., 2021).
- 44% of Latinos are first-generation college students (Postsecondary National Policy Institutes, 2022).

Implications for Higher Education

- “Universities may encourage first-generation Latino/a students to join learning communities or other campus activities.”
 - Involvement not only reduces stress, isolation, and depression but also contributes to academic success.”(Suwinyattichaiorn & Johnson., 2020)
- Universities can emphasize the importance of social support to students families.
 - “This could occur in first-year orientation programs and be given specific attention within sessions dedicated to first-generation Latino/a students.” (Suwinyattichaiorn & Johnson., 2020)
- Universities can take “ action steps, including advocating for the creation of undocumented student resource centers (USRCs) or increased funding and staffing for existing centers” (Macías, 2022).

Strategies for Advising/working with this group

- Implementing intrusive academic advising that fosters academic success for Latino students by providing them with individualized academic guidance (2020 What Works for Latino Students in Higher Education).
- Creating mentoring opportunities for Latino students that, in partnership, enhance navigational capital for higher education. (2020 What Works for Latino Students in Higher Education).
 - These opportunities give students a trusted individual that helps foster a sense of support and belonging.
- Faculty members can validate students by demonstrating genuine concern, treating students with respect, and providing meaningful feedback (Montelongo, 2019).

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Recommended Resources

Excelencia in Education. (2020) *What Works for Latino Students in Higher Education Compendium*.

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