

## Executive Brief: Latino/a Students

Olivia Ayon and Jasmin Perez

### 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.”(Suwinyattichaiporn & 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.” (Suwinyattichaiporn & 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).

### **References**

- Anthony, M., Nichols, A., Pilar, W. (2021, May 13) A Look at Degree Attainment Among Hispanic Women and Men and How COVID-19 Could Deepen Racial and Gender Divides. *The Education Trust*. <https://edtrust.org/resource/a-look-at-degree-attainment-among-hispanic-women-and-men-and-how-covid-19-could-deepen-racial-and-gender-divides/>
- Campos, A. (2021, October 6). What’s the difference between Hispanic, Latino and Latinx? *University of California*. <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/choosing-the-right-word-hispanic-latino-and-latinx>
- Clayton A., Medina M. & Wiseman A. (2019) Culture and community: Perspectives from first-year, first-generation-in-college Latino students, *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 18:2, 134-150, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2017.1386101>
- Excelencia in Education. (2020) *What Works for Latino Students in Higher Education Compendium*. <https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/2020-What-Works-for-Latino-Students-In-Higher-Education>
- Flores, S. M., Carroll, T., & Lyons, S. M. (2021, November 8). Beyond the Tipping Point: Searching for a New Vision for Latino College Success in the United States. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 696(1), 128–155. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162211043781>
- Macias L. (2022) Hall Pass: DACA recipients’ experiences “passing” in higher education, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 55:1-2, 87-104, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2022.2082292>
- Montelongo R. (2019). Cultural Factors that Impact Latina/o College Student Success at Predominantly-White Institutions: Past and Current Knowledge for Educators. *Diversity, Social Justice, and the Educational Leader*, 3(2), 11-25. <https://scholarworks.uttyler.edu/dsjel/vol3/iss1/2/>
- Postsecondary National Policy Institute. (2022). *Latino Students fact sheet* [Fact sheet]. <https://pnpi.org/latino-students/>
- Presidents’ Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, New American Economy. (2021, March). *Undocumented Students in Higher Education*. <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Undocumented-Students-in-Higher-Education-Updated-March-2021.pdf>
- Shapiro, S. (2019, February 22) Familial Capital, Narratives of Agency, and the College Transition Process for Refugee-Background Youth, *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 1-16. DOI: 10.1080/10665684.2018.1546151
- Suwinyattichaiporn, T., Johnson, Z. (2020). The Impact of Family and Friends Social Support on Latino/a First-Generation College Students’ Perceived Stress, Depression, and Social Isolation. *Journal of Hispanic Education*, 21(3), 297–314. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192720964922>
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). Table 302.62: Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled in college and percentage distribution of those enrolled, by sex, race/ethnicity, and selected racial/ethnic subgroups: Selected years, 2010 and 2019. In U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (Ed.), *Digest of Education Statistics* (2020 ed.). Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20\\_302.62.asp?current=yes](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_302.62.asp?current=yes)

### **Recommended Resources**

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

<https://www.edexcelencia.org/research/2020-What-Works-for-Latino-Students-In-Higher-Education>

Mishra, S. (2020). Social networks, social capital, social support and academic success in higher education: A systematic review with a special focus on 'underrepresented' students. *Educational Research Review*, 29, 100307.

O'Hara, E. M. (2022). Latino Student Retention: A Case Study in Perseverance and Retention. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 21(3), 315–332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1538192720968509>