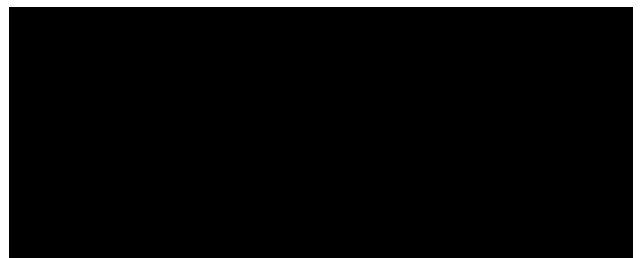
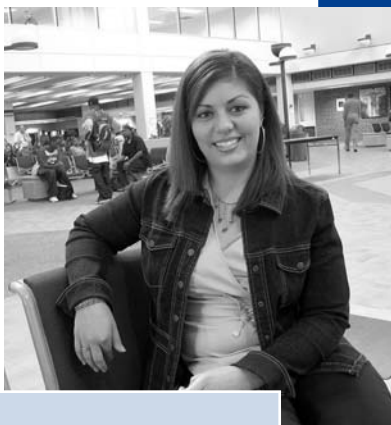


Project Exito: How are we doing?

A Study of the Educational Experiences and Outcomes of First-time Latino Students attending Colleges and Universities in the Chicago Southland region



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Prairie State College

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About the analyst

Davis Jenkins is a senior fellow at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute. He conducts research on how to increase access to economic opportunity by disadvantaged youths and adults. A key focus of his work is finding ways to strengthen the capacity of public postsecondary institutions, particularly community colleges, to educate economically and educationally disadvantaged individuals for gainful employment in a knowledge economy. Davis is currently a co-investigator with Thomas Bailey of Teachers College Columbia University on a multi-year study, funded by the Ford and Lumina foundations, of strategies for promoting success by underserved community college students. Davis consults with educational institutions and states across the country on aligning educational programs within and across institutions to support student advancement and better address regional labor force needs. Davis has over 20 years of experience as a researcher, program manager, evaluator and consultant on projects related to education for employment in the U.S. and abroad. He holds a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and a Ph.D. in Public Policy Analysis from Carnegie Mellon University.

The study

This study has been funded through a Higher Education Cooperation Act (HECA) grant from the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Consortium and individual institution contributions.

Forward

In the fall of 2004, as part of Project Éxito, member institutions of the South Metropolitan Higher Education Consortium (SMHEC) began collecting data on the success of Latinos students at their institutions.

This report presents the main findings from an analysis of data on the educational experience and outcomes of the fall 2000 cohort of first-time students, disaggregated by age, race and ethnicity, at selected SMHEC institutions. The ten institutions participating in this applied research project include: Calumet College of St. Joseph, Governors State University, Joliet Junior College, Kankakee Community College, Moraine Valley Community College, Prairie State College, Robert Morris College, South Suburban College, Saint Xavier University and the University of St. Francis.

It was agreed early in the process that all quantitative data would remain confidential. Institutions would not be compared to each other, as each college and university has a unique mix of students with a unique blend of programs and services and a distinctive set of resources, strengths, and constraints. Instead, institutions would compare the course-taking patterns and outcomes of different groups of students within their own institutions to identify any gaps in performance among these groups. This approach would also assist institutions in identifying filter points in the educational pipeline and developing strategies and interventions to successfully move students through those barriers. The participating institutions will be able to use the measures of attainment by various student groups collected through this analysis as benchmarks for gauging the impact of efforts to improve student performance over time.

Several times throughout the past year, institutional researchers from the participating institutions met with project advisor, Dr. Davis Jenkins from the University of Illinois-Chicago's Great Cities Institute, to determine the data to be collected and discuss their findings and challenges as the collection effort progressed. Once the data collection phase was complete, each institution analyzed its results and submitted that analysis to Dr. Jenkins, who then performed an independent analysis for each institution. Dr. Jenkins submitted his analysis to the institutions, posing questions about the analysis and offering suggestions for further study. Throughout this analysis, Dr. Jenkins shares some thoughts on current research (in italics), and then provides conclusions and observations based on his extensive research and experience in this field.

There are several items to note about the data:

- When this project began, institutions were encouraged to collect information on all students for a broader understanding of the student experience at each college. In this report, Latino, white and black students are compared.
- Due to time constraints, several institutions were unable to provide a complete set of data, creating a partial picture on some measures.
- Only one institution provided data on the demographic make-up of its service region. Others stated that they did not have access to such information. The Consortium has asked Northern Illinois University's Regional Development Institute to create a database that will provide census-tract-level information on the demographics of college student markets in the Consortium's geographic region with delineations for the community college boundaries. NIU will also create a database with demographic information on students and recent graduates from every public high schools in the region.

In a companion piece, all of the institutions participating in Project Éxito developed a survey of the services available to support Latino student success. In that report, each institution documents the student services, programs and activities available to Latino students. Together, these two documents represent the first step toward reaching the goal of Project Éxito: facilitating efforts by Consortium members working individually and collectively to close the gap in Latino student access and attainment in the Chicago Southland region

Genevieve Boesen
Executive Director

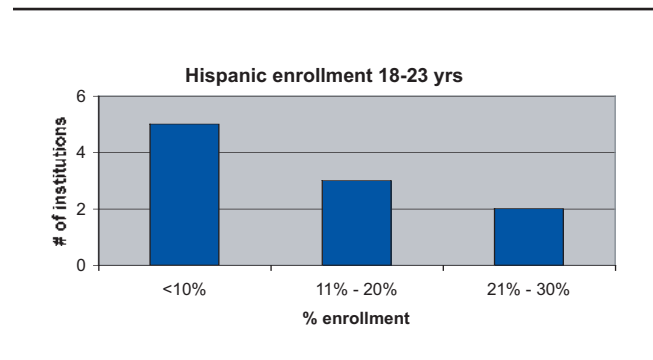
Davis Jenkins
Project Advisor

Fall, 2005

Findings on Latino Students

Latinos as share of enrollment:

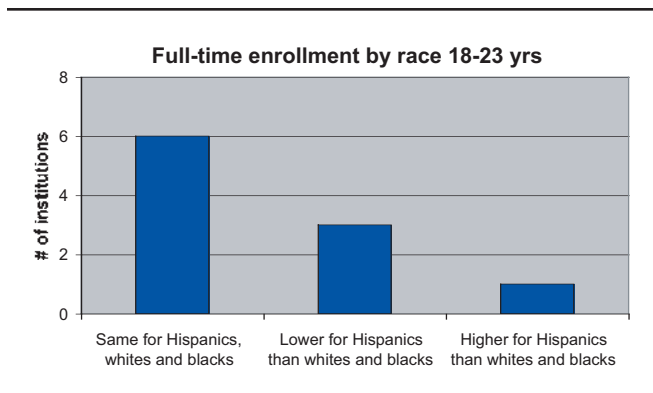
- Latinos represented less than 10% of the 18-23-year-olds in the fall 2000 first-time student cohorts at five of the 10 institutions, between 11% and 20% at three institutions and between 21% and 30% at the remaining two.
- The Latino share of enrollment among students in the 24+ age group was somewhat different. Looking at the older age group, Latinos represented less than 10% of the students at six of the institutions.
- **Note that several institutions indicated that their Latino enrollment has increased markedly since the fall of 2000.**



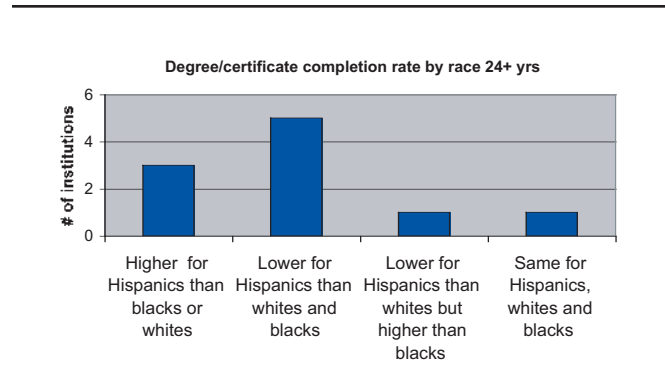
Full-time enrollment status:

Research indicates, not surprisingly, that students enrolled full-time have higher rates of completion than do those enrolled part-time.

- Among 18-23-year-olds in the fall 2000 first-time student cohorts, about the same proportion of Latinos as whites and blacks was enrolled full-time at six institutions; a lower percentage of Latinos enrolled full-time at three and one had a higher percentage of Latinos enrolled full-time.



- Among the 24+ age group, there was a higher percentage of Latinos enrolled full-time than whites but not blacks at three institutions, a lower percentage of Latinos enrolled full-time than whites and blacks at two institutions and about the same percentage of Latinos as whites and blacks enrolled full-time at four institutions.



Financial aid:

Financial aid can cut both ways with respect to student success. Studies show that students who receive financial aid - particularly loans in larger amounts - tend to complete degrees at a higher rate than those who do not receive financial aid, or receive very little. Yet, students who receive Pell grants and other forms of "need-based aid" (as opposed to merit aid) are low-income, and we know that low-income students complete at lower rates than do wealthier students.

- Only six of the 10 colleges provided data on financial aid. When comparing the proportion of Latino students who receive a Pell grant or any sort of financial aid with the proportions of white and black students, no clear pattern emerges among the six colleges. So, it is not clear what conclusions we can draw from a comparison of the colleges on this dimension.

Findings on Latino Students

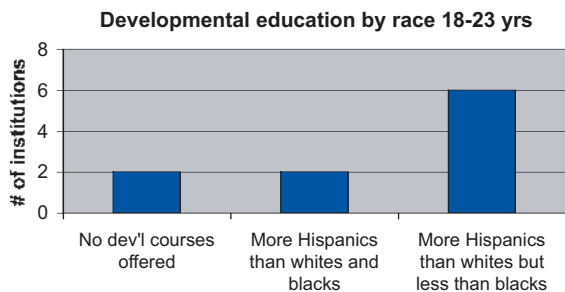
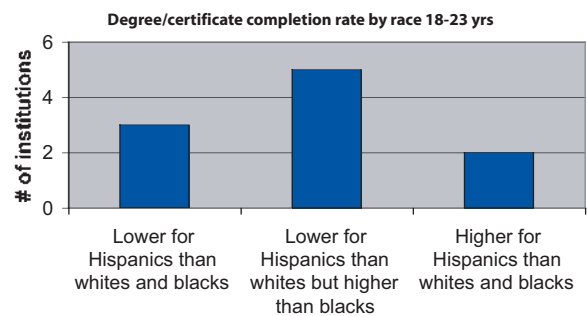
Developmental education:

Research shows that the more developmental education courses students take (particularly in reading) the less likely they are to graduate. Also, if students can pass the initial college-level mathematics course, their chances of graduating increase substantially.

- Of the ten institutions, two do not provide developmental courses.
- Among the eight colleges that do offer developmental instruction, a higher percentage of Latino students in the 18-23-year-old group took at least one developmental education course than did whites and blacks at two of the institutions; Latinos were more likely to take developmental courses than whites, but not blacks at the other six institutions.
- The rate at which students in the 24+ age group took developmental education courses was generally much lower at the eight institutions than the rate for 18-23 year olds. It is not clear whether this means that fewer older students need remedial instruction or whether older students are more likely to avoid it.

certificate or degree at a lower rate than did whites at eight of the ten institutions. At three of these eight institutions, Latino students graduated at a lower rate than did both whites and blacks; at the other five, they graduated less frequently than whites, but more often than blacks. In only two institutions did Latinos graduate at a higher rate than whites or blacks.

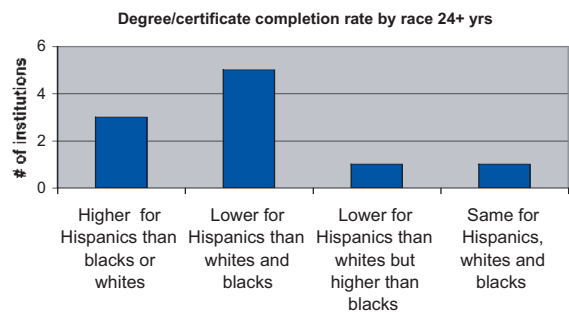
- In the 24+ age group, Latinos graduated at a higher



rate than whites or blacks at three institutions (although the numbers involved at two of the institutions were very small). Latinos graduated at a lower rate than did whites and blacks at five of the institutions. At one institution, the Latino completion rate was lower than that for whites but higher for blacks; at another institution Latinos graduated at a rate similar to that for whites and blacks.

Certificate and degree completion rates:

- In general, the rate at which students in the fall 2000 first-time cohorts completed a certificate or degree in four years at their starting institution was higher for traditional college-age students (18-23) than for students who were older (24+) upon entry.
- Older students were more likely than younger ones to complete occupational certificates, although the overall number of students in either age group who earned certificates was quite small. This number was lower even in the community colleges, all of which offer many certificate programs.
- In the 18-23-year-old group, Latinos completed a



Conclusions Regarding Latino Student Success

These analyses indicate that there are gaps in the attainment of Latino students at the majority of the SMHEC institutions. Among students in the 18-23 age group, Latinos graduated at a higher rate than whites or blacks at only two of the 10 colleges. Looking at students in the 24+ age group, Latinos were more likely to graduate at three of the 10 colleges, although the total number of Latino graduates from two of those institutions was very small. At only one college did Latino students graduate at a higher rate than whites in both the 18-23 and 24+ age groups.

The gap in outcomes of black students was even more sobering than for Latinos. In both age groups, the black completion rate was higher than that for whites or Latinos at only one institution, although the particular institution differed according to the particular age group.

- For most of the institutions, the demographics, use of financial aid, course-taking patterns, and outcomes of first-time students who were of traditional college age (18-23) differed markedly from those of older first-time students (those who are 24+). Therefore, it makes sense to break out these analyses by age group as we did.

- Information on which high schools traditional age students come from or which community college transfer students come from is useful. Disaggregating outcomes by the source of the student is often difficult because of small sample numbers, however.

- Among the community colleges, very few students completed occupational certificates, even though these colleges offer a large number of certificate programs. Some colleges indicated that some students satisfy the requirements for advanced certificates, but do not file the necessary paperwork to officially earn the certificate. It would seem to be in the college's best interest, if not also the student's, to track all students who complete the necessary requirements as having earned certificates. Research shows that having an occupational certificate does provide a significant labor market advantage compared to individuals with only a high school education, although the actual returns vary by the gender of the student and field of study.

- Black students were less likely than whites to complete a degree in four years at nine of the ten colleges. In some of the cases, the completion rates for black students were substantially lower than for Latinos.



Recommendations

- The eight institutions where Latino students complete at a lower rate than do whites should seek to diagnose the reasons for the gaps in Latino achievement. To do this, they should “drill down” further into the data to uncover root causes. For example, is it Latino males who are graduating at a lower rate than other students and thus dragging down the completion rate for Latinos generally? These institutions should also conduct interviews and focus groups with faculty, student services staff and students themselves to identify the causes of poor achievement by Latino students. If they do not already, the colleges should interview students who drop out to determine why they are leaving.

- The eight institutions with Latino completion gaps might want to examine what the two institutions, where Latinos graduate at a higher rate than do whites or blacks, do to make this happen.

- Similarly, the nine institutions where traditional age black students are less likely to complete than are white students of similar ages should examine the causes of underachievement by black students.

- For analyses such as these to have an impact on the institution's policies and practices and on student outcomes, it is critical that the results be shared with administrators, faculty and student support staff and that they be asked to help diagnose the causes of gaps in student achievement. Based on that diagnosis, they should be involved in devising ways to bridge the gaps identified. Institutional researchers should also work with faculty and staff to evaluate the impact of efforts undertaken to address student achievement gaps.

- In most of the colleges, there are differences by race and ethnicity and/or age in the proportion of students who received financial aid - whether, Pell Grants or other forms. These differences may be due to differences in students' financial needs. Still, these colleges should seek to ensure that students have equitable access to aid according to their need.

- In most of the colleges that offer developmental education, the rate at which students test into developmental education differs from the rate at which students actually take developmental courses. This suggests that students who need remediation may not be getting it. These colleges should review their assessment and placement policies to ensure that all students who might need remediation are tested and that students who lack the skills for college-level work receive sufficient support to prepare them to succeed in college.

- Related to this last point is that the rate at which students in the 24+ age group took developmental education at the eight colleges that offer such instruction is generally much

lower than the rate at which 18-23 year olds took remediation. Colleges should explore whether this is because fewer older students need remediation (in some cases, the placement test data suggest otherwise) or because older students avoid taking developmental courses.

- The colleges that offer developmental instruction should explore the connection between participation in developmental education and student outcomes, particularly since in most cases such a high proportion of students need remediation.

- The community colleges should explore why so few students earn occupational certificates even though these colleges have substantial certificate offerings. Is students' not filing the necessary paperwork the primary obstacle? The colleges should consider what they might do to increase certificate completion rates. Research shows that such occupational certificates have value in the labor market (even more so than do associate degrees in liberal arts fields, although still less than occupational associate degrees).

- Institutions that draw substantial proportions of new students from particular high schools should consider sharing with those high schools data on the course-taking patterns and outcomes of students who come from each school. In their evaluation, one college noted that it has shared such data with all of its feeder public high schools for the past five years. This past year, it piloted an effort with one high school in which it examined the college placement and performance patterns of students who came from that school in light of these students' course taking patterns and grades in English and math in high school. We encourage other SMHEC institutions to share data with feeder high schools and to convene high school and college faculty, student support staff (such as counselors) and others with the aim of better aligning curricula, standards and counseling and thereby improving the rates at which Latino students go on to college and succeed there.

- SMHEC has asked Northern Illinois University's Regional Development Institute to create a database that will provide zip code and census tract level information on the demographics of the college-age population in the SMHEC region with delineations for the community college boundaries. NIU will create another database with data on the makeup of students in every high school in the region. The information from these databases will help each SMHEC institution determine how well its student body reflects the demographics of its service area and offer some indication of the preparedness of prospective students from feeder high schools.



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