

# WHAT WORKS NOW

April 2015

The Campaign for  
College  
Opportunity



LATINOS



BLACKS



ASIAN AMERICANS  
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## Santa Rosa Junior College

*As the Campaign for College Opportunity releases its 2015 State of Higher Education in California: The Latino Report, we felt it was important to highlight best practices that can support Latino student success. This profile is one of two that showcases colleges and universities that have committed to and are working toward improving educational outcomes for Latinos.*

For Latino families in Santa Rosa, college is becoming more accessible thanks to intentional and strategic efforts at Santa Rosa Junior College.

Just 55 miles north of San Francisco, the city of Santa Rosa is a popular tourist destination for its wineries. The deeply agricultural community employs a large number of Latino farm workers and hospitality workers, many of whom have little education. Despite low educational attainment among Latinos in general, research has consistently confirmed that Latino parents have high educational aspirations for their children, and for Latinos in Santa Rosa the story is no different. They believe that a college education is critical to the future success of their children. However, they face significant barriers in helping their children reach their college dreams. Family income, lack of college knowledge, lack of financial aid knowledge, and low quality academic preparation in K-12 often make it difficult for Latino students to get through college. The reality is that Latinos in California are more likely than any other racial/ethnic group to have a parent who does not have a four-year degree and live in poverty at a rate two and a half times higher (21 percent) than that of non-Latinos (8 percent). Research has shown that many first-generation and low-income students generally lack the social capital or access to resources that are typically available to students from higher-income or better-educated families and they must also work to finance their academic endeavors and to support themselves and oftentimes, their families. Given the barriers the majority of Latinos face and these statistics, it comes as no surprise that educational outcomes for Latinos are not higher.

The majority of first-time Latino undergraduates in California (65 percent) enroll in a community college. That amounts to 529,300 students who start college, but after six years not even half of those students will earn a certificate, degree, or transfer. At Santa Rosa Junior College (SRJC), campus leaders are working to change these outcomes by providing Latino parents with educational opportunities to improve their employment options and conducting early outreach to their children. By changing the social characteristics of Latino households, they are improving the odds that Latinos will succeed in college.

SRJC awards degrees or certificates to 15.3 out of every 100 enrolled Latino students. This is the second-highest rate in the state and more than double the median number for the state which is 7.2. The college is taking two approaches to continue improving Latino student success: focusing on Latino student needs before they even start college and then supporting them once they are in college.

### Programs that help Latinos before college:

- High School Equivalency Program (HEP)
- Southwest Santa Rosa Center in Roseland
- Adelante Program

## High School Equivalency Program (HEP)

For many Latinos who work in agriculture, attaining the equivalent of a high school diploma (GED) is the first step to an education. The nature of their work requires a constant mobility that often makes it difficult for them or their children to complete an education. That is why SRJC partners with the Sonoma County Office of Migrant Education to offer the High School Equivalency Program, a federally funded grant program. Through the program farm workers and/or their families can get their GED or attain college skills so that they can move on to higher levels of education or training. The goal is to put them on the right track to continue their education or move them into more stable and better-paid jobs. Participants can receive instruction in Spanish or English, receive academic support and advising, and have the cost of the GED exam paid for. They also receive financial aid for instructional materials. The program has been in existence for three years and continues to grow.

### Success of the HEP Program:

- 250 students have been served by the program in just three short years; a tremendous feat given the difficulty in reaching this highly mobile population
- 49 students have successfully completed the program by obtaining a High School Equivalency Certificate (GED) and either continuing to post-secondary education, obtaining improved employment or increased salary
- 61 students have passed the High School Equivalency Exam (GED)
- 35 students have enrolled at SRJC as a result of the program

## Southwest Santa Rosa Center in Roseland

In addition to the GED, for many working adult Latinos in Santa Rosa language acquisition skills and computer literacy skills are the next steps to an education. These skills alone prepare them to enter a college environment. It not only opens the door for their own success, but empowers them to help their children.

**"We are providing a pathway for students, and they see the light at the end of tunnel."**

**- Hector Delgado,  
Manager, Southwest  
Santa Rosa Center**

In 2009, SRJC created the Southwest Santa Rosa Center to specifically address this issue. Following a community needs assessment, the college learned that the city of Roseland was the most diverse in the county and had the largest concentration of Latinos. The area desperately needed English Language Learner classes and the college jumped at the opportunity to serve the Latino community. The center is now the hub for non-credit students and on average per semester serves 1,500 students offering:

- Free non-credit English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- College Skills (GED Preparation Classes)
- Community Education (Spanish Classes)
- Spanish Literacy
- Electronic Technology
- Basic Computer Classes
- Older adult art classes, painting, drawing, crafts



*Left to right: Glen, Alma, and Hector  
Staff of Southwest Santa Rosa Center*

The center is the entry point to the college for adult Latinos who make up the majority of the students at the center. Students can choose to enroll in 8-week intensive courses or 17-week courses that are offered at three different times—8:30am-11:30am, 12:00pm-3:00pm and 6:30pm-9:30pm. All staff are bilingual to make students feel comfortable and the accessibility of the center in their own community helps overcome their perception of the college as "intimidating."

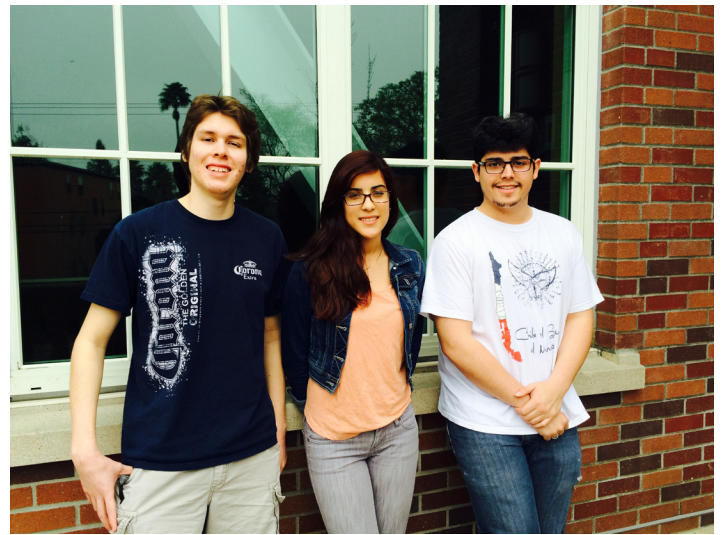
Students who have taken non-credit courses have gone on to enroll in the college and have become teachers and computer technicians, according to the staff at the center. The center has had such great success that SRJC was recently awarded a federal grant to continue their work. Under the Building Community Partnerships to Serve Immigrant Workers grant,

SRJC partnered with the Graton Day Labor center to examine local labor market trends and identify future workforce needs. They are currently working on developing non-credit curriculum to offer at the center that will meet these needs. The goal is to help immigrant workers increase their levels of education so that they can move into the jobs of the future.

## Adelante Program

Early outreach to students is key to increasing Latino educational outcomes. Given the barriers Latino students face, exposing them to college early in their academic trajectory has significant impact on their enrollment, persistence, and graduation in college. With this in mind, SRJC partners with the Sonoma County Office of Migrant Education to host a non-credit summer school program on the campus for children of migrant farm workers. Children in grades 6-12 are eligible to participate and are bused to the college where they take coursework in math, computer literacy, history, English and science. The classes are taught by middle and high school teachers and the program is run entirely by the school district but is hosted at SRJC. The word "adelante" means "forward" and the goal of the program is to encourage children of farm workers to literally keep moving forward academically. By taking classes at the college campus, students learn to feel comfortable being there and gain the confidence they need to continue their education beyond high school. Between 300-350 students participate in the program each year. As part of the program, parents are also invited to the campus for "Noche de Padres" –parent's night. The night features performances by students in the program including speeches, skits, dances and poems. Having parents and students on the campus solidifies the message that college is within reach for them.

"My hope and dream is that they will one day become college students here."  
-President, Dr. Frank Chong



Left to right: Alex Berlanga, Monica Acosta, and Sebastian Troncoso  
MESA students

## Prioritizing Latino success & diversity once on campus

The first step in ensuring Latino students can reach their college dreams is to make their success a campus priority; resources and decisions are then aligned to uphold the priority. Under SRJC's strategic plan, objectives are outlined to better serve the Latino student population.

### Support Student Success:

*"Enhance cultural competency to better serve all student populations with a focus on first generation college students and the increasing Latino/a population"*

### Serve Our Diverse Communities:

*"Identify the educational needs of [the city's] changing demographics and develop appropriate and innovative programs with a focus on the increasing Latino/a population"*

It is important to note that college leaders play an essential role in setting priorities for their campus, and SRJC's last two Presidents have ensured the success of Latinos is top of mind. Under the former President's leadership, student support services were protected during the recession. These support services are critical to helping first-generation college students succeed because they provide the support that allows them to focus on their studies. The Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) which provides students with financial for books and school supplies, summer readiness, English language learner programs, and others were subsidized in the midst of budget cuts so that they would not be disproportionately affected. "The number one competition for retention is work," says Inez Barragan, EOPS/CARE Director at the college. Without these wrap around services, navigating college can be too complex for

Latino first-generation, low-income students.

SRJC's current President has taken the success of Latinos one step further by increasing diversity on campus as a whole and reenergizing community engagement efforts. Diversity is key to bringing cultural competency to the college and the President has implemented various measures to ensure it remains a top priority. Under his leadership, cultural competency is now required as a skill for new hires, faculty and staff are learning more about the challenges that diverse student groups face through professional development activities, and a new award for local educators who demonstrate the greatest impact in multicultural education to students in the county has been added to the college's annual "Day Under the Oaks" celebration. The President is not only encouraging faculty and staff to talk about the challenges that students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds face but is also consistently emphasizing the importance of being aligned with the community. The college serves the community and the best way to know their needs is to be actively involved. The President regularly engages the Latino community by attending community events. This has sparked new relationships with community based organizations and allows them to feel comfortable voicing their needs and ideas. His public presence has fostered a strong relationship between the Latino community and the college.

#### Success of new tactics employed by leadership:

- The number of faculty and staff that are people of color has increased from 16% to 24%.
- All frontline positions in key student contact departments are filled by a person who is bilingual.
- Keynote speakers at four professional development activities throughout the year have discussed national trends in higher education, race and ethnic issues in college, and challenges and success stories of helping first-generation and high-risk students of color. As a result of one activity, Latino faculty and staff who wanted to advocate for Latino issues on campus came together to create the Latino Faculty and Staff Association.
- The Multicultural Educator Award has been awarded to two faculty members and an Exhibits Specialist at the

SRJC Museum since its three years in existence.

- Nicknamed Frank Chavez by Latino community members, President Frank Chong has developed a close relationship with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, community based organizations such as Sonoma County Latino Leaders Los Cien and the Young Latino Business Association. As a result of his relationship with the Los Cien group, the college was informed that ESL classes were needed in Guerneville where a large concentration of Latinos reside. The college began offering the classes and the program has been incredibly successful. It is now in its third semester.

**"The college should be aligned with the community. We have to deliver, bring resources, and be genuine."  
-President, Dr. Frank Chong**

Working within the college and outside of the college, leadership at SRJC is planting seeds of change to break the cycle of low educational outcomes and poverty for Latinos. More community colleges across the state should follow their example and prioritize Latino student success.

*For more information regarding Santa Rosa's efforts to help Latino college students succeed, please contact: Ricardo Navarrette, Vice President Student Services at [rnavarrette@santarosa.edu](mailto:rnavarrette@santarosa.edu).*



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