HISTORIC NUMBER OF LATINX CALIFORNIANS ARE ENROLLING IN COLLEGE, BUT CALIFORNIA LAGS IN DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR LATINX STUDENTS

2021 State of Higher Education for Latinx Californians Report reveals 43% of all undergrads in the state are Latinx, but half of Latinx adults who went to college were not supported to complete a degree

LOS ANGELES, CA -- Today, The Campaign for College Opportunity released its 2021 State of Higher Education for Latinx Californians report that highlights college-going and attainment rates for Latinx Californians during a webinar featuring Latinx college students and higher education system leaders.

The report reveals significant trends in college preparation, enrollment, and success of Latinx students. One clear takeaway from the report is that the Latinx community understands the value of a college degree, as more Latinx students continue to enroll in college. Over 1.39 million Latinx students are enrolled in college in California, representing 43% of all college undergrads in the state.

And, there is more good news!

- 87 percent of Latinx 19 year-olds in the state have a high school diploma or equivalent credential compared to 73 percent 10 years ago.
- 44 percent of Latinx high school graduates in 2019-2020 were prepared for college and eligible for university admission.
- Preliminary admissions data from the UC for fall 2021 shows an 8 percent increase in Latinx admissions from fall 2020.
- In the CSU system, four-year graduation rates have doubled from nine percent to 18 percent for Latinos and from 15 percent to 29 percent for Latinas over the past five years.

The report also digs deep into troubling trends indicating that, despite larger enrollment numbers, too few Latinx are going to college right after high school and California’s institutions of public higher education are not sufficiently supporting Latinx students to graduate, thereby underutilizing a tremendous source of talent and economic power.
More on the troubling trends:

- More than half of California’s Latinx high school graduates are not eligible for admission to the state’s public four-year university systems.
- While 78 percent of Latinx students enroll in a community college seeking to earn a two-year degree and/or transfer to a four-year institution – after six years, fewer than one-third (32 percent) are supported to transfer to a four-year college or university.
- At the CSU, fewer than one in five Latino freshmen (18 percent) are supported to graduate in four years, and only 29 percent of Latinas enrolling as full-time freshmen are supported to graduate in four years.
- Only 36 percent of Latino transfer students enrolling in the CSU are supported to earn their bachelor’s degrees in two years, compared to 41 percent of their white male peers, and 50 percent of Latinas.

“As the largest demographic group in California, it is imperative that California substantially raise the college-going and completion rates of the Latinx community. The state’s future is intrinsically tied to the success of its Latinx community,” said Michele Siqueiros, president of The Campaign for College Opportunity. “If a bachelor’s degree is the entry level credential for today’s workforce, California is creating a permanent underclass if we don’t seriously and urgently improve Latinx degree attainment.”

A number of policy and practice changes are improving Latinx student success, including the elimination of remedial education at California’s community colleges and the California State University, as well as efforts to streamline transfer via the Associate Degree for Transfer. In addition to strengthening implementation of these reforms, the report offers several recommendations including:

- Expanding Pell Grant access to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) recipients as well as pathways to citizenship for all undocumented individuals.
- Committing to a statewide goal of ensuring that, at least, 60 percent of Latinx Californians in the workforce hold a degree or high-value credential by 2030.
- Reevaluating the enrollment caps established under the California Master Plan for Higher Education and increasing enrollment of Latinx students at the CSU and UC.
- Identifying, hiring, retaining, and promoting Latinx faculty at California’s public colleges and universities.
- Increasing high school graduation rates for Latinx students to 90 percent and making the A-G coursework the default curriculum for all high school students in California.
- Ensuring all high school seniors complete either a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application.
• Modernizing California’s financial aid system to be based on student need and eliminating artificial rationing devices.

The report authors acknowledge the special role of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in California. Most of California’s public colleges and universities are designated HSIs - 106 community colleges, 21 CSUs and 5 UCs - meaning at least 25% of their student body is Latinx. These institutions receive federal funding to support Latinx student enrollment and completion and can play a significant role in raising degree attainment.

“The value of a college degree cannot be overstated. Throughout the pandemic, we saw that individuals with a bachelor's degree were more likely to stay employed, more likely to be able to work from home and more likely to have reliable health insurance. A bachelor's degree saved lives,” added Michele Siquieros. “As California emerges from the COVID-19 crisis, we must redouble our efforts to ensure more Latinx students graduate with college degrees, and that our colleges and universities reflect the rich diversity of the state's Latinx population.”

You can access the full 2021 State of Higher Education for Latinx Californians report, as well as see what elected and higher education leaders are saying about the report, here: https://collegecampaign.org/portfolio/2021-state-higher-education-latinx-californias/.

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About The Campaign for College Opportunity:

The Campaign for College Opportunity is a California bipartisan policy and research non-profit organization focused on a single mission: to ensure all Californians have an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in college in order to build a vibrant workforce, economy and democracy. For more information, visit www.CollegeCampaign.org / Facebook.com/CollegeCampaign or follow @CollegeOpp.