

The Hispanic Population and Hispanic Serving Institutions

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Abstract

Hispanic Serving Institutions are designated by the United States Department of Education with the purpose of increasing the educational attainment of the Hispanic population. Designation is determined by the percent of the population of full-time undergraduate students at the institution of higher learning. While this federal policy has positively impacted the percent of Hispanic high school graduates enrolling in undergraduate programs at 2- and 4-year colleges across the country, the Hispanic population continues to complete the 4-year degree at the lowest rate of any ethnic minority in the U.S. This paper explores the changing demographics of the U.S., the impact of educational attainment on Hispanics, and the Hispanic Serving Institution designation. Amendments to the current policy and institutional action items are proposed for improving graduation rates for Hispanic students.

Keywords: Hispanic Serving Institutions, Hispanic students, minority education, Hispanic education, higher education

The Hispanic Population and Hispanic Serving Institutions

Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) are two and four-year colleges and universities proposed to serve the Hispanic/Latino population in the U.S. They are designated by the Department of Education (DOE), and are funded by Title V to meet the greatest needs of Hispanic/Latino students (DOE, 2016a). Despite current efforts, the Hispanic/Latino population suffers low educational attainment at all levels when compared to other ethnic groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority population in the United States, and this population is the

fastest growing ethnic group in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Thus, improving educational attainment of Hispanics/Latinos must remain a national and institutional priority for the United States to remain a competitor in the global economy.

Background

While enrollment in higher education for the Hispanic/Latino population has made significant gains over the past two decades, educational attainment for this population is currently lower than every other ethnic group in the United States. Enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students in colleges and universities is continuously increasing, partially due to the Department of Education Title V Program which grants designation and funding for eligible colleges and universities known as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. This funding is intended to expand educational opportunities for Hispanic/Latino students and improve degree attainment, through expanding and enhancing academic programs, program quality, and institutional stability. This funding can be used on projects such as: " ... scientific or laboratory equipment for teaching; construction or renovation of instructional facilities; faculty development; purchase of educational materials; academic tutoring or counseling programs; funds and administrative management; joint use of facilities; endowment funds; distance learning academic instruction; teacher education; and student support services" (DOE, 2016a, Types of Projects section, para. 1). The current policy continues to promote recruitment and enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students in higher education. This paper reviews the current policy, explores options for improving the rate of degree completion, and recommends modifications to the current policy for successful retention, matriculation, and graduation of Hispanic/Latino students.

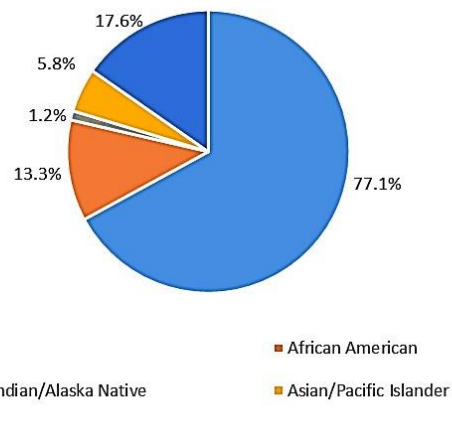


Figure 1. "U.S. Population by Race & Ethnicity (2015)". This figure illustrates the Hispanic population of the U.S. as 17.6% of the total population. (Stoker, 2016).

A Growing Hispanic/Latino Population

According to 2015 American Community Survey conducted by the United States Census Bureau, Hispanics/Latinos currently represent 17.6 % of the United States population as shown in Figure 1, totaling 56 million people (Stoker, 2016). This is the largest ethnic minority in the U.S. Among Millennials, currently ages 18-34, one in five persons is Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, as of 2013, Hispanics/Latinos accounted for nearly half the population under 18 years old for three states: California (52%), New Mexico (59%), and Texas (49%). Figure 2 shows the percent

of children under 18 years of age who are Hispanic in every state of the country.

Between July 1, 2014 and July 1, 2015, the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States grew by 1.2 million, nearly half the total population growth of 2.5 million for the year. The Pew Center (2015) projections show by the year 2060, the Hispanic/Latino population will reach 119 million, constituting 29% of the total population in the U.S. As such, the actions, behaviors, consumerism, education, and workforce engagement of the Hispanic/Latino population will have a profound impact on the future of the United States, significantly shaping the national economy. It is imperative to the global position of the country to endeavor strong Hispanic/Latino graduation rates at every level of the education pipeline.

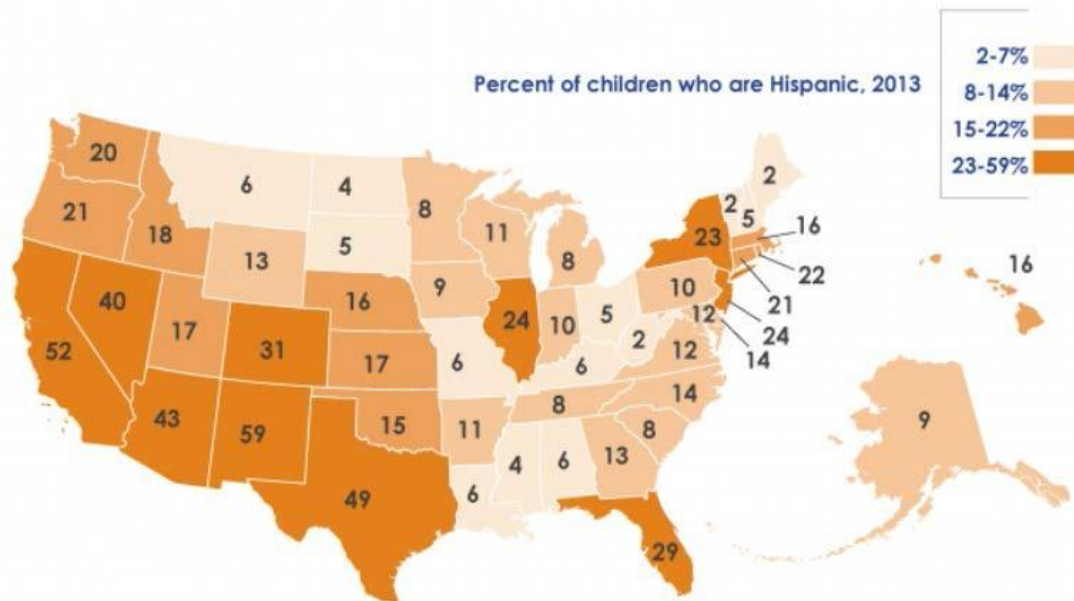


Figure 2. "Percent of children who are Hispanic (2013)". This figure illustrates the percent of children 18 years and younger who are Hispanic in every state of the U.S. This includes self-reported Hispanics of any race. (Murphy et al., 2014).

Workforce and Income in the Hispanic/Latino Community

A cultural value heavily influencing employment rates of the Hispanic/Latino population is work ethic (Hallett, 2012). This has resulted in relatively high employment within the Hispanic/Latino community, such that this demographic accounts for 16% of the U.S. workforce, while also accounting for 18% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Despite high employment rates, poverty remains a significant issue for the Hispanic/Latino community. Work has not translated into wealth for this underrepresented group. As shown in Figure 3, the average median income in the United States was \$56,000 for 2015, while Hispanics/Latinos earned \$45,000 on average for the same year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The poverty rate for Hispanics/Latinos was nearly one third higher than the rate of the general population for 2015, as 21.4% of Hispanics/Latinos lived in poverty compared to 13.5% of the U.S. population.

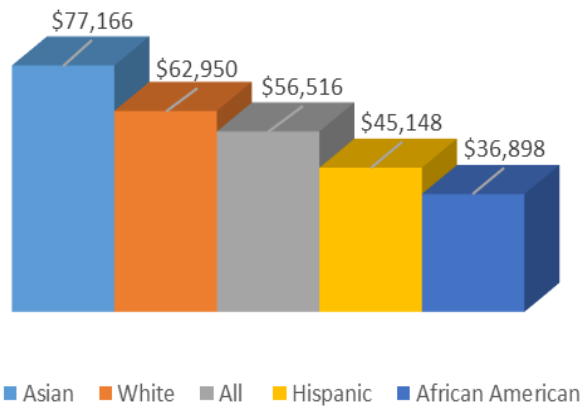


Figure 3. "2015 Median Household Income by Race". This figure illustrates income gap existing for the Hispanic household as compared to the national average. Adapted from the 2015 Current Population Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015).

Education and the Hispanic/Latino Community

Educational attainment for the Hispanic/Latino community has historically been challenging. This can partially be attributed to cultural values of work ethic and income contributions to the family; and reflects mistrust in the American education system (Hill & Torres, 2010). Furthermore, studies have found the socialization of many Latino children focuses on survival rather than success in working-class homes due to the issues of poverty and low income, (Flora & Flora, 2015).

Additional evidence suggests the Hispanic/Latino population is in transition with more students enrolling in higher education, partially attributed to the effective recruitment efforts of HSIs. Figure 4 represents the trends for Hispanic enrollment in higher education as compared to the national average in the United States from 2000-2015, as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (2017b).

Trends for participation in education by the Hispanic/Latino population include enrollment in two-year colleges near where they live; commuting to school, rather

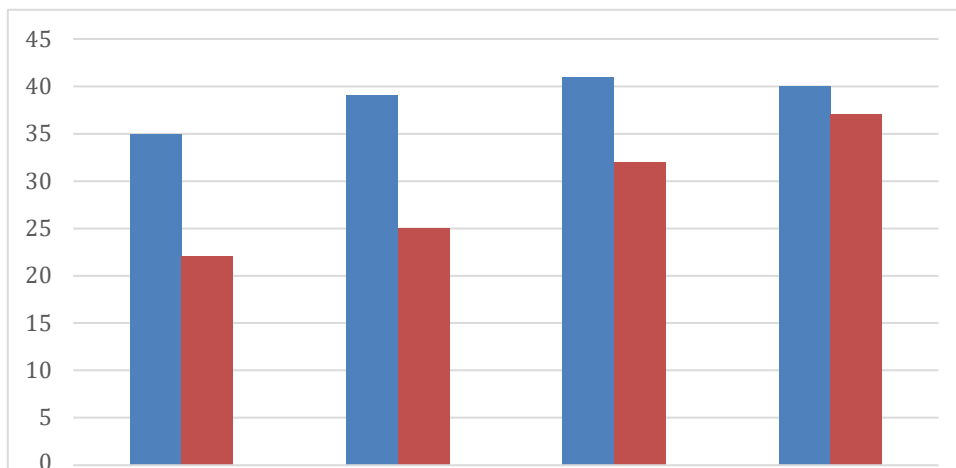


Figure 4. "Percent population ages 18-24 enrolled in degree granting post-secondary institutions". Compares Hispanic and the national average for civilian noninstitutionalized persons. Data from NCES (2017b).

than living on-campus; part-time college enrollment; full-time employment while attending college; first-generation college students; low-income earners; and less academic preparation than their peers (Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). Federal, state, local, and institutional interventions have been created to combat the educational disparities for some Hispanic/Latino students due to academic and financial disadvantages, achievement gaps, and cultural influences. These efforts are intended to promote Hispanic/Latino student success. Some federally designated funding for minority serving institutions has been demarcated for providing financial incentives for students to enroll in higher education on a full-time basis by funding work-study or research programs contributing to the economic base for students' households. Another historical barrier for Hispanic/Latino students is that higher education has been viewed as a commodity in their culture, and relatively few members of the community have historically graduated from higher education; however, as those who successfully complete college degrees become role models for younger students. The population has achieved a much higher rate of enrollment in college, and a record low high school dropout rate (Pew Hispanic Center, 2013).

According to Pew Hispanic Center (2013), Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. account for 19% of all college students, age 18 to 24; 23% high school students; 25% elementary school students; 27% kindergarten students; and 29% public nursery school students. College enrollment rates for first-time-first-year (FTFY) Hispanic/Latino students surpassed every other ethnic group in the U.S. in 2012 at 49% compared to 47 % for their white non-Hispanic counterparts. Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority group on U.S. college campuses with 2.3 million students currently enrolled. This high enrollment in post-secondary education has been successful, in part, due to the federal designation of HSIs. Participation in education for this community has grown considerably in recent years, and is projected to continue growing in the future.

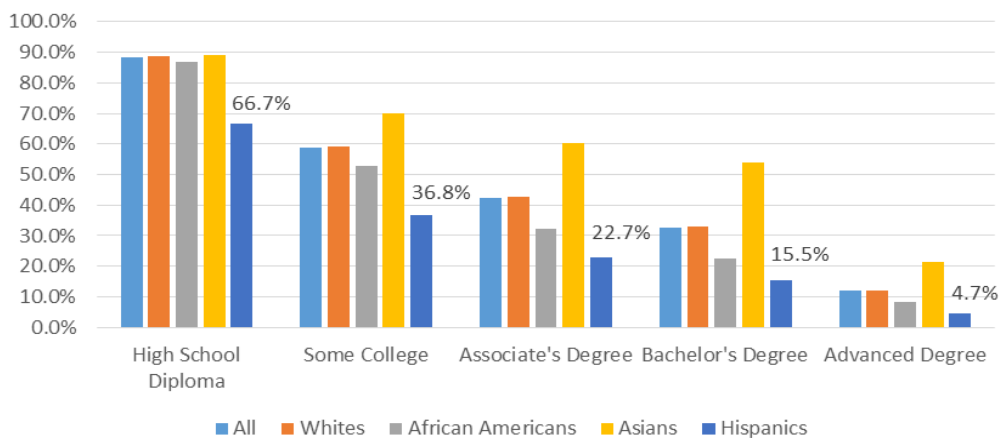


Figure 5. "Educational Attainment by Race & Ethnicity, Persons 25 years & Older (2015)" Stoker (2016).

Despite these extensive gains, however, degree completion for Hispanics/Latinos is notably low. As represented in Figure 5, the 2015 Current Population Survey reports graduation rates for Hispanics/Latinos age 25 and over are lower than every other ethnic population in the United States. Moreover, the degree completion rate for 2015 diminishes progressively along the education pipeline. Educational attainment trends for bachelor's degree or higher for Hispanics 25 years and over are compared to national rates in Figure 6. Current data regarding degree attainment through the academic pipeline suggests that modifying policy to mitigate attrition and improve graduation rates would benefit the nation. Improved retention, matriculation, and graduation of Hispanics/Latinos are opportunities for supporting social mobility, ultimately impacting the quality of life and economic sustainability of a large portion of the population in the United States.

The percent of degrees conferred in the U.S. offers evidence that policy reform for HSIs should be considered.

The National Center for Education Statistics indicates the following degrees awarded by colleges and universities in the U.S. for 2013 – 2014 academic year as shown in Figure 7: 1 million Associate's degrees; 1.8 million Bachelor's degrees; 750,000 Master's degrees; and 177,000 doctoral degrees. A smaller than expected number of these were earned by the Hispanic/Latino community: 18% Associate's degrees;

12% Bachelor's degrees; 9% Master's degrees; and 7%

Ph.Ds. were awarded to Hispanic/Latino students (NCES, 2016).

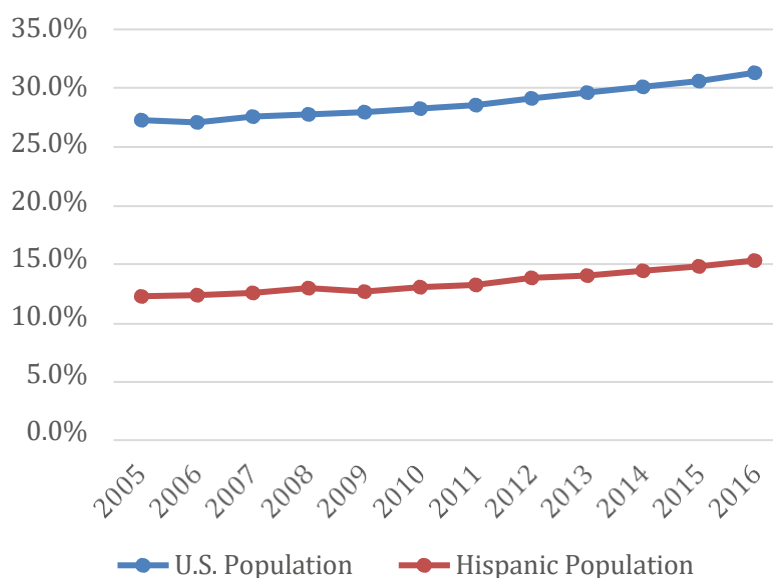


Figure 6. "Bachelor's Degree or Higher for Population 25-years and Older (2005-2016)". Data from U.S. Census Bureau (2017).

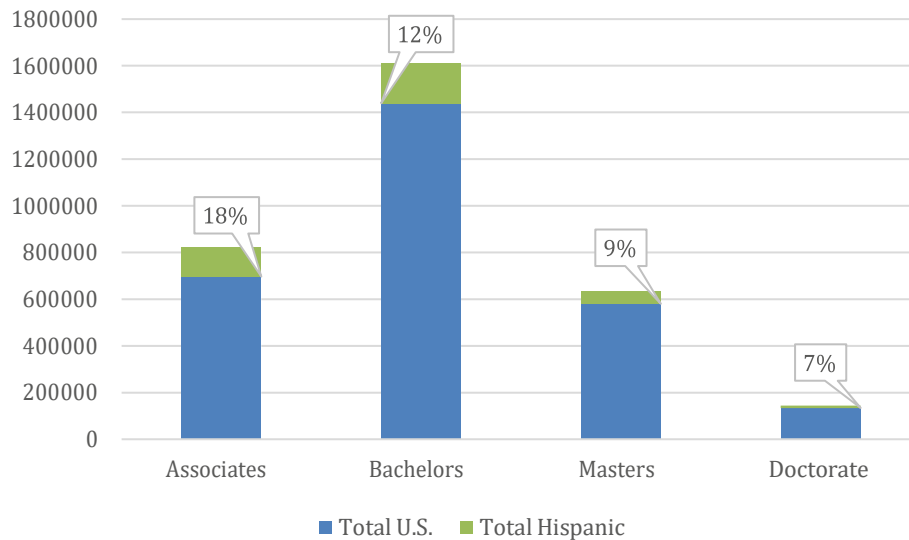


Figure 7. “Percent Degrees Conferred to Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S., 2013-2014”. Data from National Center for Education Statistics (2017a).

Institutional Commitment and Hispanic/Latino Students- Institutional commitment is particularly important to Hispanic/Latino college students, according to a study examining the effects of institutional commitment on Hispanic/Latino students enrolled at a two-year institution (Tovar, 2013). The study defined institutional commitment as the actions taken by college faculty and staff contributing to a smooth transition to the institution and maintains a positive learning environment evident to students. The study indicates that perceived institutional commitment has a direct impact on the engagement, sense of mattering and belonging to the institution, and integrative experiences for Hispanic/Latino students. These are also indicators for student retention (NSSE, 2014) providing a guiding post for successfully affecting Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S.

Current Policy: Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs)

Current Hispanic Serving Institution designation aims to promote solutions addressing the greatest needs of the Hispanic/Latino student population. Despite current efforts, the data reveal Hispanics/Latinos currently enroll in higher education at higher rates, yet experience low levels of completion compared to other underrepresented populations in the United States. As such, maintaining enrollment strengthened by the current policy is imperative. The policy should be amended to address more successful retention, matriculation, and graduation of Hispanic/Latino students. Designation metrics should focus on successfully enrolling and graduating Hispanic/Latino students.

Designation of the HSI

Title V of the Higher Education Act defines Hispanic/Latino Serving Institutions (HSIs) as: 1) eligible as determined by 20 USC §1101a(a)2 and 2) full time equivalent undergraduate enrollment at least 25% Hispanic/Latino at the end of the

award year immediately preceding the year of the application (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). HSIs are subject to reapplication for designation on an annual basis and can lose the 5-year designation and funding eligibility based upon the demographic make-up of the undergraduate student body enrolled at the institution. The number of designated Hispanic/Latino Serving Institutions has grown continuously from 1990 to 2014, from 137 to 435, as shown in Figure 8 (HACU, 2017). This constant growth closely parallels the Hispanic/Latino population growth in the U.S.

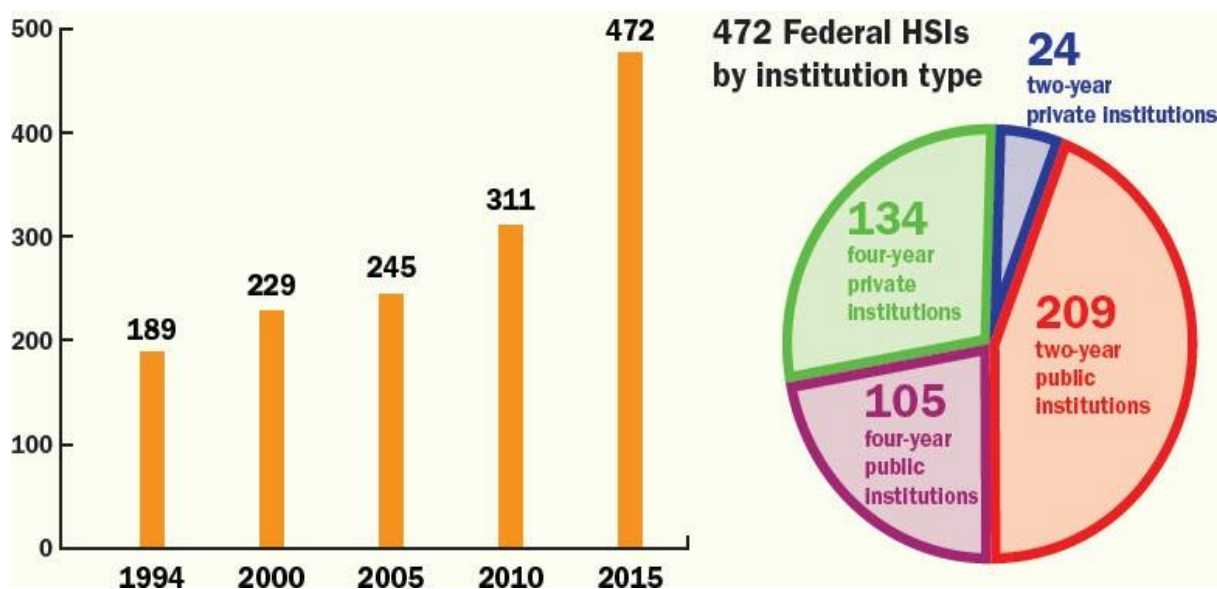


Figure 8. "HSI Growth: 1994-2015". Federal Designation by Department of Education 1990-2015. Hispanic/Latino Associations for Colleges and Universities (2017).

The distribution of HSIs, also shown in Figure 7, reflects the education trends for Hispanic/Latino students. According to the Hispanic/Latino Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), 44% of all Hispanic/Latino Serving Institutions are two-year public colleges, and 49.6% of Hispanic undergraduate students attend 2-year institutions (HACU, 2017). Four-year private institutions are the next largest category of HSIs, followed by four-year public institutions. The smallest category is the private two-year college.

Analysis: HSIs as Enrollment Based Institutions

The enrollment-based designation of HSIs presents several challenges for institutions of higher education. Since designation reviews occur yearly, institutions find variability in eligibility for designation and Title V funding when the total fulltime undergraduate student population is below 25% Hispanic; assessment is performed on an annual basis, and designation is granted for five years (DOE, 2016). However, eligibility for Title III and Title V grant funding for HSIs is determined annually and requires institutional HSI status and at least 50% of all students enrolled at the institution must be eligible for need-based Title IV funding. This has significant impact on long-term institutional commitment to interventions specific to Hispanic/Latino student success. Expansion of academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability supported by the Title III or V funding, is

compromised when the institution loses eligibility. As previous studies have shown, Hispanic/Latino student success is highly impacted by a sense of commitment to the individual student, which can be improved by addressing this sense of commitment despite fluctuations in Hispanic student enrollment during five-year designation.

Additionally, compromised or instability of HSI eligibility may pose challenges for informing faculty of status. Recurring training for administrators, faculty, and researchers at institutions of higher education ensures that employees at all levels within the institution are informed of the purpose and benefits accompanying this designation. Benefits include eligibility and priority for additional funding from public and private funding sources. Faculty also foster an empowering atmosphere for underrepresented students, who often desire a sense of belonging in higher education and seek caring mentors that strive to help them achieve educational success. Moreover, students who attend HSIs are eligible to engage in special programs such as the Hispanic Internship Program, regardless of their ethnic affiliation. Thus, it is imperative to inform faculty, staff, and students and bolster opportunities afforded to them per the HSI designation.

While enrollment-based designation of HSIs has contributed to significant gains in enrollment rates of Hispanics/Latinos, it lacks incentive for instituting sustainable academic achievement for these students. This designation has the opportunity to promote institutional cultures focused on graduation of Hispanic/Latino students. Unlike Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions are not mission-based, minority-serving institutions. HBCUs were founded with the mission to graduate African-American students (USDOJ, 2017). Likewise, TCUs are located throughout Native American Country with the mission of graduating Native American students. Adopting a mission statement that includes graduation of Hispanic/Latino students gives institutional leadership an effective and enduring tool for defining goals unique to the institution and its student population. Mission statements aid in providing employees guidance for working independently and collectively to reach the expected level of institutional performance (Ekpe et al., 2015). Incorporating a mission statement that aims to graduate competitive Hispanic students, provides guidance for faculty, staff, and administration to reach these desired outcomes.

The current federal designation has adequately addressed the historical first hurdle for Hispanics/Latinos: enrollment. Enrollment rates in higher education reveal the policy has performed successfully and addressed this issue satisfactorily. As such, policy modifications are necessary to adequately address the current greatest need: graduation rates of Hispanic/Latino students. Recent assessment of a thoughtfully constructed funding formula for higher education in Ohio reveals that performance-based funding can positively transform access, persistence, and retention for underserved and at-risk students (Crellin et al., 2011). Dougherty et al. (2016) advise policy makers to consider efforts to protect academic rigor and preserve admissions standards to continue admitting less prepared students when developing a framework for performance-based funding. Efforts to retain, matriculate, and graduate students require focus and strategic investment from the

public sector for improving the academic standing and achievement of this minority group.

Policy Recommendations

The growing Hispanic/Latino population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), the changing economic base in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), and the current policy governing the designation of Hispanic Serving Institutions (DOE, 2016) are the basis for addressing the limitations of the current policy. Policy amendments should incentivize outcomes for Hispanic/Latino degree attainment conferred by Hispanic Serving Institutions. The educational and economic disparities and barriers for Hispanic/Latinos in the United States indicate opportunities for improving interventions and changing policy to address the greatest needs of Hispanic/Latino students and improve outcomes for this underrepresented population. Policy amendments at the federal level and institutional recommendations are presented based on historical figures and current studies addressing organizational behavior and performance, and on the needs of Hispanic students.

Federal Level Policy

The current Hispanic Serving Institution designation measures the fulltime equivalent (FTE) enrollment of the undergraduate student population as the basis for awarding HSI designation and federal funding eligibility for Title III and V grants. This has demonstrated effective enrollment of Hispanic/Latino students in higher education over time and has indirectly increased high school graduation rates of the Hispanic/Latino population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The current policy has influenced educational goals and enrollment of Hispanic/Latino undergraduate students; however, persistence rates, retention rates, successful matriculation, undergraduate graduation rates, and enrollment in graduate programs and completion of graduate degrees are lacking for Hispanics/Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015; NCES, 2014). The current policy fails to address metrics impacting, measuring, and incentivizing successful matriculation and graduation of Hispanic/Latino students, which would ultimately promote improved outcomes. Below are recommendations for improving federal HSI designation:

1. Determine designation of HSIs based upon six-year graduation rates of Hispanic/Latino undergraduate students, in addition to current FTE enrollment rates.
2. Define eligibility such that at least 25% of the undergraduate graduating class is self-reported Hispanic/Latino, in addition to current FTE enrollment rates.
3. Require institutional level addendum to mission statement addressing graduation of competitive Hispanic/Latino students.

Time-to-graduation and Graduation Rates- The metric proposed for awarding designation should reflect the commitment of the awarded institution to successfully matriculate Hispanic/Latino students within a reasonable timeframe. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), the national mean time for students to earn a bachelor's degree in 2008 was 55 months. At the

national level, 54.8% of students who entered four-year institutions in 2010 completed their undergraduate degrees within six years; however, the Hispanic/Latino rate was 45.8%, while white and Asian student rates were 62% and 63.2%, respectively (Tate, 2017). Current Title V funding intends to develop successful programs and interventions serving the Hispanic/Latino population's greatest need: improving graduation rates. The policy should promote closing the achievement gap for Hispanic/Latino student graduation. Therefore, amending the policy by adding a requirement for time-to-graduation and graduation rates should be considered as metrics for eligibility.

Twenty-five percent undergraduate graduating class- Federal focus on broadening participation of underrepresented minorities increases inclusion of all groups and fully utilizes the nation's talent and resource potential cultivated from the current American population (NSF, 2016). This implies that developing talent of people from all academic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds is vital to the global competitiveness of the nation. Providing educational services to the Hispanic/Latino population demonstrates fiscal responsibility and stewardship of federal funds purposed to increase the competitiveness of the nation, including the Hispanic/Latino population. Faculty and administration at the local institution interact with the students they serve, and know their abilities, opportunities, and needs. Adequately serving the student body characterizes creativity and flexibility allowing faculty and staff, working directly with students, to adjust interventions based on frequent assessment and needs of current participants (Vela, 2014). These adjustments should be evidence based and within reason, addressing student needs adequately, and supporting successful retention, matriculation, and graduation of Hispanic/Latino students. The outcome of the process, successful graduation, demonstrates stewardship of funding.

Mission Statement Addendum- Currently, there are seven designations for minority serving institutions granted by the U.S. Department of Education (2016). While some institutions were established to educate certain populations (i.e. Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities), others receive funding based on enrollment of underserved students. Hispanic Serving Institutions are designated by the requirements outlined in §502 of the HEA, 20 U.S.C. §1101a, funded through Title V. The DOE does not have a classification for institutions of higher education specifically created to educate the Hispanic/Latino population (DOE, 2016). This differs from other ethnic minority groups funded by the DOE.

Amending the current policy presents Hispanic/Latino students the option to enroll in institutions purposed to meet their specific academic, socioeconomic, and cultural needs. This presents an opportunity for institutions to support the largest enrolling minority group in higher education which will yield significant gains in graduation rates. As per the current data, HSIs, on average, enroll Hispanic/Latino students at higher rates than non-HSIs, yet graduate these students at the same rate as their non-HSI counterparts (NCES, 2011). Evidence presented in organizational behavior literature proposes that adopting a mission-based commitment will improve outcomes (Ekpe et al., 2015); thus, it is recommended that a requisite for a

mission-based approach to Hispanic/Latino education is incorporated in the designation requirements for HSIs.

Institutional Level Policy

Two recommendations are made to improve institutional policy for HSIs:

1. Adopt a mission-based addendum to the current mission statement addressing the institution's commitment to successfully recruit, retain, matriculate, and graduate Hispanic/Latino students.
2. Institute recurring mission-based training for administration, faculty, and staff every 2 years.

Mission-based Addendum- Organizational behavior posits that concerted organizational effort focused on a unified mission improves performance (Ekpe et al., 2015). Focusing organizational efforts on graduation of Hispanic/Latino students can be performed at the discretion of the institution.

Mission-based Training- Generally, faculty are far removed from the process of applying for designation, obscuring the additional benefits HSI status affords the institution. Training and informing faculty about the designation and its benefits promotes engagement in pursuing opportunities reserved for HSIs. This designation grants eligibility for additional funding reserved for minority serving institutions and HSIs. As universities secure these resources, students experience increased access to interventions that promote retention, engagement, matriculation, and graduation. These initiatives are imperative to the success of HSIs since research programs and support services directly impact graduation rates (Doerschuk, 2016).

Hispanic Serving Institutions would benefit from strategically approaching mission-based organizational training and internal systems that support university faculty to actively seek opportunities tailored to Hispanic/Latino students and minority education. Recurring training requirements for faculty and staff would help reinforce the institution's commitment to the purpose of the designation, while bolstering support for faculty actively pursuing opportunities and interventions for students. As every institution is unique, it is important to assess the internal capacity to communicate the mission to employees, and to tailor strategies to the unique needs and capacity of the university (Appelbaum et al., 1998). Empowering faculty and staff to actively support the purpose of the HSI requires intentional direction provided through a mission statement (Ekpe et al., 2015), access to information (Huq, 2017), and strategic communication (Appelbaum et al., 1998).

Summary

The designation of HSIs is based on Hispanic/Latino student enrollment. At the national level, the U.S. has made significant gains in enrolling this demographic in higher education. While the national enrollment rate of Hispanics/Latinos in higher education exceeds all other minority groups, this population has low degree attainment at every level of the academy. Current trends show as education levels increase, degree attainment decreases. This has profound impacts on the development of the human capital in the U.S., as Hispanics/Latinos are the largest

minority group in the nation. As stated by Barro and Lee (2001), development of human capital has profound effects on the success, innovation, and competitiveness of the entire nation. Thus, it is of national interest to improve the educational attainment of this population.

Amendments to federal and institutional policy included in this paper are data driven and based on literature in organizational behavior and management. These recommendations consider current HSI designation, and current higher education achievement of the Hispanic/Latino community. It is anticipated these amendments would advance the purpose of the Hispanic Serving Institution from enrollment to graduation of students. The recommendations include adoption of an institutional mission statement reflecting the charge to improve graduation rates for Hispanic/Latino students, and institutional mission-based training. The effectiveness of Hispanic Serving Institutions will impact the global competitiveness of the U.S. and determine the economic viability of the nation by guiding the educational attainment of Hispanic/Latino students.

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