TOP 100 COLLEGES FOR HISPANICS

A Portrait, by the Numbers, of Hispanics in Higher Education

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By Mary Ann Cooper

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Each year, The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education Magazine publishes its list of the Top 100 schools for Hispanic students. The schools on the list represent the higher education institutions with the most Hispanics enrolled and the places where the most Hispanics receive undergraduate and graduate degrees. We all know that more and more Hispanics are attending college and receiving degrees, but how much do we really know about the Hispanic students we are sending off the college?

First, some basics: we know that there were 52.5 million Hispanics living in the U.S. in 2011, plus an additional 3.7 million who were in Puerto Rico. Hispanics represent 17 percent of the U.S. population. That represents a 45.5 percent growth from 2000 to 2011, largest of all population groups. Hispanics are a younger demographic than the general population of the United States. The median age of Hispanics is 27.4, compared to 36.8 for the population of the U.S. as a whole. And although Hispanics can be found in all parts of the United States, more than 50 percent of the nation’s Hispanics live in California, Florida and Texas. If you add New York, Arizona, Illinois, New Jersey and Colorado, they account for over 75 percent of all Hispanics. Hispanic population growth from 2000 to 2010 has been most rapid in the South and Midwest. This all adds up to a potent potential for the purchasing power of U.S. Hispanics. In 2010, that power added up to $1 trillion and is projected to reach $1.5 trillion by 2015.

The demographic power of Hispanics is no doubt held back by a spotty education record of young Hispanics. More than 35 percent of Hispanics 25 and over have not completed high school as of 2012, compared to 12.5 percent of non-Hispanic Whites. More than 14 percent have a bachelor’s degree and 4 percent have an advanced degree as of 2012, compared to 34.4 percent and 12.5 percent for non-Hispanic Whites. The playing field levels if Hispanics graduate high school. Two-thirds of Hispanic high school graduates ages 16-24 were enrolled in college in 2011, compared to 67.7 percent for non-Hispanic Whites. More than two and a half million total Hispanics were enrolled in nonprofit institutions in 2011-12, including Puerto Rico. More than 51 percent (1,270,579) of Hispanic college students attend two-year institutions (compared to 42.9 percent of all college students).

Defined by the Higher Education Act as nonprofit degree-granting institutions with full-time equivalent undergraduate enrollments that are at least 25 percent Hispanic, Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) play a large role in promoting Hispanic higher education. In 2011-12, 356 institutions met the federal enrollment criterion, enrolling 1,480,722 Hispanic undergraduate and graduate students in postsecondary (nonprofit) schools. HSIs represent 10.5 percent of nonprofit colleges and universities in the country, yet enroll 17 percent of all students in postsecondary (nonprofit) schools, and serve 56 percent of all Hispanic students. Also, HSIs receive 66 cents for every dollar going to all other colleges and universities annually, per student, from all federal funding sources. The number of HSIs is rapidly growing, from 137 institutions in 1996 to 172 in 1995, to 230 in 2000, to 253 in 2005 and 356 in 2011. The growth in these schools from 2010 to 2011 represented a 14.5 percent increase in number of Hispanic-Serving Institutions.

Leading Hispanic advocacy groups become more involved in improving those numbers further. As an example, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) joined with the Partnership for a New American Economy, the National Immigration Forum and a bipartisan coalition of more than 500 CEOs and mayors in urging college and university presidents and chancellors to push Congress to enact immigration reform that will allow the U.S. to retain the best and brightest minds trained and educated in this country.

How does immigration reform impact Hispanic numbers in higher education and the way those graduates fit into our system? Many foreign-born students that attain degrees in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) leave the country due to outdated and restrictive immigration laws that send U.S.-trained talent overseas to work in direct competition with American industries. This results in a drain on innovation and entrepreneurship with a heavy cost to the national economy. Key points that support the effort to reforming immigration policy are:

- Three out of every four patents that the top 10 U.S. patent-producing universities received in 2011 had an immigrant inventor
- Every foreign-born advanced-degree graduate trained in the U.S. creates an additional 2.62 jobs for American workers
- By 2018, the U.S. will have an estimated 779,000 jobs requiring advanced STEM degrees, but only an estimated 555,200 advanced STEM degree holders
- Foreign-born students arriving in our country as children are prevented from attending college because of their undocumented status, denying our country potential talent
Finally, one overlooked demographic impacting minority enrollment in higher education is the growing class of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who are Hispanic. To that end, the VET Education Act of 2013 provides for competitive grant programs to Minority-Serving Institutions for academic and related support services for enrolled veterans to achieve their educational and career goals. The VET Education Act of 2013 would support the establishment of Centers for Veteran Student Success on campuses to provide a single point of contact to coordinate support services for veteran students.