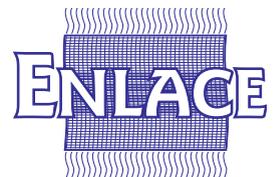
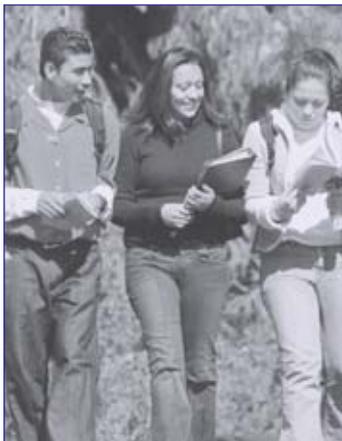




# ENLACE

Bridging the Gap Between Community  
College and University:

Learning from the ENLACE Experience





## Background on the Issue

In the United States, nearly half of all undergraduate students start their higher education at a community college. For the Latino population, that number jumps to over 60 percent.<sup>1</sup> Over half of all undergraduate Latino students spend some part of the academic year as part-time students, while also tending to family and work responsibilities. For these students, a community college education opens many doors, including the door to transfer to a four-year, degree-granting university.

In reality, however, less than 13 percent of Latino students who begin at a community college actually complete a bachelor's degree. Overall, by age 26, only 18 percent of Latino high school graduates have attained a bachelor's degree. The research and experience is clear. Entrance into college is only one hurdle; having a successful experience that ends in graduating with a degree is just as critical.

Many ENLACE sites realized that, to have an impact on the numbers of Latino students successfully attaining bachelor's degrees, they needed to bridge the transition between community college and university. Financial barriers are paramount and addressing these required commitment on the part of the institutions. Partnerships between the university and the community colleges that feed into it were key, together with community organizations that served the Latino community.

The ENLACE model has made a difference in the lives of Latino students by using a holistic approach: implementing student-centered programs, engaging parents and the community, and changing institutional and state policies. These three core elements were also vital in bridging the gap between community college and university. The following are good practices that emerged through the ENLACE experience, and are also borne out through research.

## Good Practices for Supporting Latino Student Transfer from Community College to University

### *Serve students across the P-20 educational pathway*

Begin preparation for community college to university transfer during high school for students unlikely to immediately enter university due to academic, financial, or residency challenges. This includes advice about course credits and financial aid, as well as developing a long-term plan of study.

<sup>1</sup> Latino Youth Finishing College: The Role of Selective Pathways. Pew Hispanic Center. Fry, June 2004.



Create peer-learning communities in the first year of community college. Bilingual peer communities for first-year Latino students can provide critical peer support for a successful journey into a university.

Create case-based follow-up, counseling, and advising transfer programs in the community colleges that engage a broad group of college staff. Transfer counselors that forge a personal connection with students can include faculty members, student peer advisors, as well as specific transfer “agents.” At universities, create specialized orientation programs for transfer students.

Develop summer bridge programs for community college students to experience university courses and begin to immerse themselves in university life.

Engage master’s-level Latino students in the field of educational administration in the issue of community college transfer through fellowship programs.

### ***Engage parents, families, and communities***

Include parents and family members in orientations, counseling, and advising of community college students. Latino community college students are far more likely to be living with family, and have family and work obligations. Bringing family into the college experience is critical, particularly for students who are first-generation college-students.

Support networks of Latino parents with children in college or university to speak at orientations and to engage with other Latino parents. They can demystify the university experience, applications, and, particularly, financial aid mechanisms.

### ***Support policy change for impact***

Address the urgent financial aid situation that limits community college students from going on to get bachelor’s degrees. Create endowed scholarships for transfers, identify and resolve inequities in institutional aid for transfer students, and provide emergency funds to support students in need.

Build personal and institutional relationships at the community colleges and the universities within the community’s feeder pattern. Faculty, counselors, and administrators at both institutions can collaborate on pedagogy, curriculum development, and placement exams.





Create articulation agreements and dual enrollment agreements between community colleges and partner universities. These can include guaranteed admission to the local university for community college students, waiving admissions tests for students that pass certain requirements, and access to university facilities and advising while still in community college.

For more research and good practices to support this transfer, please see:

[www.jackkentcookefoundation.org/](http://www.jackkentcookefoundation.org/). Transfer Access to Elite Colleges and Universities in the United States: Threading the Needle of the American Dream. Dowd, A. et . al. Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. 2006.

[www.highereducation.org/reports/pa\\_transfers/](http://www.highereducation.org/reports/pa_transfers/). State Policy and Community College-Baccalaureate Transfer. Wellman, J. National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education and the Institute for Higher Education Policy. 2004.

To learn about the experience of improving this transfer, please contact the following ENLACE sites:

Northeastern Illinois University – Chicago, Illinois  
[www.neiu.edu/~enlace/](http://www.neiu.edu/~enlace/)

Santa Ana College – Santa Ana, California  
[www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/](http://www.sac.edu/community/partnerships/enlace/)

Hillsborough Community College – Tampa, Florida  
[www.hccfl.edu/enlace/](http://www.hccfl.edu/enlace/)



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