



VOICES



(VOICES):
A PROFILE
OF TODAY'S
LATINO
COLLEGE
STUDENTS



VOICES

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This brief was written by Deborah A. Santiago, Vice President for Policy and Research, *Excelencia* in Education

For more information on this publication contact:

Excelencia in Education, Publications
1752 N Street NW, 6th Floor
Washington, DC 20036
202-778-8323
Contact: publications@EdExcelencia.org

A PDF version is also available on the web at
www.EdExcelencia.org/research/pubs.asp



Excelencia in Education aims to accelerate higher education success for Latino students by providing data-driven analysis of the educational status of Latino students, and by promoting education policies and institutional practices that support their academic achievement. A 501(c)(3) organization, *Excelencia* is building a network of results-oriented educators and policy-makers, adding value to their individual efforts with the means and momentum to address the U.S. economy's need for a highly educated workforce.

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FOREWORD

The United States is experiencing a profound demographic shift from the baby boomer generation to today's young people of high school and college age. Increasing numbers of these young people are Latino. *Excelencia* in Education aims to accelerate Latino student success in higher education and ensure the high caliber of tomorrow's workforce. This publication presents the challenges and complexities of college and university affordability from the perspective of Latino students.

With support from Lumina Foundation for Education, *Excelencia* in Education has spent a year engaging thought leaders, Latino students, as well as outreach and service providers in deliberative discussions about the impact of cost and affordability on Latino students' pursuit of higher education. After gathering the most current data about financial aid, college participation and college completion, *Excelencia* convened selected educational stakeholders to examine these data and share their perspectives about higher education's

capacity and commitment to support this generation of Latino college goers.

In June 2007, selected Latino students were invited to Washington, DC to participate in a focus group on higher education capacity and affordability. The following day, they participated in a town hall style meeting on Capitol Hill. These events, combined with trend analysis about Latino college-going students serve as the basis for *Voces: Hearing from Latino Students about College*.

We produced this publication to help higher education decision makers listen to the voice of Latino students. Hearing Latino students, *Excelencia* will continue to work with campuses, service providers and educational policy leaders to better engage Latino students and their families.

Sarita E. Brown
President
Excelencia in Education

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deborah A. Santiago is the vice president for policy and research at *Excelencia* in Education and brings her extensive experience in education policy and research to the challenge of accelerating Latino student success. Some of her recent publica-

tions include: *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04* and *California Policy Options to Accelerate Latino Success in Higher Education*.

INTRODUCTION

Latinos are the youngest and fastest growing ethnic group in the United States. It is imperative that institutional leaders and decision makers have a better understanding of Latino students today in order to shape the policies and practices to serve our college students in the future.

Currently, disparate statistics about Latino students in higher education are available from national databases and sources, such as the U.S. Census and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center on Education Statistics. However, these valuable data sources provide a limited and two-dimensional picture of Latino students. Frequently, for the sake of simplicity and clarity, many decision makers only focus on a single data point to characterize students. Rarely do decision makers receive informational tools that allow them to combine current statistics and trend data with the narratives of the very students described in statistical summaries.

Voces: A Profile of Today's Latino College Students provides national data as well as information by Latino students

speaking in their own voice. The work that gave shape to these profiles included focus groups and interviews with Latino college students discussing how they and their families view college affordability and opportunity. The students' comments were synthesized to create the profiles.

Policy makers and institutional leaders must confront the changing demographics and the unchanging goal — a college education — of today's Latino college students. The stories of students profiled in this publication may be very familiar, or may be a revelation to the reader. Either way, the profiles are intended to provide a more nuanced portrayal of the multiplicity of Latino students in college today.

This publication begins with a profile of Latino students based on national data. To complement this data, the publication also includes personal stories of Latino students who fit different composites of the broader statistical profile of Latino students. These profiles are the people and the real stories that underlie the numbers.



LATINO STUDENT PROFILE: WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

Statistical data provide useful, although two-dimensional, composites of students. These composites help us recognize some of the contexts and the types of students that are grouped by different characteristics. However, because these composites are generally based on averages, they do not capture the many nuances that are present in the growing diversity in higher education, specifically in the case of Hispanics. For example, while Latinos are heterogeneous by country of origin, language ability, generational status, and college participation, the composite Latino college student may be described as a first-generation college student of Mexican descent, with developing English fluency, who enrolls in a college near his or her community. This composite does represent many, but not all Latino college students. Despite these limitations, it is useful to get a general picture of Latino students, as a point of departure to address the strengths and needs of these students.

The following data profile provides an overview of general characteristics for Latino undergraduates.

GROWTH: Latino representation in higher education continues to grow. In 2005, Hispanic students represented 11% of the total student enrollment in higher education—up from 6% in 1990. Between 2000 and 2005, the number of Hispanics enrolled in undergraduate education increased about 30%, compared to only 10% for whites, 28% for blacks, and 16% for Asian/Pacific Islanders. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007*, Table 210]

HISPANIC ORIGIN: About half of all Hispanic college students (48%) are of Mexican descent. Further, 16% of Hispanic college students are Puerto Rican, 3% are Cuban, and 28% are of “other” Hispanic descent. [*Excelencia in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

AGE: Despite increases in enrollment, only 25% of college-age Latinos (18-24 year-olds) were enrolled in college, compared to about 42% of whites, 32% of blacks, and about 60% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2005*, Table 184]

GENDER: While the numbers of Latinos enrolled in college have increased for both men and women, representation by Hispanic women has increased more rapidly. In 2004, Hispanic women represented almost 60% of all Hispanics in higher education. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2005*, Table 205]

CITIZENSHIP: The vast majority of Latinos enrolled in undergraduate education are U.S. citizens. In 2003-04, 98 percent of Latino students were either U.S. citizens (86%) or legal residents (12%)—the same overall percentage of all undergraduates (93% and 5% respectively). [*Excelencia in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

PARENTS' HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL: Latinos were more likely to be first-generation college students (49 percent) than other undergraduates in 2003-04. Only 29% of Latinos in college had parents who had earned a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 41% of all undergraduates. [*Excelencia in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

DEPENDENCY STATUS: While almost half of Latino undergraduates were dependents, Latinos were more likely to be independent students with dependents (31%) than all undergraduates (27%). [*Excelencia in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

INCOME: Almost 25% of Latino dependent undergraduates had family incomes under \$40,000 in 2003-04. In comparison, just over 15% of all undergraduates had such low income levels. [*Excelencia in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

COLLEGE-PREP: One-third of Latino high school graduates in 2005 had taken the minimum recommended coursework for college. In comparison, 36% of white, 40% of African American, and 43% of Asian-Pacific Islander high school graduates had taken this recommended coursework. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007*, Table 140]

COLLEGE-GOING PATTERNS

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT RATE: In 2005, the college enrollment rate (percent of high school completers who enrolled in college the fall immediately after graduation) for Hispanics was 54% and for white students was 73%. [NCES, *The Condition of Education, 2007*, Indicator 25]

LOCATION: Latinos in higher education are concentrated in several key states. About 50% of Hispanics enrolled in higher education were in two states in 2005: California and Texas. Almost 75% of Latinos in higher education are in five states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007*, Table 212]

CONCENTRATION: Almost 50% of Hispanic undergraduate students are enrolled in about 7% of institutions of higher education (252 institutions) identified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). [*Excelexia* in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*]

INSTITUTION TYPE: The majority of Hispanic undergraduates are enrolled in two-year institutions (52%). In comparison, the majority of white, black, and Asian/Pacific Islander students are enrolled in four-year institutions (only 34%, 40%, and 38%, respectively, are in two-year institutions). [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007*, Table 211]

ATTENDANCE INTENSITY: Almost 50% of Latino students were enrolled part-time in college in 2005. This is a higher percentage than white (37%), black (40%), or Asian/Pacific Islander students (37%). [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007*, Table 210]

HOUSING: Most students lived off-campus in 2003-04, but one-third of Latinos lived with their parents, compared to about one-quarter of all undergraduates. [*Excelexia* in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

HOW LATINO STUDENTS PAY FOR COLLEGE

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION: While Latinos were more likely to apply for aid than all undergraduates (78% vs. 74%) in 2003-04, Latinos were only as likely as all undergraduates to receive some form of aid to pay for college (63 percent). [*Excelexia* in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*, Table A1]

FINANCIAL AID AVERAGE AWARDS: Latinos received the lowest average financial aid award of any racial/ethnic group. The average total aid award for all undergraduates in 2003-04 was \$6,890. Asians received the highest average financial aid awards to pay for college (\$7,620) while

Latinos received the lowest average aid award (\$6,250). [*Excelexia* in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*]

FINANCIAL AID SOURCES: In 2003-04, 50% of Latino undergraduates received federal aid, while only 16% of Latino undergraduates received state aid and 17% received institutional aid. However, Latinos received the lowest average federal aid awards of any racial/ethnic group. The average federal aid award for Latinos was \$5,415, while for whites the average award was \$6,230, for African Americans it was \$6,145, and for Asians it was \$5,995. [*Excelexia* in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*]

FINANCIAL AID TYPES: In 2003-04, half of Latinos received grants while less than one-third received loans (30 percent). However, the average loan amounts Latinos received (\$5,620) were higher than the grant amounts they received (\$3,810). [*Excelexia* in Education and Institute for Higher Education Policy, *How Latino Students Pay for College: Patterns of Financial Aid in 2003-04, 2005*]

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Latino students are less likely to complete college through the traditional path (enroll within one year of high school graduation, and attain a postsecondary credential within the “traditional” time frame). Only 4% of Hispanics completed a postsecondary credential through the traditional path, compared to 15% of whites and 23% of Asians (based upon students in 8th grade in 1988). [NCES, *Issue Brief: Racial/Ethnic Differences in the Path to a Postsecondary Credential, June 2003*]

In 2005-06, Latino students earned 9% of awards conferred in higher education. Of these, 33% were in certificates, 23% were associate degrees, and 31% were bachelor degrees. [*Excelexia* in Education calculations using NCES, IPEDS, 2006 Fall Completions]

Latinos have increased their associate degree attainment 125% and bachelor degree attainment 88% in 10 years (1994-2004). In 2004, Hispanic students earned 11% of associate’s and 7% of bachelor’s degrees awarded. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2005*, Table 258 and 261]

LATINO STUDENT PROFILE: WHAT STUDENTS TELL US

The following student profiles reflect the different composites of Latino students in college today. The profiles include representation by gender, age, residency, Hispanic origin, and college attendance patterns consistent with national data. More importantly, these profiles breathe life into the statistical profile provided in the previous section, by including stories in the students' own voices as well as summaries from interviews and

group discussions that were only slightly edited in an effort to reflect the student's comments.

While the students profiled in this publication agreed to share their stories, for the purposes of this publication, only the first names of students were included.



MYNOR

Mynor is a single 23-year-old male born in Guatemala. He is enrolled at a private university in Texas, works part-time, and lives off-campus. His parents' highest educational attainment is a high school education or less (no college education) and their family income is less than \$40,000 a year.

College choice: Mynor wanted to stay close to home. He did apply to other colleges for an ego boost, but he planned all along to stay close to home. Mynor played soccer in high school and wanted to continue playing, so when a nearby college offered support and a spot on the team, he chose that institution. Upon reflection, he now sort of regrets staying so close to his family. He had other options and with financial aid could have gone elsewhere and been exposed to even more opportunities. Mynor's parents were not involved in the college selection process, but were supportive of his college goals. His parents expected he would do the work to choose a college and get in, and he felt that was one less thing for them to worry about.

College information: Mynor was enrolled in the AVID program (college prep), where he learned about colleges. He also did campus tours and received help with the college application process. Further, he became best friends with his high school counselor by continually pressing for information. When it came to deciding on a major of study, Mynor looked into disciplines that would get him money. He knew someone with a degree in philosophy who was unemployed, and he did not want that for himself, so he decided to study business.

The following is an excerpt from an essay Mynor submitted about his college experience as a recipient of a Hispanic College Fund scholarship.

Like many other immigrants, my family was seeking to escape the poverty and dangers of the country. We successfully established ourselves in Austin with the help of other relatives who had [settled] there prior to our arrival. My parents have endured harsh working conditions. My mother cleaned houses, while my father worked many labor intense jobs including landscaping, construction, and clean-up crews. For a couple of years my parents and I, along with 8 other families, lived in one house. Eventually, my parent's raised enough funds to finally move.

In addition to their hard work, my parents provided me with many opportunities. With the help of many helpful people my mother and aunt had met through work, I was able to attend excellent schools. My elementary school is one of the top schools in Austin, but it is mainly populated by white students. It was a frightful, but a very rewarding experience as well. I continued my education in schools in accordance to the feeder cycle of my elementary school.

When it came time for college, I decided to stay in Texas. There were several schools outside of Texas interested in me who[m] offered me full scholarships, but I was not interested in leaving the state. I was also determined to play soccer in college.

I was accepted to every school I applied for, and was offered money from many of them. I eventually chose St. Edward's University due to their reputation and their offer to play soccer. Prior to my admittance to college, I applied to as many scholarships as I could. I was awarded many of the scholarships I applied for. I even received a scholarship originally intended for African Americans because of their lack of applicants.

The counselor's office was my second home my senior year in high school. My first year at St. Edward's, I was able to obtain enough scholarship and grant money to receive free schooling. I have received the same assistance all four years. I am graduating in May 2007 with a B.B.A. in International Business. I hope to continue my success through my career aspirations in the consulting industry.



CAROLINA

Carolina is a native of Ecuador. She immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 10 with her mother and younger brother, and attended a private high school in Maryland on a need-based scholarship, graduating with a 4.0 GPA. She is 21, single, bilingual, a U.S. citizen, and lives with her family. Carolina is enrolled full-time at a community college, commutes to school, and works part-time. Her mother has some college education (although not a degree) and their family income is between \$40,000 and \$60,000 a year.

Carolina is a sophomore at Montgomery College (Community College) and is in the highly-selective Montgomery Scholars Program. Through this program she receives financial aid and is exposed to such opportunities as studying International Relations for a summer at Cambridge University in England. She plans to continue her education and pursue a degree in Communications by transferring to a university.

Carolina is a 2005 Hispanic Heritage Foundation Youth Award Gold medallion recipient in Journalism. Since 2003, she has been the host of *Generación Latina*, a cable television show for Latino youth in Montgomery County, and writes articles for the youth section of *Revista Buena Gente*, a local magazine.

College choices: For Carolina, the primary factors in her college choice were the institution's size, cost, and location. Location was probably the most critical factor because her family is very close knit. Her family, especially her mother, really wanted her to go to a college close to home. Since Carolina liked the schools in her surrounding area, she did not consider her family's insistence to be a hardship in her college choice. She has heard people criticize making college choices based on location, but wonders if the "cultural value" placed on family is in conflict with this broader expectation of college choice.

College information: Carolina got most of her information about college from Internet research on sites like the College Board, and sites geared to Latinos, such as the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) website. There were only 25 Hispanic students at her private school. She did not think her high school provided useful resources about colleges and her counselor had no information about Latino organizations and resources that could have helped her initially in making her college choice. She found out about most of the resources she used on her own.

Paying for college: Since she was 10, Carolina's mom told her that her number one goal was to get a college education. While her mother supported that goal, she also told Carolina that it was up to her as a student to figure out how to pay for her education. Carolina is an only child and lives with her mother, so she helps to offset college and living expenses by working.

Carolina saw the following options to pay for college: take on a \$10,000 debt each year to go to a university or go to the local community college as part of an honors program. She chose to go to the community college because it offered her lots of opportunities of financial aid as well as exposure to a strong academic program and activities with a cohort of students. She now plans to transfer to American University (a private institution in Washington DC). While the university has not offered as much financial aid as when she was at the community college, she still thinks the costs are worth it. She was happy at the community college because she saved "tons of money" that she could then spend to attend the institution she transferred to. During her time at the community college, she did not have any loans (only scholarships and grants). She expects to take out a loan for her junior year at the university and hopes that it will be through the school and not a private loan because she knows that interest rates are "crazy" high.



YURIDIA

Yuridia is a married 24-year-old student of Mexican descent. She is a first generation U.S. citizen and speaks both English and Spanish fluently. Yuridia attends a public university in South Texas full-time, lives

off campus, and works full-time. Yuridia is a main financial provider for her family. She did not graduate from high school, but earned a GED before entering college. Her parents do not have a college education, and her family income is less than \$40,000.

College choice: Yuridia dropped out of school when she was 13 but got a GED at the age of 18 because she wanted to go to college. Her husband encouraged her to apply because he knew her dream of getting a college education. She only applied to the one school in the community where she lived and worked. Yuri is married with four kids, so choosing a college where she would have to relocate was not an option.

Paying for college: Yuridia had no idea that she could receive financial aid to go to college, because she had not been to high school or heard about it in college until after her first year.

Then she filled out the federal financial aid application (FAFSA) and applied for as many public and private scholarships as she could find. She has received some grants as well as loans (subsidized as well as private loans) to pay for college. Further, when she was pregnant and in school, her husband was hurt and could not work, so she went back to work full-time. She continues working full-time while going to college.

The following is an excerpt from an essay Yuridia submitted about her college experience as a recipient of a Hispanic College Fund scholarship.

I am a twenty-four years old full-time student, mother, and worker. I am still young, but I think, I have accomplished a lot. I had to overcome the physical and mental abuse by my mother, who even banned me from our home one month after she had gotten remarried.

I was just thirteen years old, when I had to drop out of school completing the 7th grade only. However, at the age of 18, I passed the test for my GED and could enroll at the University

of Texas at Brownsville. Now I am pursuing a bachelor's degree in Accounting. Right now, I am in my ninth full-time semester, and my short term goal is to achieve A's in all my classes. I want to make my long time goal of going to law school come true. That is why I want to graduate with the highest grade point average possible.

Getting good grades is not easy, but the hardest thing I ever accomplished was being a good mother and student at the same time. My family is the most important thing to me. I have been married for eleven years and we have four children who I dearly love.

Moreover, I am determined to reach all of my academic and personal goals. And my strongest motivation is my family; my children and my husband are the most important persons in my life. Moreover, they believe in me. My children are not an obstacle; they are my motivation!

Let me also mention that I do volunteer work, which I love because it gives me the feeling of having made a difference in the lives of others for the past year. My children are accepting and are supporting me in my work at the Odyssey Healthcare Center, where I currently give companionship to terminally ill people.

Among my academic achievements I have been listed on the 2004 and spring 2005 UTB Dean's List, been honored by being nominated the last two years for the All-American Scholar Award, the National Dean's List Award, the Chancellor's List Award, and the National Collegiate Business Merit Award. In 2006 and 2007, I received the International Scholar Laureate Delegation of Business Award, was named Who's Who among Students, and received the STARS and HCF Scholarships. A personal high point was that I was one of twenty selected scholars, out of 600 recipients from the HCF Scholarship, to be invited to a paid trip to Washington D.C. for the 13TH Annual Awards Gala and Leadership Development Program in October 2006! I am excited because, this July, I was also nominated to attend a paid trip to AKPsi's Leadership Convention that will be held in Morgantown, Indiana.

As proud as I am of myself for having reached my academic and personal goals, I am most proud of having been able to manage being a full-time student, and worker, and most importantly being a full-time mom and loving wife!



STEVEN

Steven is a single 25-year-old male of Mexican descent living in South Texas. He is a second generation U.S. citizen, English is his primary language, and he works part-time. Steve attends a public university, lives off-campus, and is a “returning” student (re-enrolled after he had stopped taking classes for a while). His family’s annual income is less than \$40,000 a year, and his parents have a bachelor’s degree.

College choice: Steven enlisted in the military for five years and then returned to be closer to his family. He chose a college in the community and believes it is the best experience of his life. He wouldn’t change his decision.

Paying for college: His brother went to Brown University and amassed huge debts because his parents could not help pay for college. Given that example, Steve decided that he would join the military to help pay for his college education. He had a very specific three-year plan to complete his education. Steven is paying for college with funds earned through the GI Bill, scholarships (such as the Hispanic College Fund), money he earns as a substitute teacher, through work-study, and small loans. He believes the loans are worthwhile because they allow him to complete more quickly and offset the cost of an additional fourth year in college.

College information: Steven’s friends who went into military service gave him information and feedback about college prices and differences.

The following is an excerpt from an essay Steven submitted about his college experience as a recipient of a Hispanic College Fund scholarship.

I was born into an underprivileged single parent household as the fourth in a family of seven. It was in the Rio Grande Valley, more specifically, in the city of Brownsville, TX where I was raised and received a public school education. It was during my senior year of high school that I decided to join the military. From a humble household, college would be out of reach; therefore, I enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, which had also been my childhood dream. The next five years of my life were spent maturing and traveling around the world with the military. I had the honorable experience of participating in the U.S led Iraq war. I returned to the United States and received the Presidential Unit Citation, National Defense Medal, and Operation Enduring Freedom Medal. Shortly thereafter, I was discharged from active duty and came home to Brownsville, TX.

I quickly enrolled at University of Texas at Brownsville in the summer of 2004. It was the start of my former goal to graduate with a bachelor’s degree. I am currently scheduled to graduate with a B.B.A. in Management that I have managed to accomplish in less than three years while maintaining a 3.7 GPA. My hard-working, modest background coupled with extensive military experience has facilitated my undertaking of an undergraduate education.

During this time, I have been recognized by The National Dean’s List, President’s List, and Dean’s List. I have additionally been awarded The Hispanic College Fund Lockheed Martin Scholarship, The South Texas Rising Scholars Scholarship, and The National Collegiate Business Merit Award. My time attending to scholastic activities has been supplemented with volunteer work at wonderful places like the Nature Conservancy Southmost Preserve Butterfly Garden and the Gladys Porter Zoo. I also work part-time for the Department of Veterans Affairs at the University of Texas at Brownsville.



NORMA

Norma is a single 27-year-old female student of Mexican descent who lives in Glendale, California. She is a U.S. citizen, English is her first language, and she has multiple dependents. She is enrolled at a community college part-time, works part-time, commutes to campus, and has a family income that is less than \$40,000 a year. Her parents have less than a high school education.

College choice: For Norma, the cost of going to college was the biggest decision in making her college choice. She did not finish high school because her father was disabled and she had to help take care of the family. She is still taking care of her parents and now has a daughter as well. Norma applied to five schools that had her major. Although she was accepted by all, she chose the college with the lowest tuition because of the cost. Before she went to college, she worked full-time for a while. She always believed that going to college meant that she and her family could have more job opportunities and a better lifestyle.

The following is an excerpt from an essay Norma submitted about her college experience as a recipient of a Hispanic College Fund scholarship.

The economic plight of many Hispanic students entering college is an issue that should be addressed. For me, attaining a college degree has always been a financial challenge, not an academic one. I am currently 27-years-old and I am finally about to earn my associate's degree in nursing science. I am considered a "returning" college student because I did not enter college right after finishing high school. In fact, I did not have the privilege of finishing my high school education as many traditional college students do. I was sixteen years old when my father suffered a heart attack that rendered him disabled. Our family faced serious financial difficulties because he was the head of our household. I was reluctantly forced to leave high school ahead of time so that I could work to help support my family. I took and passed the California High School Proficiency Exam in order to fulfill my high school requirements and enter the workforce. I have not stopped working since.

Although I always planned on attending college, my financial obligations impeded me from pursuing this goal. I had to wait several years to begin my college career (not by choice, of course). As a student with dependents of my own, I know the importance of financial aid. I would not be attending college if it weren't for the generous scholarships and grants that have made it possible for me. Today, I hope to continue my college education and enter a graduate program. I sit here with great aspirations to not only be the first in family to attend college, but also to obtain a professional degree.



MAYRIN

Mayrin is a 21-year old female of Dominican, Lebanese, and Spanish origin. She is a U.S. citizen and lives in New York City, New York. Mayrin is fully bilingual, but considers English her first language. Mayrin

is single, lives with her mother and their family income is less than \$40,000 a year. Mayrin describes herself as a homebody. She was raised by a single mom and both her mom and two older siblings went to college. Her mother earned a bachelor's degree.

Mayrin went to private Catholic schools throughout her education and wanted to continue to do so in her collegiate career as well. She attended Fordham University (a private 4-year institution) as a full-time student, and received financial aid to help pay for college. She also worked part-time as a tutor and over the past several years worked at various offices on campus. She loved going to school and could not have imagined not attending college directly after high school. She is looking to attend law school right after graduation.

College choice: Mayrin wanted to stay home and support her mom and help out in the household, so she decided to choose among the colleges near where she lived. Fortunately, there were lots of college options to choose from in New York City. She commutes to school and has always loved staying at home. She

lives in the Bronx, where her school, Fordham University, is located, and therefore has a very quick and convenient commute.

After deciding on location, she looked at programs in the nearby colleges that offered what she wanted to study. Mayrin's mom and older siblings encouraged her to study abroad for a semester. Although she was hesitant, she went abroad, and appreciated the experience away from home.

Ultimately, it was important for her to feel at home at the campus she chose. When asked if she would have gone to another institution if cost had not been an issue, she said no. Mayrin loved her experience at Fordham University; for her it was a perfect fit.

College information: To find the right college for her, Mayrin did research online from sites like the College Board, got information from her guidance counselor, spoke with her mom's friends, and visited the campuses she was interested in attending. She and her mom completed the entire college selection process together. Her mom is her best friend.

Paying for college: Mayrin comes from a single parent household. To help her mother with college costs, she worked to help pay for school and her own expenses. She received financial aid in the form of private scholarships, like the Hispanic College Fund, and institutional aid as well as some loans.

SUMMARY

These profiles tell us a lot about the needs, determination, and ultimate successes of Latino students in higher education. As even more Latinos enroll in colleges and universities, there will be new opportunities to evaluate data on Latino educational progress and to use statistics to better understand the real people who are behind the numbers. Institutional leaders and policymakers who make this con-

nection have the potential to gain greater knowledge of the issues and, as a result, make better program and policy decisions. The opportunity is there for those who wish to take it.

To listen to these Latino students describe their college choices and experiences please visit us on the Web at www.edexcelencia.org/programs/voces.asp

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WE APPRECIATE HAVING HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK DIRECTLY WITH ANTONIO TIJERINO, PRESIDENT OF THE HISPANIC HERITAGE FOUNDATION AND IDALIA FERNANDEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE HISPANIC COLLEGE FUND IN DEVELOPING THE JUNE 2007 VOCES EVENT THAT HELPED INFORM THIS PUBLICATION. EXCELENCIA IN EDUCATION IS PROUD TO WORK WITH THESE ORGANIZATIONS AND ENCOURAGES YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THEIR WORK AND THE STUDENTS THEY SUPPORT.

The Hispanic Heritage Foundation (HHF) identifies, inspires, promotes and prepares Latino leaders in the community, classroom and workforce through national, cultural, educational and workforce programs. HHF is a 501c3 (Federal ID# 52-1818255) organization with all sponsorships supporting their year-round programs including the Youth Awards, Speakers' Bureau, miMentors, miCollegeOptions, LOFT (Latinos on Fast Track) and the Hispanic Heritage Awards. For more information please visit www.hispanicheritage.org.

The Hispanic College Fund's mission is to educate and develop the next generation of Hispanic professionals. They provide students with vision, resources, tools, and mentors through the HCF Scholars Program, the Hispanic Youth Symposia, Latinos on Fast Track (LOFT) and the Hispanic Young Professionals Program. Their focus is on developing Latino youth who are pursuing undergraduate degrees in business, science, engineering, technology and math. For more information please visit: www.hispanicfund.org

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1752 N Street NW, 6th Floor • Washington, DC 20036

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